

India is a vast and highly complex society with uneven and varied development. It has the universal features of any semi colonial, semi-feudal society under the grip of finance capital; it also has many a specificity, which requires deep study and analysis. Revolution here is no simple task, While focusing on the axis of the armed agrarian revolution it would additionally entail dealing with and solving the varied and numerous diseases afflicting our socio political system. The new democratic revolution entails the total democratisation of the entire system and all aspects of life - political, economic, social, cultural, educational, recreational, etc. The standard of life has to be enhanced, not only materially but also in the sphere of outlook and values. A new social being has to emerge in the course of the revolutionary process.



Cherukuri Rajkumar (1954-2010), popularly known as Azad, spokesperson of the Communist Party of India (Maoist), served the cause of Indian revolution for over thirty five years till he was murdered by state forces. This is a collection of his writings and interviews about the position of Indian Maoists on various political, economic and social issues.

MAOISTS IN INDIA

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AZAD

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WRITINGS
&
INTERVIEWS

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INTERVIEWS

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Maoists in India
Writings & Interviews
By Azad

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In Honour of Our Friend

We, the friends of Cherukuri Rajkumar (Azad), present this bouquet of his writings and interviews collected from popular newspapers and websites, to all those who are interested to know the ideas of the Maoist politics in India in general and Azad's articulation of the politics in particular. Azad has been our friend for more than thirty years and as much time, two thirds of his short life of 56 years, he spent developing, exploring, elucidating and debating these ideas. A voracious reader and prolific writer that he was, the writings collected here might be less than a tenth of his literary output. Much of his writing was anonymous or under different pseudonyms in clandestine journals and documents and we leave it for future research to prepare his collected works, most probably with active support from the party for which he was a spokesperson, member of Central Committee and Politbureau at the time of his brutal killing by police on July 2, 2010 in Adilabad forests of Andhra Pradesh.

His death brought back his memories to us and we, from different walks of life, began cherishing his recollections more after his death. Indeed he began living amongst us more vigorously after his death, justifying the saying "a tyrant dies and his rule is over, a martyr dies and his rule begins". Azad's writings, statements, opinions, letters and his expositions of the revolutionary movement that is spreading leaps and bounds are reverberating in the present more vociferously. During the last three months after his cold-blooded killing by the police his name is more visible in the news than when he was alive.

We, as friends of Azad, thought it was our duty to propagate his ideas, his personality and his thoughts and writings. Even as we understand

that his party would be in a better position to undertake that effort, we also wanted to add our bit to the task. Within one week of his death, we brought out a small collection of obituary articles written by prominent journalists and civil libertarians in Telugu. We were overwhelmed by the international response against his killing and brought out another slim volume of statements of solidarity and condolence issued by various parties, organisations and individuals across the world.

This book, in that process, is our third attempt to propagate Azad's ideas. All these articles and interviews appeared in popular newspapers like Economic and Political Weekly, The Hindu, Mainstream, People's March, etc. and available on the net. We gratefully acknowledge all the publications and websites.

We distributed our earlier publications to all those people we knew but we thought this book should be available to all those whom we may not know, but really want the book. We would like to remind all those that given the kind of repression prevailing in India now it would be difficult to identify ourselves. Hence we requested revolutionary writer Varavara Rao, who was an emissary of the CPI (Maoist) when the latter had peace negotiations with the government of Andhra Pradesh, to lend his address to the book. We are thankful to him for accepting our request.

Our friend Azad lives here in his words. In his eloquence. In his turn of phrase. In his penchant for truth. In his meticulous approach. In his incisive analysis. In his steadfast practice. In his supreme sacrifice. Azad continues to inspire.

Friends of Azad
September 20, 2010

A Brief Biography

Cherukuri Rajkumar (Comrade Azad) was born into a middle class family of Krishna district in Andhra Pradesh on 18 May 1954. His father Cherukuri Lakshmaiah Chowdary, an ex-service man, and mother Karuna shifted to Hyderabad to run a small restaurant and thus he had his primary education in Hyderabad and secondary education at Sainik School, Korukonda in Vizianagaram district. He did his graduation in chemical engineering at Regional Engineering College (REC), Warangal and post graduation in ore dressing at Andhra University, Visakhapatnam.

Students of REC were in the forefront in forming Andhra Pradesh Radical Students Union (RSU) in October 1974 and Rajkumar was part of that group. He was arrested in 1975 under Emergency and spent a few months in jail. Radical Students Union was revived after Emergency and Rajkumar became its state president in 1978. He was re-elected twice to that position.

In 1980 he chose to become whole timer and began his underground life and there was no looking back. For the next 30 years, he worked in different areas like Karnataka, Tamilnadu, Kerala, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Dandakaranya, giving theoretical, political and organisational inputs to struggles in all these places. He guided party units and committees in all these states as well as South-western Regional Bureau. Though he was part of a collective decision-making body of the party, his personal contribution in terms of vision, expertise in several fields and a sharp insight into different developing themes helped the movement quite a bit. He was a voracious reader and a prolific writer. Given the nature of his clandestine activity he wrote under different pseudonyms, and more often credited his writings to

collective, but one could easily identify his style in numerous writings in Voice of the Vanguard, People's March, People's Truth, Maoist Information Bulletin, etc.

In 2002, the government of Andhra Pradesh initiated for talks with the then CPI (ML) Peoples War to bring about peace. It was Rajkumar who guided the efforts of peace negotiations on the part of the revolutionary party and he wrote a number of statements, gave interviews to newspapers clarifying the party's position. In 2004, the talks moved a little forward between the representatives of CPI (Maoist) and CPI (ML) Janasakthi on one hand and the representatives of the government on the other. Between May 2004 and January 2005, it was again Rajkumar who guided and prepared a lot of statements and documents for the talks. Again beginning with 2007 when the Prime Minister described the Maoist movement as the biggest internal threat, Rajkumar consistently exposed the real intentions of mining mafia behind the onslaught, including Operation Green Hunt. Through various writings and interviews in several media, he elaborated the party's positions on various issues including the peace process. A number of statements given by him, an 18-page interview along with audio sent to press in October 2009, his 12,262-word interview given to the Hindu in April 2010 and his letter of May 31, 2010 in response to Home Minister P Chidambaram's letter of May 10 to Swami Agnivesh are crystal clear expositions of the position of the CPI (Maoist).

Maoists in India

The special issue (July 22, 2006) devoted to the Maoists in India reflects recognition of the growing importance that the Maoist-led movement plays in the polity and the economy of the country. However, what was disconcerting was that an issue devoted to the Maoists did not have a single article by the Maoists themselves. The majority of the essays appeared preoccupied with the question of violence and not with the horrifying conditions of the masses and finding a way out for them. Though the *EPW* has chosen a wide spectrum of views, it would have been more constructive if the articles were linked more to the question of the alleviation of the horrifying conditions of the masses, particularly in this period of globalisation when the situation has worsened. The issue of violence should have been seen in this context. In this reply, we will first very briefly present our understanding of the Indian social order, then discuss our own goals as the framework from which to view the points made by the writers, and subsequently take up some of the main issues on which we differ. We shall assign importance to those arguments that are really disturbing the well-wishers of the movement.

Semi-Colonial, Semi-Feudal Order

Our beloved country, so rich in natural wealth, human power and ingenuity, has been reduced to a condition that is, in some respects, worse than most of the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. In these nearly 60 years of so-called independence the situation has not significantly improved compared to what prevailed in the last years of the British Raj – at least for the general masses. In the Nehruvian period, the model of development

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relied on the “trickle down effect”; now, in the present phase of globalisation, there is no pretence of even that. The one lakh figure (official) of suicide deaths in rural India in the past 10 years is only the tip of the iceberg of misery that none of the writers refer to. Poverty and deprivation of the masses have continued apace, more so in the present phase of globalisation. And, if the masses (not just Naxalites) dare to even raise their voice for justice, they face the lathis and guns of the state machinery with increasing intolerance.

This was evident not only in the workers’ struggle in Gurgaon, the tribal people’s struggle of Kalinga Nagar, the slum dwellers’ resistance in Mumbai and Delhi, the struggles of displaced people of the

Narmada, peasant struggles in Rajasthan, the electricity employees’ struggles in UP and Punjab, and the struggle of the state government employees in Tamil Nadu, but even in the protests against the recent demolitions in the middle class localities of Delhi. In all these struggles the people were ruthlessly trampled upon, as they did not have the strength to withstand the state onslaught. As a result, their conditions have gone from bad to worse. What answers do the writers (in the *EPW* special issue on the Maoist movement in India) have to put an end to such endemic state violence on different sections of struggling people? How should these people organise to improve their lives? How should they fight back? To negate the Maoist method, which has at least achieved some degree of success, at least in those areas where the Maoists have adopted the path of armed struggle, without providing an alternative, in effect, is to push people into deeper and deeper despair (and poverty), even as the moneybags strut around flaunting their wealth.

The increasing state violence on the masses and the growing impoverishment are not just an accident or some isolated instances, but endemic to the existing system, which we Maoists broadly characterise as semi-colonial and semi-feudal. Semi-colonial because the Indian ruling classes (big business, top bureaucrats, and leading politicians running the centre and the states) are tied to imperialist interests. Semi-feudal, as the old feudal relations have not been smashed, only a certain amount of capitalist growth has been superimposed on them. So also, the Parliament is no democratic institution (as in countries that have been through a democratic revolution – a bourgeois democracy) but has been instituted on the existing highly autocratic state and semi-feudal structures as a ruse to dupe the masses.

The contemporary Indian economy is unduly influenced by the activities of carpetbaggers, a ruthless mafia, rapacious mining interests and giant speculators, all linked to the politics of criminality. The degeneration is so deep, the rot so acute that these same moneybags are floating thousands of non-government organizations (NGOs) in order to trivialise the ills of the system so that people are diverted from seeing that these are endemic to the very system itself and not due to just some bad individuals or policies. The semi-colonial, semi-feudal order reproduces social polarisation – a growing rich and their vast number of hangers-on, and an increasing mass of the impoverished. A small section of the middle class is moving into the first category, partaking of some crumbs from the opulent dining table; the bulk of the people are being pushed into squalor, unemployment, agrarian crisis, business bankruptcy and financial ruin. Even the local bourgeoisie (small) and small traders are being squeezed out in increasing numbers with the entry of giant companies in all spheres of the economy.

With these extremes of wealth and poverty, in order to protect the enclaves of the rich and powerful, the state will be driven to resort to more and more repression of the people and their organisations. It is only within this framework that one can understand why the home ministry designates the Maoists as the number one threat to “internal security”. We Maoists seek a just and equitable order. In this endeavour, the key question is how does one confront the repressive Indian state that brutally tramples upon the people, even as it defends and pampers the wealthy. But before that let us get to what we stand for.

Maoist Model of Development

We Maoists stand for a people-oriented, self-reliant model of development. In this model, people play the central role; their initiative is released to the fullest extent possible. We are of the opinion that all wealth generated within the country should stay here and not be allowed to be drained off abroad. India is a very rich country with tremendous human power and ingenuity, together with a vast natural resource base. The vast wealth, illegally and immorally appropriated by the imperialists, feudal elements and compradors, should be seized and turned to use in developing the economy, first and foremost in agriculture and in rural areas, where the bulk of our people live.

Our model of development is oriented to vastly enhancing the purchasing power of the masses. This will create a huge home market in

the country itself, which will act as the main engine for growth. The starting point for this is overhauling the rural economy, where 70 per cent of our people live. This will be initiated through land reforms, by the redistribution of land on the basis of "land-to-the-tiller". In his article, Tilak D Gupta says that this is not viable any longer as there is not enough surplus land. But has he fixed a viable ceiling to determine how much land will be available for redistribution? Has he determined how much land is with the government/panchayats; how much land is with religious institutions and mutts; how much land is with absentee landowners (even most bureaucrats/army officials maintain land, and many, in fact, purchase more); and how much land is with the private corporate sector and with luxury resorts, golf clubs, etc?

The land reforms, coupled with large investments in agriculture (to also regenerate the soil destroyed by the green revolution), forestry and allied activities (poultry, goat farming, fishery, etc), will enormously expand the rural populace's purchasing power. This in turn will create a market for the basic necessities of life and will help generate local industry, resulting in employment generation. With this employment generation the purchasing power will increase further, leading to more industry, and it is this spiral that will result in continuous growth. In this development model, growth (and extension of the home market) will be linked to people's welfare and will in fact be dependent on it.

In the urban areas too, industrial production will be people-oriented. The opulent expenditure of the super rich will cease (as their surplus and ill-begotten wealth will be confiscated) and the vast slums will be rehabilitated. Job security will be ensured with a living wage and there will be no necessity to cling to ancestral land as a source of security to fall back upon. This will release a further amount of land for the impoverished rural populace.

Cultural, sports and recreational activities will involve the masses, while education will be made available to all. All forms of caste and patriarchal oppression/ discrimination will be fought against and prohibited. Untouchability will be abolished and severely punished. All degenerate and feudal ideas will be fought against long after the revolution through cultural revolutions. Healthcare will be freely available, and more focus will be on preventive care and hygiene.

In a nutshell, this is the model of development that we Maoists stand for. It is stated in the party programme and political resolutions issued from time to time. On this, there is no ambiguity. In Bastar, before

the massive state onslaught in the present Salwa Judum campaign, extensive development projects along the above lines were taken up and have been documented in the booklet *New People's Power in Dandakaranya* (2000). In Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand and Bihar, it was the just struggles of the peasantry under Maoist leadership that led to the seizure of lands from the big landlords and distribution among the landless and poor peasants.

What we propose is a model of new democracy built around the axis of land reforms and a self-reliant economy. It is also this new democratic model that we seek to implement (on seizing power) in its rudimentary form in the guerrilla bases and later in the base areas. That is why in Dandakaranya the Maoists not only implemented people-oriented projects (when the military operations were not as intense) but also called for the stopping of our rich iron ore being taken away by Japan at the Bailadilla mines and supported the 400-odd indigenous small-scale rolling mills facing closure due to government policies. Is this model violent? Is it undemocratic? It is in fact the most humane and peace-loving model of growth. But when we try and implement it, the state comes down heavily on us and on the masses that support us. It is not we who seek violence. In fact, for over a decade we were able to build extensive developmental projects in Dandakaranya and Jharkhand when the government's military actions were at a lower scale. We seek to implement the model of development just outlined; if this can be done peacefully, so much the better. But history has shown us that the moneybags and their political representatives are unable to accept even the thought of such a transformation.

The Question of Violence

The question of violence is the single most important thread passing through all the articles. No real communist is for violence per se. Communists are for a peaceful social system built around equality and justice. But when they seek to work for such a system they are attacked most brutally. This has been the case ever since the birth of the communist movement. They have been massacred and exterminated right from the days of the Paris Commune. It would be naïve to think that the Indian ruling classes, who have a lengthy record of violence unleashed on the oppressed masses, are any better. Besides, it is not just state violence that people face; in a class society, as in India, violence is endemic to the very system and the oppressed masses are exposed to it in the course of their daily lives – by the feudal authority and by factory managements, and also as a result of untouchability, patriarchy, etc.

Human society, ever since the origin of private property and classes, has moved forward only through a process of prolonged and tortuous struggles, and by countering the violence of the ruling classes. To expect that the ruling classes will today accommodate those demanding a new and more advanced social system is to deny the lessons learnt from history. For instance, K Balagopal has speculated regarding an alternative response that could have been pursued by the Maoists even after the encounter killings began in Andhra Pradesh. Would the government, as speculated by Balagopal, have allowed the Maoists to concentrate on exposing the anti-poor bias of the present development model and extend their mass activity to a point that would have given their aspiration for state power a solid mass base? If that possibility existed, why in the first place did the ruling classes attack the legal movement in Karimnagar and Adilabad? There was then no armed activity when the Disturbed Areas Act was put in place by the Chenna Reddy government in 1978.

And, how does one confront the attacks by the landlords and the police? Balagopal also asserts that a positive response from the state would have de-legitimised the argument for revolutionary violence. Such speculation only displays the illusions of our intellectuals with regard to the nature of the state. What is needed is a realistic appraisal of the situation.

To put so much emphasis on the violence of the Maoists appears to divert the issue, where, in the present system the masses have to face violence everyday of their lives. Hundreds die each day of hunger, starvation and easily curable illnesses. Semi-feudal authority in the villages has only force as its major instrument of control. Workers in all but the big industries (some time even there) have to regularly face the hoodlums maintained by the management and even the police. The women of our country have to face daily patriarchal violence and there are many so-called dowry deaths each year. Dalits have to face humiliation and abuse on a daily basis. And, over and above all this is the violence of the state, the Hindutva fascists, the mafia linked to the mainstream political parties, big business, and so on.

The violence of the Maoists, which is preceded and provoked by the violence of the oppressors, is not really the main issue; justice is. If Naxalite violence is to be discussed, it should be in the context of violence pervading every aspect of our system. If not seen in this framework, one falls prey to the abstract bourgeois concept that "violence breeds violence", without understanding the structural causes of violence.

One important aspect of today's counterinsurgency operations is the massive use of an informer/espionage network to decimate the movements, not only externally, but also from within. Today, this is one of the major weapons in counter-insurgency strategies in the world, including India. Counter-insurgency operates right from the village level, the mass organization level, to covert operations within the party itself. Massive funds are being secretly allocated for this purpose. Most of these informers pose as "civilians", and many can be from the poorer classes. But, their existence has led to the death of thousands of the best of revolutionaries throughout the world. This has been accompanied by brutal torture to extract information. Earlier, accounts of brutal torture became public; now, the ruling classes make sure that this does not happen by killing the tortured victim and by legitimising torture as a necessary component of the "war against terror".

What the world sees is only the overt violence of the state, not these covert operations. The only long-term method of countering these operations is through deepening the mass base of the party (not mere mass support) and raising its political level. It is also necessary to deal with the problem in the immediate; otherwise the best of our cadre get killed. If all persons in every village are tightly organised (into mass organisations, militia, and party units) it is very difficult for an informer to survive without getting noticed. But such intensive organisation takes time and is not so easy in the bigger villages and the urban bastis. In between, the informers are recruited. Most of the elements recruited by the state may come from ordinary backgrounds, but they are mostly lumpen or degenerate elements. They are recruits in the covert operations of the police and the army. Any leniency towards them can mean (and has meant) the death of the best of our comrades. Actions against these elements cannot be construed as violence on civilians, but on recruits to the police/ paramilitary forces, and should be seen as such. This is important to understand, in the light of modern-day counter-insurgency in the form of Low Intensity Conflict, originally devised by the MI5 (of Britain) and the CIA (of the US), and used throughout the world.

Major Misconception

There is yet another major misconception – that "innocent" people are being caught in the crossfire between the Naxalites and the police. First, this is not a fact. Secondly, the "people" are not a homogeneous mass; the ruling elite and their hangers-on are with the state, while the masses of the oppressed are with the Naxalites. The former support state

terror (as in the Salwa Judum), while the latter act together with the Maoists to resist such terror. The misconception of a homogeneous populace is linked to postmodernist thinking of a so-called “civil society”, which conceals class divisions within society. All the same, in conflicts involving state terror and the people’s resistance to it, there will be some sections not allied to either side, but the majority are polarised into two camps – a minority allied with the state, on the one hand, and the masses backing the Naxalites, on the other. The above-mentioned fallacy of conceptualising the people as a homogeneous mass runs through all the articles, including that of Sumanta Banerjee when he writes: “... the Maoist guerrillas often betray an immature mindset by intimidating them, instead of patiently politicizing them”. In our view, at the village level, the masses are divided into three sections: the diehard reactionaries, the intermediary sections who may vacillate between the two contending forces and the masses won over by the Maoists. Banerjee’s statement would apply to the intermediary sections. The reality however is that the bulk of the actions taken by the Maoists have been against the diehard reactionaries. There may have been errors, as also different conceptions of who belongs to the first or second category. While these can be discussed, the three sections have to be clearly demarcated, for this is fundamental to understanding the class struggle at the ground level, which is a struggle for power. The diehard reactionaries have to be suppressed, while the rest have to be patiently politicised. There are, of course, problems of class analysis and consequently, incorrect handling of contradictions among the people due to inexperience of some cadres. Although this is an exception rather than the rule, the state has used these aberrations by magnifying them and many intellectuals who refuse to see the reality have become a prey to such intrigue of the state, often joining the chorus against revolutionary violence. Further in the same vein Sumanta Banerjee adds: “Of the two (i e, state and communist revolutionaries), the communist revolutionaries who claim to look after the welfare of the poor and the oppressed, are expected to be more humane in their choice of tactics and genuinely democratic in getting popular consent for them – particularly when such tactics affect the vast masses of uninvolved citizens. If in their drive for retaliation they stoop to the level of the police or security forces and indulge in indiscriminate attacks on soft targets...” Now, real humanity entails unconditionally standing by the oppressed. But there is no all-encompassing humanity.

In a class society, where the ruling classes fiercely crush the oppressed at every step, real humanity entails fierce hatred for their

oppressors. There can be no love without hate; there is no all-encompassing love. The Maoists may err in certain actions, from which we will learn certain lessons, but “to be more humane” cannot be associated with the question of civil behaviour vis-à-vis the enemy and their agents in our tactics. Having said this, quite rightly, there should not be any attack on soft targets, but targets have to be assessed within the framework of the politico-military aims of the movement – both immediate and long-term. For Sumanta Banerjee, a school building housing the paramilitary, or, communication towers, may be soft targets, but for the Maoists it would be part of their long term aims to counter the enemy forces. Sumanta Banerjee’s clubbing of Maoist violence with that of the Islamic fundamentalists is unfair, as nowhere have the Maoists consciously attacked civilians.

The so-called civilians of the Salwa Judum are basically the SPOs and “lumpen” elements mobilised by the state as a vigilante force to kill, burn, loot and destroy tribal life in countering the Maoists. Though unnecessary losses should be avoided, like the two children in the Errabore camp, no people’s war can be so clinical, as to have no civilian causality. The point is whether the maximum care has been taken not to affect civilians. The police/paramilitary have been utilising this principled stand of the Maoists in their tactics to counter them. For instance, they travel in public transport buses along with civilians and use the masses as human shields while entering areas that are Maoist strongholds. They know well the Maoists will not attack if civilian lives are involved. They also employ unarmed policemen and home guards to collect information about the Maoists from villages in Naxalite strongholds, and even use women as informers as the Maoists do not easily target such people. Three thousand home guards were recruited recently in AP along with 1,500 SPOs, as admitted by the chief minister at the chief ministers’ meeting on terrorism and left extremism on September 5 this year. The home minister and DGP of AP admitted that they had deliberately not given rifles in about 500 or so police stations in the state as they were sure Maoists would not attack unarmed policemen.

So, to sum up, violence is endemic in this brutal system. One cannot appreciate the need for revolutionary violence unless one understands the fascist nature of the state, the cruelty of the state’s forces, tortures and fake encounters, bans on peaceful meetings, and state violations of the democratic rights of the people. The fascist nature of the state is exposed when confronted by powerful people’s movements, as we witness in all those areas of activity of the Maoist movement. In fact,

Maoist violence is only to put an end to all the violence in this rotten system and to bring peace to our country and people. There is no other recourse in such a brutal and ruthless system. We sincerely ask the writers to please suggest how to end the violence of oppressors and the state that acts on their behalf? How can the oppressed masses gain justice?

Finally, we wish to state that in the course of the revolutionary movement we do make mistakes on this account; but wherever we have done so, we have never sought to hide it, but have issued a public apology. While we will always try and learn from our shortcomings, it must also be realised that no class war can be conducted with clinical precision. It is very tortuous and painful; just as the daily life of the bulk of our population is no less agonising.

We will now take up some other major arguments and leave the rest for a future discussion.

Comparisons with Nepal Maoists

There is a tendency to compare the Maoists movements of Nepal and India, pitting the Nepal Maoists' present tactics as a supposed peaceful alternative to the Indian Maoists' violent methods. One should not forget that the present victories of the anti-monarchy movement are primarily a result of the success of the politico- military battles by the People's Liberation Army and their ability to beat back the attacks of the king's army. Their victories are built on the backbone of a 30,000 strong PLA and one lakh militia, and the loss of 12,000 lives. This fact is brought out in a recent interview with the Hindi magazine *Philal* where comrade Prachanda, the chairman of the CPN (Maoist), said: "When we talk with the leaders of these political parties we say that had we not been armed, there would have been no 12-point understanding. Had we not been armed, Deuba would never have been able to come out of prison. Had we not been armed, many of you would have been killed because of the feudal monarchy, which murdered its blood relations inside the Palace... We also told them that our weapons only made the revival of your parliament possible, you are not credited with it; the credit goes to the PLA...". Besides, change of tactics depends on the situation in the respective countries and the strength of the contending sforces. Sitaram Yechury has particularly sought to pit the Nepal Maoists against the Indian Maoists. While the CPI (M) brutally suppresses the Maoists in West Bengal, it is hypocritically speaking in praise of the Nepal Maoists. Instead of pitting one revolution against the other, it would be far more constructive to take the positive experiences of other revolutions and

see how best these could concretely be applied to the Indian revolution to take it forward. This brings us to debates about the revolutionary path.

On the Revolutionary Path

Among the writers, the most forthright in questioning the very path of the revolution was Tilak D Gupta who said: "...the case for revising the ideological-political line and the strategy and tactics of the CPI (Maoist) is quite potent by itself because of the changed international situation and above all due to the major worldwide setback to socialism". Earlier in the article, he also raised doubts on the change to Maoism. He questions some of the very basics of the CPI (Maoist). Sagar too, after raising questions on a large number of tactical issues – idealizing elections, pitting mass action against armed struggle, opposing democratization of tribal culture, negating its successes and only focusing on its supposed lack of presence everywhere (as though all over the world Marxists are making sweeping gains) – he goes to the extent of clubbing the entire "left", including the parliamentary CPI and CPI (M) with the CPI (Maoist) in a single category by calling for a "genuine confederation of the various Left organisations". Sagar goes so far as to equate the parliamentarians with those leading the armed struggle by saying: "In the broad context of Indian politics it would appear to him/her that the Left in all its diversity is actually part of one 'parivar' with one component doing nothing but parliamentary work and the other focusing on armed struggles and the middle consisting of many combinations of these two extremes". Mohanty, while even erring on facts (claiming that all the ML groups have equal strength, which not even the enemies of the movement say), equates the CPI (Maoist) with the revisionist Liberation and Kanu Sanyal groups. Some of the writers have highlighted certain lacunae within the movement to negate the entire path, others negate it in the name of the "changed situation", and yet others negate it by obfuscating the lines of demarcation between Marxism and revisionism.

Let us take some of these arguments. As Tilak says, it is true that there have been some changes in the international situation, though the basic essence of imperialism has not changed. But the changes, linked with the economic crisis, and the increasing ferocity of imperialism, particularly US imperialism, would warrant more extensive and deeper armed resistance than what we have today. Witness what happened in Iraq, or the arrogance displayed by Israel in Lebanon and Palestine; or

the massacres of communists and even liberal opposition in Latin America; the butchery of hundreds of mass leaders in the Philippines, etc. The much talked of "space" for the revolutionaries and democrats is shrinking, not because of the armed activities of the Maoists, but because of the increasing fascist character that imperialism and its agents throughout the globe are acquiring. This is evident in India where the governments at the centre and the states are enhancing their armed might on a scale never seen before. They realise that with the aggressive implementation of the policies of LPG, mass revolts will have to be dealt with. So, it is not clear in which direction does Tilak pose the case for revising the ideological-political line and the strategy and tactics of the CPI (Maoist). There is need for much greater depth of analysis before making such far-reaching statements.

Today if the movement is weak in many parts of the country, the need is to strengthen it there, not change the path to some vague "genuine confederation of the various Left organisations". What is needed is not such an amorphous conglomeration, but a genuine United Front (UF) of the four classes of the workers, peasants, middle classes and the national bourgeoisie. An effective UF is the only way to rally all the antiimperialist, anti-feudal forces and not a confederation of the various Left organisations, which blurs the basic distinction between the different class forces. The history of all revolutions, particularly that of Russia and China, has clearly shown that victory was only possible by fighting an uncompromising ideological-political battle with all forms of revisionism. Where the path of compromise was adopted, the socialist goal was lost, though there may have been military victories, as in Vietnam, Cuba, North Korea, etc.

Tribal and Caste Questions

There is a tendency to focus on identity politics, as in K Balagopal's article, and idealise backward tribal societies, as in Sagar's and Nandini Sunder's articles, both of whose approach is linked to a postmodernist perspective actively promoted by the NGOs.

K Balagopal not only talks of identity politics but also believes that as a result of the revolutionary struggle the biggest sufferers are the oppressed themselves – what he calls the "decimation of the organic leaders". It is true that our movement has generated hundreds of intellectuals from the most oppressed; yet Balagopal negates the revolutionary process when he ends his piece by saying that "the daily losses of such persons is a sacrifice the oppressed cannot be called upon

to put up with indefinitely". This is an ambiguous end and could have many implications – it seems to imply that the oppressed should give up, what to him seems a futile path. If there are excessive losses, the causes have to be found and corrections made, but to expect revolution without sacrifice is illusory. As far as "identity politics" is concerned, it divides the masses; what is required is a class approach that unites the masses, including the oppressed. A class approach to the caste question demands an end to upper-caste oppression, brahminical ideology and abolition of the pernicious caste system, including 'untouchability'. But, "identity politics" only emphasizes caste and acts to ossify caste divisions further.

As far as preserving tribal culture NGO style is concerned, it would be good if Sagar and Nandini Sunder talk to the women of Bastar who would recount what that culture also gave them – forced marriages, witchcraft, superstition, forced drudgery, etc. Though not as bad as the Hindu patriarchal system, tribal culture is far from idyllic. The Maoists have indeed sought to learn from the adivasi masses and have taken all that is positive in tribal culture, while doing away with the dross. So, we have not only sought to preserve the Gondi, Santhali and other languages, but have also developed them; we have preserved and adopted the folklore of the tribal peoples and their dance forms, infusing them with social content. We have encouraged and further enhanced the elements of community and collective living, which were a natural part of their culture. We are preserving the forests and taking up reforestation campaigns. In addition, we have taken education to the tribal peoples and modern knowledge, which cannot be expected to continue to be the sole preserve of the established intellectual elite.

Conclusion

India is a vast and highly complex society with uneven and varied development. It has the universal features of any semicolonial, semi-feudal society under the grip of finance capital; it also has many a specificity, which requires deep study and analysis. Revolution here is no simple task. While focusing on the axis of the armed agrarian revolution it would additionally entail dealing with and solving the varied and numerous diseases afflicting our sociopolitical system. The new democratic revolution entails the total democratization of the entire system and all aspects of life – political, economic, social, cultural, educational, recreational, etc. The standard of life has to be enhanced, not only materially but also in the sphere of outlook and values. A new

social being has to emerge in the course of the revolutionary process. As communists we are always ready to rectify our mistakes and listen to others, as we have the interests of the people at heart. But the criticisms would help if they were concrete; those that we agree with we will willingly accept and try and improve our practice; where we disagree we can freely and openly debate the issue.

On the 'Comprehensive Peace Agreement' in Nepal

On November 5 the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) [CPN (M)] had entered into an agreement with the government of Nepal which stipulated that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) would deposit its arms in seven designated cantonments while the government's armed forces too would deposit an equal number of arms. These would be placed under the supervision of a United Nations (UN) monitoring team while the keys of the lockers of PLA arms would be with the Maoist party. It was also agreed by both sides to dissolve the present parliament and form a new interim parliament with a share of the seats for the Maoists, to form an interim government with some portfolios for the Maoists, and to elect a constituent assembly by next summer, which is supposed to decide the fate of the monarchy and the future of Nepal. The agreement received the final official stamp when prime minister, G P Koirala and the chairman of CPN (M), comrade Prachanda signed the agreement and declared it publicly. The Central Committee (CC), Communist Party of India (Maoist) [CPI (Maoist)], has been perturbed by this agreement concluded by the fraternal Maoist party in Nepal with the government of the seven-party alliance (SPA) led by the Indian protégé, Koirala. The agreement to deposit the arms of the people's army in designated cantonments is fraught with dangerous implications. This act could lead to the disarming of the oppressed masses of Nepal and to a reversal of the gains made by the people of Nepal in the decade-long people's war at the cost of immense sacrifices. The clause in the agreement to deposit an equal number of arms by both sides will

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obviously work in favour of the Koirala-led government as the latter will have the option to use the huge stock of arms still at the disposal of the army anytime and to further strengthen the reactionary army of the government. The decision taken by CPN(Maoist) on arms management, even if it thinks it is a tactical step to achieve its immediate goal of setting up a constituent assembly, is harmful to the interests of the revolution. Revolutionary experiences the world over had demonstrated time and again that without the people's army it is impossible for the people to exercise their power. Nothing is more dreadful to imperialism and the reactionaries than armed masses and hence they would gladly enter into any agreement to disarm them. In fact, disarming the masses has been the constant refrain of all the reactionary ruling classes ever since the emergence of class-divided society. Unarmed masses are easy prey for the reactionary classes and imperialists who even enact massacres as proved by history. The CC, CPI (Maoist), as one of the detachments of the world proletariat, warns the CPN (Maoist) and the people of Nepal of the grave danger inherent in the agreement to deposit the arms and calls upon them to reconsider their tactics in the light of bitter historical experiences. The agreement by the Maoists to become part of the interim government in Nepal cannot transform the reactionary character of the state machinery that serves the exploiting ruling classes and imperialists. The state can be an instrument in the hands of either the exploiting classes or the proletariat but it cannot serve the interests of both these bitterlycontending classes. It is a fundamental tenet of Marxism that no basic change in the social system can be brought about without smashing the state machine. Reforms from above cannot bring any qualitative change in the exploitative social system, however democratic the new constitution might seem to be, and even if the Maoists become an important component of the government. It is sheer illusion to think that a new Nepal can be built without smashing the existing state. Another illusion that the agreement creates is regarding the so-called impartial or neutral role of the UN. The UN is in reality an instrument in the hands of the imperialists, particularly US imperialists, to dominate, bully and interfere in the affairs of the third world countries for the benefit of the imperialists. It is used as a guise to provide legitimacy to the brazen acts of the imperialists to oppress and suppress the people of the third world. Afghanistan and Iraq are the most recent instances of the UN's direct role in legitimising imperialist aggression and occupation of these countries. It is the duty of revolutionaries to expose, oppose and fight this imperialist role of the UN. Giving it a role in arms management,

election supervision, and the peace process in Nepal would only mean inviting imperialist interference, in particular, that of US imperialism. Another disturbing factor is the illusion harboured by the Maoists in Nepal regarding the role of the Indian expansionists. The Indian ruling classes are the biggest threat to the people of the entire subcontinent and it is the duty of the people of the various countries of south Asia to unitedly fight Indian expansionism. The Indian state, with the backing of US imperialism, has been continuously interfering in the internal affairs of Nepal; it had backed the monarchy while encouraging its stooges among the parliamentary forces in the name of two-pillar theory; trained and extended all forms of aid to the Royal Nepal Army in their military offensive against the Maoists; has secret deals with the Nepali Congress led by Koirala and with other reactionary parties; and is bent upon disarming the PLA and the masses of Nepal and isolating the Maoists. Its aim is to grab the natural wealth of Nepal, particularly its huge hydel potential, and to make it a safe haven for the imperialists and Indian comprador capitalists. Comrade Prachanda's repeated praise for India's role in bringing about the agreement between the Maoists and the SPA in Nepal creates illusions among the masses about India rather than preparing them for fighting the Indian expansionists who are keen on Sikkimising Nepal in the future. Even more surprising is the assertion by the CPN(Maoist) that their current "tactics" in Nepal would be an example to other Maoist parties in south Asia. Comrade Prachanda had also given a call to other Maoist parties to reconsider their revolutionary strategies and to practise multiparty democracy in the name of 21st century democracy. Our CC makes it crystalclear to CPN(M) and the people at large that there can be no genuine democracy in any country without the capture of state power by the proletariat and that the so-called multiparty democracy cannot bring any basic change in the lives of the people. It calls upon the Maoist parties and people of south Asia to persist in the path of protracted people's war as shown by comrade Mao. We also appeal to the CPN (Maoist) once again to rethink their current tactics, which are actually changing the very strategic direction of the revolution in Nepal, and to withdraw from their agreement with the government of Nepal on depositing the arms of the PLA as this would make the people defenceless in face of attacks by the reactionaries.

Interview on the Developments in Nepal

The results in the April 10 elections to the Constituent Assembly in Nepal have been overwhelmingly in favour of the Maoists, a development least anticipated by even the keenest observers. How does your Party in India, the CPI (Maoist), look at the election results in Nepal?

Azad: As mentioned in my press release on behalf of my Party's central committee last week, the election results in Nepal have demonstrated the overwhelming anger of the masses against the outdated feudal monarchic rule in Nepal, against the Indian expansionist's bullying and domination of Nepal, against US domination and oppression, against comprador-feudal parties which allowed this to continue and betrayed the masses for too long. The results are a reflection of the growing aspirations of the Nepali masses for democracy, land, livelihood and genuine freedom from imperialist and feudal exploitation. It is these aspirations of the overwhelming majority of the masses that had completely trounced the parties that had either supported the King and/or the Indian ruling classes or hesitated to come out strongly against feudal, imperialist oppression and Indian intervention in Nepal. The royalists could not win even in a single constituency out of the 240 constituencies where direct elections were held. And leaders of the so-called mainstream such as Madhav Nepali, Sujata Koirala were rejected outright which came as a great shock to the ruling classes.

Hence, when an alternative like the CPN(M) came to the fore, with its open commitment to abolish the feudal monarchy once for all, abrogate all unequal treaties

Interview

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signed with India by the former ruling classes of Nepal, and ensure democracy and equality for the oppressed sections of society such as Dalits, adivasis, national minorities and women, the masses enthusiastically veered towards the Maoists. To put it in a word, the people of Nepal had come out resolutely against constitutional monarchy, Indian expansionism and US imperialism; the results reflect the growing aspirations of the Nepalese masses for land, livelihood and democracy.

Our Party looks at the election results in Nepal as a positive development with enormous significance for the people of entire South Asia. We send our revolutionary greetings to the people of Nepal for rejecting outright the monarchic rule and the comprador-feudal Parties during the April 10 elections to the Constituent Assembly. These results point to the real aspirations of the Nepalese people and should serve as a guide to the CPN (M) for its future course of action.

Q: What do you think are the reasons for the impressive results in favour of the Maoists in the elections to the Constituent Assembly in Nepal?

Azad: There are six major reasons:

One, the masses of Nepal had enough of King Gyanendra's autocratic and authoritarian rule. Constitutional monarchy is indeed an anachronism even in the 20th century leave alone 21st century.

In fact, people of Nepal had put up with such a rotten, reactionary feudal rule too long a time. And when they found an opportunity to throw it out they grabbed it. There was never such an opportunity during earlier elections as all the parliamentary parties were either loyal to the King or displayed nominal opposition to the King. It is only the CPN (Maoist) which had shown its firm commitment to abolish the monarchy once for all and had come to the fore as an alternative to the bourgeois-feudal parties.

Two, the masses of Nepal had enough of bullying, intervention and domination by Indian expansionism. There is a general atmosphere of suspicion regarding the motives of the Indian ruling classes in Nepal. The people of Nepal had suffered too long under the obnoxious unequal treaties signed by successive rulers of Nepal with the Indian government such as the 1950 Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship, the Mahakali Treaty, and so on. The Indian rulers have always had an eye on the natural wealth of Nepal, its rich natural gas reserves, hydro-electric potential, forest products etc. Along with imperialist exploitation, oppression and

plunder, the Indian CBB too is seen as an obstacle for the development of the local industry and trade. Besides this, Indian ruling classes have been continuously interfering in the political affairs of Nepal. They supported the monarchy all along and in the past few years took up the so-called two-pillar theory of supporting the King as well as the Nepali Congress. They gave training, supplied arms to the Royal Nepal Army, and sent all sorts of aid to contain the Maoist revolutionaries in Nepal. All these despicable acts had only fuelled the anger of the masses against Indian government. Now when an opportunity presented itself before them in the form of the CPN (M) they naturally voted for it which should be seen as a vote against Indian domination. None of the other Parties showed the guts to confront India. It was only the CPN (M) which categorically assured the people that it would do away with all the unequal treaties with India, ban obscene Hindi films, stop recruitment of Gurkhas into the Indian Army and provide them with alternative employment, and so on.

Three, the masses of Nepal had enough of the exploitation, oppression and intervention of the US imperialists. Throughout the rule of King Gyanendra and even until today after the humiliating defeat of his loyalist parties in elections, US imperialists has stood by his side rendering all aid to perpetuate his rule and to brutally suppress the Maoists. They had placed the CPN(M) on its list of terrorist outfits. This is a grave insult to the people of Nepal who view this as unwarranted meddling in Nepal's affairs. By supporting the discredited King US imperialists became even more discredited and hated by even those who had no anti-imperialist consciousness or opposed to US imperialism as they see it as a protector of feudal monarchy.

Four, the promises made by the CPN (M) to establish a democratic, federal, secular Nepal with freedom, democracy and equality for all the oppressed sections of society such as Dalits, adivasis, national minorities and women had an electrifying impact. For the first time, these oppressed sections were given considerable representation in the elections. Under such conditions, the oppressed masses came out enthusiastically in support of the Maoists. Women's turn-out, it is said, was equal to, and may be even greater than that of men—something unimaginable in a feudal country like Nepal.

Five, the most important factor is the positive impact created by the decade-long people's war led by the Maoists on the overall balance of forces in Nepal. The Maoists had established control over almost three-

quarters of rural Nepal. Through the people's revolutionary governments in the countryside they had carried out several reforms which brought the masses closer to them. Most of the Parties had thus become irrelevant in the eyes of the people. The impact of armed struggle should not be underestimated.

For instance, even in India if we see, the united Communist Party won an overwhelming majority of seats (31 out of 32 seats) in the elections to the state assembly in Telangana region in 1957. This, in spite of the fact that the CPI had withdrawn the Telangana armed struggle so much was the impact of the antifeudal armed agrarian struggle on the people of Telangana.

Lastly, though a less important factor, mention must be made of the support of the local capitalists and a section of the traders who, even though are opposed to the Maoists in general, think that bringing them to power is the only guarantee for peace in Nepal. They fear that Maoists would once again take to arms if they are defeated in the polls.

Q: Now that the Maoists have come to power will they be able to carry out the promises made?

Azad: This is the most difficult question to answer. The immediate problem for the Maoists is to secure a coalition of forces that can meet the target of two-thirds majority in the Constituent Assembly in order to incorporate their radical reforms into the new Constitution. But to achieve two-thirds majority they have to rely on the reactionary comprador-feudal parties such as NC and social democratic UML. Needless to say, it is impossible to carry through the promised reforms with such a hotch-potch combination of forces. These Parties in the coalition will not be willing to be a party to the programme of the Maoists and will, moreover, try to subvert any radical changes which are aimed at curtailing their own class interests.

It is a fundamental tenet of Marxism that no radical restructuring of the system is possible without the militant mobilization of the vast masses into bitter class struggle. It is impossible to make genuine changes in the system through measures initiated "from above", i.e. through state decrees and laws. Whichever Party may be in power, not excluding the most radical Maoists, it can only make laws at best, but to implement these it is imperative to mobilize the masses and advance class struggle against exploiters and oppressors. Without this the liberation of the vast majority of poor is an impossible task. And for the CPN (M), even enacting

the much-promised laws will be an almost impossible task given the present coalition in the CA. No ruling class will give up power without putting up a bitter struggle and carrying out counter-revolutionary activities against the oppressed class. Hence the real, bitter and most cruel struggle for power will now unfold soon after the elections. The reactionaries will oppose every change tooth and nail. And, lacking a majority in the Constituent Assembly, the Maoists will be powerless to affect radical changes in the Constitution. Either they have to compromise and adjust with a section of the reactionary forces thereby sacrificing the class interests of the oppressed in whose interests they had come to power, or, they have to mobilize the people and intensify the struggle through all means, including armed insurrection, in order to implement genuine democracy and establish people's power.

There is no other alternative. We must not forget the experiences of Indonesia, Chile, Nicaragua and other countries where the Communist Parties had come to power but were either thrown out in counter-revolutionary coups accompanied by counter-revolutionary massacres of Communist cadres, or threw out the Party in so-called elections as in the case of Nicaragua. The experience of Nicaragua is very much relevant in the context of so-called multi-party democracy.

Q: How do you envisage the future scenario in Nepal? Will India and US imperialism adjust to the new reality that had emerged in Nepal and support the Maoist government or will they create hurdles?

Azad: We will be living in a fool's paradise if we think that imperialist America and expansionist India will be comfortable with the Maoists in power in Nepal or that they will adjust themselves to the new reality. Though they will have no other go but to continue diplomatic relations they will also continue to create an adverse situation for the new government if it does not obey their dictates. The fact is that the US rendered all help to its stooge parties in Nepal to defeat the Maoists. It tried its best to keep the monarchy alive as the King was the most reliable pillar for its rule by proxy in Nepal. And as for India, it received a slap in its face when its chief stooge—GP Koirala and his NC—tasted an ignominious defeat. Most of the stalwarts of NC were trounced and swept away in the flood of people's fury as their traitorous deals with India have by now become well-known to the Nepali people.

However, India has gained in another front. In the Tarai region it supported the two Madhesi parties which won a considerable number

of seats with the backing of India. India will use the Madhesi trump card to create disturbances in Nepal if the new regime does not toe its line. Already Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) led by Upendra Yadav has demanded that the Maoists should make their stand clear on the demand for Madhesi autonomy (*Ek Madhes Ek Prades*) and had asked the Maoists to discontinue their relations with international forums like the RIM and CCOMPOSA.

Both US and India will try by various means to bring the new government to toe their line. They can, for instance, hit at Nepal's belly—its economy—by paralyzing industrial production, blocking trade and supply lines thereby creating food shortages and shortage of consumer goods; in other words it can squeeze Nepal through an economic blockade. This it will do if it thinks the new regime is going too far. As it is, the situation in Nepal is already too delicate with almost 10 hours of loadshedding even in capital Kathmandu and a shortage of all essential commodities. Its powerful neighbours can alter the balance through economic blackmail which could lead to growth of social unrest and massive protests against the Maoists. Acute shortage of essential items and rising prices can lead to disenchantment with the fledgling regime and a dip in its popularity thereby giving an opportunity to the discredited parties to re-establish themselves. Thus the situation in Nepal will remain extremely delicate and unstable even though the Maoists had won an impressive electoral victory. Comrades Prachanda and Bhattarai know this well and hence they have been appealing for India's cooperation. They had gone on record saying that there will not be stability in Nepal without India's cooperation. The fact that Nepal is a small country sandwiched between two powerful and big neighbours—India and China—and that it is a target for the US imperialists makes the governance quite a difficult proposition. Hence we should not read too much from the electoral victory of the Maoists in Nepal.

Q: Then do you mean the electoral victory of the Maoists and their capture of state power through parliamentary means is a futile exercise, and that it cannot bring the desired radical change in the social system?

Azad: I don't exactly mean that. The control of state power, if they really can control, does give the Maoists a means to defend the gains accrued during the long years of revolutionary war and to affect radical changes in the social system. But this cannot be achieved through the type of state power that has fallen into the hands of the Maoists at the present juncture. In fact, even in classical revolutions as in China, where

the Communist revolutionaries had seized power through an armed revolution, Mao had warned of the danger of the rise of a new class by virtue of their positions in the state machinery. After Mao, the state had degenerated into a machinery of oppression and suppression of the vast masses. The lesson that we Communists had learnt from this experience is that the Party should concentrate on organizing the masses and mobilizing them to rebel against all types of injustice and exploitation perpetrated by state and Party bureaucrats.

In Nepal, where the Maoists have come to power in alliance with a section of the reactionary ruling classes, it is an even more urgent task of the Maoists to continue the class struggle by organizing the masses against all forms of exploitation and oppression. To the extent possible, the Maoists should use their relative control over the state to help the masses in their struggle for freedom, democracy and livelihood. But it would be an illusion to perceive the state as an instrument for bringing about a basic change in the lives of the people. This can be achieved through continuation of class struggle for which, the state can, at best, render some help.

Q: Sitaram Yechuri of the CPI(M), among several others, have said that the Maoists of India have to learn from Nepal's experiences and take the parliamentary road to come to power. What does your Party say in this regard?

Azad: Why Yechuri alone? Even the DGPs of Jharkhand, AP and other states where Maoist movement is strong had said that before. Leaders of other reactionary ruling class parties had been harping on the same theme ever since the revisionists began participating in parliament in our country. Some like former RAW chief Thorakan have said that the Maoist victory in Nepal would have a demonstration effect on the Maoists of India.

Firstly, those who say this forget that the situation in Nepal and India are completely different. In Nepal the immediate political task before the entire Nepali masses was a struggle against the monarchy which circumstance had brought about a measure of unity among the various parliamentary parties and broad sections of people. The King himself, with the active guidance and aid from US imperialism had created a situation where all forces had to close their ranks and wage a struggle for democracy. The fact that hardly two per cent of the Nepali population supported the monarchy, as revealed by a 2008 Survey report, shows the basis for such a united struggle of the Nepalese people and

the CPN(M) utilized such a situation. In India, it is a fight against the semi-colonial, semi-feudal social system of which the parliamentary system is part and parcel. All the major parliamentary parties are representatives of the comprador-feudal classes, obey the dictates of imperialists, and hence stand in the counter-revolutionary camp. Here the immediate task is struggle for land, livelihood and liberation for the vast majority of the masses.

Even in Nepal, to achieve these, class struggle has to be waged and parliament can do hardly anything to mitigate the sufferings of the masses. Now with the exit of the King, when the real questions confronting the people have come to the fore, it will not take much time for them to realize this universal truth.

Yechuris, Karats and Buddhadebs have over 40 years of experience in the Parliamentary pig-sty. But what basic changes have they brought in the system? Their parliamentary cretinism has done no good for the masses. The rich have grown richer and poor poorer even in the states where these revisionists have been in power. Without their support the ruling UPA government headed by Manmohan Singh would not have dared to carry out the anti-people policies. They had correctly dubbed themselves as "a barking dog that doesn't bite". They agree that they are powerless to do anything more than acting as "speed-breakers", as described by one of their spokespersons, in the path of the anti-people onslaught by the UPA government at the Centre. The fact is, they are not merely speed-breakers. They actually act as political brokers intermediating between the vast masses and the reactionary rulers trying to bring about class harmony in place of class struggle. In the states where they are directly in power they have become no less exploiters and oppressors than the Congress and the BJP. Singur and Nandigram are their laboratories for carrying through their pro-imperialist, pro-comprador big business policies. And in this they have become even more brutal thanks to the vast army of social fascist gangs at their disposal. These political prostitutes spin one theory after another such as "the bigger evil versus the lesser evil", that they have no power to stop the SEZs across the country, unless, of course, they come to power at the Centre to justify their hobnobbing with Congress at one time, TDP at another and such antics. But in the same breath they hypocritically say that without SEZs, privatization, foreign investment, etc., West Bengal and Kerala cannot go ahead with industrialization, and so on.

No wonder, imperialist and comprador capital is very impressed by the performance of the Indian Left. NRI industrialist Lord Swaraj Paul, who is the chairman of the Caparo Group which is setting up a component unit in Singur, was all praise for the CPI (M) and its leader Buddhadeb when he visited West Bengal as the head of a delegation of the United Kingdom branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. These social fascists have now become the blue-eyed boys of the World Bank, Tatas, Salems, Swaraj Pauls and the people of India will fare no better under a CPI (M) government at the Centre.

There is little wonder they have been asking the Indian Maoists to follow suit. Our Party firmly believes that a basic change in the system cannot be achieved through the parliamentary path but through class struggle. In our country this takes the form of armed agrarian revolutionary war. We, of course, do not reject other forms of struggle and organization, besides armed struggle and armed organization, and you would have realized this if you are a keen observer of our movement. This is of no consequence to our Mr. Yechuri who only dreams of seats in the Parliament like any other ruling class party. We, on the other hand, invite everyone opposed to imperialism, feudalism, comprador bureaucrat capitalism and the neo-liberal policies of the reactionary ruling classes of India, to come forward to wage a united militant struggle instead of whiling their time in an impotent anti-people Parliament and acting as lobbyists and power brokers. For revisionist chieftains like Yechuri, who are bogged down neck-deep into the morass of parliamentarism and bourgeois lobbying, such a revolutionary alternative is naturally an anathema.

Q: Prachanda had earlier said that he would be the first President of Republican Nepal but a few days ago he changed tack and declared that he would head the ministry. Do you think it is correct for anyone in a Communist Party to be the head of the government, chief of the Party and army at the same time?

Azad: We too had seen his statements in this regard. He still says he wants to be the President if it is acceptable to all i.e. by consensus. As such, the present Constitution of Nepal has no provision for an Executive President. It will take another two years for the Constituent Assembly to adopt the newly drafted Constitution and to arrive at a final decision on this. Hence comrade Prachanda might have reconsidered his earlier decision and decided to become the Prime Minister.

Now the question is not whether the Party chief should be President or Prime Minister. We have a different opinion altogether. We think that the Party chief should be neither. He/she should concentrate on developing class struggle and not get immersed in the administration of the state. If we believe that the role of the Party is to continue class struggle until the final stage of Communism then we can appreciate our viewpoint. The history of revolutions had shown that once the Party has led the revolution to final victory it also lays the basis for the rise of a new class of Party and state bureaucrats. When the Party and state completely coalesce then it will be terribly difficult to fight the rise of bureaucratic class and to mobilize the people against the wrongs done by the state. Hence it is very much essential that the party leaders remain with the masses, organize and guide them against each and every form of exploitation and oppression. In Nepal this becomes even more crucial as the Maoists have to share power with a section of the comprador-feudal classes.

Q: Prachanda and Bhattarai had declared that they are willing to invite FDI and to create a business-friendly environment in Nepal. They also said that they would encourage capitalism. Is it correct for a Maoist party to invite foreign investment and develop capitalism?

Azad: Firstly we must understand the reality of Nepal. It is an extremely backward, semi-feudal country that lacks the minimum infrastructure and industrial production. It is a part of the Fourth World, if we can call it so. The UN has placed it in the category of Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Hence the first task in Nepal would be to liberate the vast masses from the feudal clutches and develop industry on that basis. As regards developing capitalism in Nepal there need not be any objection from revolutionaries as long as it is national capitalism and is properly regulated to meet the needs of the masses and is directed towards the growth of the internal economy and not for exports or for serving the imperialists.

But if the encouragement is for inflow of foreign capital it will be detrimental to the interests of the country in the long run. The foreign capital would begin to control the economy of Nepal even if the Maoists are the major partners in the government just as it had done till now. The Maoists should encourage indigenous capital and help its growth while gradually eliminating foreign capital. Both Prachanda and Mr Bhattarai had a meeting with businessmen under the aegis of the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI)

as soon as the results became clear. There is pressure from businessmen for an investment-friendly environment, maximisation of profit, tax reforms, new flexible labour laws and a positive industrial policy.

In the past Maoists had opposed private institutions in health and education sectors. But now Prachanda has promised private-public partnership will be encouraged in health and education sectors. Mr Bhattarai has promised to remove whatever hurdles that may arise in the private sector. We have been hearing reports of talks between the Maoist leaders and the officials of World Bank. If these reports are true then it will have dangerous consequences on the future of Nepal. Depending on FDI and adopting pragmatic approach towards industrialization of Nepal in the name of overcoming the country's economic backwardness will only lead to opposite results and strengthen the hold of the imperialists.

Q: How do you foresee the future fraternal relations between your Party and the CPN (M)? Given the fact that the Indian state does not want the Maoists of Nepal to maintain relations with the Indian Maoists, and the demands by MJF in this regard is a clear indication of growing Indian pressure, will fraternal relations between the two Parties continue as before?

Azad: We believe and desire that fraternal relations between the CPI (Maoist) and CPN (Maoist) should continue as before. As long as both the Parties stand firmly committed to proletarian internationalism international pressures and internal pressures will not come in the way.

Of course, there is bound to be increasing pressure from various quarters on the Maoists of Nepal to cut off their relations with other Maoist Parties. Particularly India and the US will exert utmost pressure in this regard. We do understand the complexity of the situation. However, we must keep in mind that every Communist Party is a detachment of the world proletariat. And any proletarian Party will place national interests subordinate to the interests of the world proletariat. Comrade Prachanda had correctly said that ideological ties between the two Parties will remain intact. And we believe the ideological debates and discussions have to continue. The various international fora such as CCOMPOSA should continue with their aims and activities in spite of the new situation that had arisen.

Q: What do you have to say about comrade Prachanda's comment in his interview to The Hindu that "for the Indian Maoist party, its leaders and cadres, these efforts of ours provide some new material to study, to think about and go ahead in a new way. Our efforts provide a reference point."

Azad: [The original CPI (Maoist) Information Bulletin article seems to have accidentally omitted Azad's answer to this question. – BannedThought.net ed.]

Q: Finally, is there anything you want to say to the people of Nepal and the CPN (M)?

Azad: Our Party, CPI (Maoist), sends its revolutionary greetings on behalf of our CC, entire Party rank and file, and the people of India to the CPN (Maoist) and the people of Nepal for their categorical rejection of monarchic rule and the comprador-feudal Parties through the elections to the Constituent Assembly. We wish to apprise them that the real battle for the transformation of their lives and the life of Nepal begins now. Lack of vigilance even for a moment could prove dear to the Maoists as well as the people of Nepal as vultures within and outside their country are only too eager to maintain the existing social order and itching to destroy all the gains achieved by the people and the Maoists. We wish to remind the CPN (M) and the people of Nepal to bear in mind the warning we had given in November 2006 when they decided to become part of the interim government. I repeat what we said then: "The agreement by the Maoists to become part of the interim government in Nepal cannot transform the reactionary character of the state machinery that serves the exploiting ruling classes and imperialists. The state can be the instrument in the hands of either the exploiting classes or the proletariat but it cannot serve the interests of both these bitterly-contending classes. It is the fundamental tenet of Marxism that no basic change in the social system can be brought about without smashing the state machine. Reforms from above cannot bring any qualitative change in the exploitative social system however democratic the new Constitution might seem to be, and even if the Maoists become an important component of the government. It is sheer illusion to think that a new Nepal can be built without smashing the existing state."

Our Party hopes that CPN (M) will take heed of our fraternal advice and continue the class struggle to achieve real liberation of Nepal from imperialism, feudalism, Indian expansionism and advance towards socialism and Communism. It has no other go but to continue the people's war to achieve the above aim as it is impossible to carry out basic transformation in the social system through the coalition of forces that have come to power at the present juncture.

Our Party will wage uncompromising struggle against the machinations and expansionist designs, the intervention and bullying

and acts of subversion of the Indian ruling classes in Nepal and assure that we shall stand firmly by the side of the CPN(M) and the people of Nepal in their fight for genuine freedom and independence. It is only the victory of the revolution in India that can ensure real equality and mutual respect between the two countries. And our Party will step up its efforts to advance the revolution in our country to its ultimate victory.

Q: Before departing I would like to have a clarification regarding some recent reports in the media that the spokesperson of the CC, CPI(Maoist), Azad, and his wife Rama had died in an encounter with the police in the Eturnagaram forest in Warangal district of AP. So, after all, this had turned out to be just a rumour!

Azad: Need I to say anything more on this when you are face-to-face with the supposedly dead person? I only wonder at the incapacity of the media to verify facts before publishing. Every lie that is churned out by the media acquires a certain measure of credibility in the eyes of the people at least for some time. They create confusion and mislead public opinion. With regard to the so-called encounter that was supposed to have led to my death the first lies that were circulated in the media, though these were not repeated in the later news reports, were enough to create a dent in some people's minds. Even when the facts eventually come out it would be too late to correct the impressions created. Many people still think that Azad is dead. In last Tuesday's (April 22) Indian Express, for instance, there was a centre page article by former chief of Research & Analysis Wing, Mr. P.K. Hormis Tharakan who wrote that "CPI (Maoist) spokesperson and CC member, Azad (Gajarla Saraiah) and his wife Rama were killed in an encounter in Eturnagaram forest". This was in the context of his analysis of the electoral results in Nepal. One can imagine how great is the impact of news reports appearing in the media which can easily carry away an experienced senior intelligence officer of the Indian establishment! On the other hand, this also shows how raw is the brain of a former chief of RAW!!

Q: Wasn't Gajarla Saraiah alias Azad a member of the CC and CMC?

Azad: No. Even that is not a fact. The fact is that comrade Gajarla Saraiah (also known as Azad and Raghu) was a member of NT Special Zonal Committee until 2004 after which he was transferred to Maharashtra where he served as a member of the state committee and secretary of Gondia-Balaghat divisional committee until August 2006. He was never a member of the CC or the CMC as propagated by the media. He and his wife Rama were picked up by the APSIB from

Kolhapur town in Maharashtra and brutally murdered after torturing them cruelly. Their bodies were thrown in the forest in Warangal and, as usual, the notorious SIB of AP projected this cold-blooded murder as an encounter. They also tried to make it appear that he was a senior member of the CC and CMC. The police in AP know very well that both these comrades were out of the state for over four years and yet had the audacity to claim that they were killed in Warangal forests. That is the power these licensed goondas of the state enjoy in a country that is said to be a Republic having a Constitution. Every encounter killing—and these run into thousands over the years—is a telling vindication of the Maoist thesis that Indian democracy is formal and fake. The lawlessness of the police and security forces had never come into question by the Courts and not a single officer in AP had been indicted for murder in spite of carrying out over three thousand murders in the past two decades.

On V Prabhakaran

On the 18th of May the Sinhala chauvinist Sri Lankan army claimed to have shot dead Velupillai Prabhakaran, the Tamil nationalist leader who led the war for the liberation of Tamil nation in Sri Lanka for over three decades. However, the fascist Rajapakse regime of Sri Lanka made the official confirmation of the death of Prabhakaran only the next day.

The death of Prabhakaran and several other leaders of LTTE is the culmination of the genocidal war unleashed by the Sinhala chauvinist ruling classes of Sri Lanka against the Tamil nation—a war that had taken thousands of Tamil lives, destroyed the towns and villages inhabited by Tamil nationals, displaced lakhs of people, and turned the entire northern region inhabited by Tamil nationals into a grave-yard. In this genocidal war the fascist Rajapakse government was assisted and guided by the various imperialist powers, and by the big powers of Asia—India and China. It is after arming itself to the teeth with material assistance from these powers that Rajapakse regime unilaterally broke the cease-fire of 2002 signed with LTTE and began its brutal onslaught in July 2006. It had unleashed aerial bombardment and indiscriminate destruction of the Tamil areas, carried out gruesome genocide, and created an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. The fascist army had bombed schools and hospitals, besides residential houses and offices of LTTE. The indiscriminate bombing on LTTE bases and civilian people had created a situation where people had no alternative but to flee the war-zone. And this was the goal of the Sri Lankan rulers who, like the Israeli Zionist racists who had

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occupied and settled Jews on Palestine territories, want to settle the Sinhalese citizens permanently in Tamil territories and change the demography of the region.

While this is the fact the neo-Nazi Rajapakse regime is falsely claiming that his army had been continuing the operations only against the LTTE to save the Tamil civilians. All the major powers in the world are accomplices in the genocide of the Tamil people and the murder of Prabhakaran and other leaders of the LTTE. The betrayal by renegades like Col. Karuna and Pillayan, has played no less a role in the setback to Tamil cause. They had shamelessly joined hands with Rajapakse—the chief enemy of the Tamils for a few crumbs.

The reactionary rulers of Sri Lanka, India and various imperialist powers and their servile media have been describing Prabhakaran as a terrorist and LTTE as a terrorist outfit. Every national liberation struggle in history had to bear with such epithets hurled by the colonialists and their servile lackeys. The fact is for over three decades Prabhakaran and the LTTE he led waged one of the longest and fiercest wars for national liberation in South Asia. LTTE and Prabhakaran had been a terror not only to the Sri Lankan rulers but also to the Indian ruling classes who had sent their Army into Sri Lanka in 1987 to suppress the LTTE in the name of peace-keeping force but had to withdraw it after suffering huge losses of over 3000 troops in just three years.

Moreover, the LTTE had also shot dead Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 for having sent the IPKF. How was it possible for the Sri Lankan Army to defeat the powerful LTTE and capture the entire territories held by the LTTE? Every organization waging a national liberation war or a revolutionary war has to study this seriously. One of the reasons is the complacent attitude on the part of LTTE after having captured and retained its power over the Tamil territories for a considerable period. From a guerrilla force it gradually assumed the character of a standing army waging positional war. Hence its forces became easy targets for the enemy who had relied heavily on aerial bombardment of entire territories followed by occupation. Another reason was the lack of a consistent policy of uniting various sections of the Tamil people and organizations and building a broad-based front against the Sri Lankan state. Loss of the Eastern Province was the first great setback, and betrayal by renegades like Karuna and Pillayan who had joined hands with the ruling party and assisted in identifying and unleashing attacks on LTTE bases is also an important factor leading to the setback.

The CC, CPI (Maoist), offers its humble homage to Prabhakaran and the thousands of LTTE leaders and cadres who had laid down their lives fighting heroically until their last breath for the liberation of their nation. The aspirations of the Tamil nation cannot be crushed through brutal fascist means. Learning lessons from the setback, the Tamil nation will rise up again and wage a more united and militant struggle to achieve its genuine liberation. We stand by the Tamil people's demand for a separate sovereign Tamil Eelam and pledge to extend our support and solidarity.

On Patel Sudhakar Reddy & Venkataiah

Comrade Patel Sudhakar Reddy alias Suryam alias Vikas, member of the central committee of CPI (Maoist), was arrested on May 22 from Nashik city in Maharashtra by the APSIB, was brutally tortured and murdered on 23rd night. As usual, the AP police, under the direction of fascist YSR government, floated the story of an encounter having taken place in Tadwai forest in Warangal district in which comrade Suryam and district committee member comrade Venkatayya were said to have been killed. The police claimed that one AK-47 rifle and a 9mm pistol were recovered from the state along with three kit bags. Comrade Sudhakar Reddy was being followed by APSIB since at least a week prior to his arrest. He was kept under watch when he went to the shelter maintained by comrade Venkatayya in Nashik. The police waited with the hope of abducting some more top leaders of the Party but when they realized that Suryam became suspicious of being followed, he was promptly abducted along with comrade Venkatayya and both were shot dead after severe torture. These murders are yet another instance of the so-called rule of law preached by YS Reddy, Manmohan Singh, Chidambaram and the top police brass.

Comrade Suryam, hailing from Mahbbobnagar district in south Telengana, is a senior leader of the CPI (Maoist) who began his revolutionary life as a student leader of Radical Students Union in early '80s. Responding to the call of the Party to build a zone of armed agrarian revolutionary struggle in North Telangana and Dandakaranya with the goal of transforming them into base areas, he went to

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Eturnagaram-Mahadevpur forest in North Telengana in 1983 and worked as a commander of the guerrilla squad. Later he was transferred to Gadchiroli district where he worked until 1988. He was shifted to the work of purchasing arms for equipping the speedily growing armed guerrilla squads. He played a crucial role in supplying arms to the Party but was arrested in 1992 in Bangalore based on a tip-off from an arrested person. He remained an exemplary communist leader in jail where he spent almost seven years. He was released in 1998 and was taken into the AP state committee in the state Plenum held in 1999. He served as its secretariat member from 2001 to mid-2003 when he was transferred to other work allotted by the CC. He played a prominent role in building the movement in Dandakaranya in its initial years and later in the state of Andhra Pradesh. He was taken into the CC in 2005 and as a member of the CC he made significant contribution in formulating the central policies and plans.

Comrade Venakatayya hails from Cheryala mandal in Warangal district and was actively involved in the student movement in AP for almost a decade and served as a leader of the All India Revolutionary Student Federation in AP. He was shifted to technical work in 2004 and has been working in the technical field since then.

The martyrdom of these comrades is a great loss to the Indian revolution. The CC, CPI (Maoist), pays its red revolutionary homage to comrade Sudhakar Reddy and Venkatayya and vows to fulfill their revolutionary dreams of a classless society. The people of India, particularly the people of AP, will never forget the great service these comrades had rendered to the Indian revolution. The Party will certainly avenge the martyrdom of these comrades by intensifying and expanding the ongoing people's war, establish base areas in the vast countryside of the country, transform the PLGA into PLA and advance the Indian revolution to its final victory.

On the Election Boycott Tactic of the Maoists

In his article entitled “The Maoists, Elections, Boycotts and Violence” (EPW, 2 May 2009), Sumanta Banerjee (SB) makes an attempt to analyse the boycott call issued by the Communist Party of India (Maoist) [CPI (Maoist)] in the recently held Lok Sabha elections. This is based on the “Interview” of Azad, the spokesperson of the Central Committee of CPI (Maoist), which appeared in Maoist Information Bulletin No 7. SB begins his article with the following comment:

The Lok Sabha elections were inaugurated with a fanfare of bomb blasts, killing of security personnel and poll officials, burning of polling stations, 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 SB was carried away by the propaganda let loose by sensation-craving commercial media shows how powerful the latter is in moulding and influencing even saner minds. There are two fabrications in SB’s above-quoted remark. Allow me to briefly explain. Trumped-Up Story The first untruth – or distortion, if one would like to call it so – is the so-called hijacking of the train. Either to sensationalise in order to add some colour to 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 Mughalsarai at Hehegada station in

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Latehar district of Jharkhand for four hours is made into a sensational hijack! If one news channel flashes the news thus, no other such channel wants to be left behind and the story goes on and on, nonstop for 24, 48 or even more hours, depending on the interest it generates among the viewers. Who first propagated this sensational news is not known but in no time it spread like wildfire with every news channel and newspaper jumping into the fray and making even independent thinkers like SB 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. From where had the Maoists hijacked the train? Had they diverted it from its usual route by forcing the driver or guard? If not, how could one describe this as hijacking? Let us ask SB: If stopping a train by hundreds of people squatting on the railway tracks is termed as hijacking, then, what term would you use to describe the seizure and forcible diversion of a train by a handful of armed people?

It must be emphasised that the so-called hijacking by protestors who stopped the train by squatting on the tracks for four hours is not related in any way 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 organised as part of the bandh demanding a judicial enquiry into the brutal, cold-blooded murders of five village youth by the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel in Badhania village that falls under Barwadih PS in Latehar district. The five youth were picked up within an hour after the mine blast triggered by Maoist guerrillas killed two CRPF men on the morning of the 16th of April. The villagers were shot dead within two hours after the CRPF had lost its men in the ambush by Maoists. The fake encounter generated widespread protests throughout the state for almost a week in some places. 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 fallout of this brutal incident. Thus, at least now it should be clear that the train was held up in Hehegada by unarmed protestors to object against the fake encounter, and not, let us repeat, for boycott of polls.

SB appears to be quite relieved that the Maoists had physically targeted 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). But here again he displays a sense of cynicism

and states this as if it was the first time that the Maoists had spared the voters. In fact, even 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 in Kasamsur in Manpur area of Kanker district in Chhattisgarh (Dandakaranya). In fact, our Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee had tendered an apology immediately after the unfortunate incident and reassured the people that it will take all precautions that such unfortunate incidents would not occur in future. Our statement was covered in the local media widely. A serious review of the mistake was also made by the concerned committee. While expressing our condolences to the families of the five polling officials who died in the landmine explosion, we made it very clear that it is not our policy to harm polling staff. Even after this it is surprising that SB includes polling officials in the list of our targets.

The Main Questions Now taking up the main questions raised by SB, is it correct to conclude that the “vast majority of the voters are not ready for boycotting elections”? But, is it true that voters had gone in “large numbers (often representing 50 to 60% of the electorate in these areas)”? Is it a fact that there has been “moderate to high percentage of polling in Naxalite areas in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Bihar and Jharkhand”? SB further tries to paint a picture of the Maoist party attempting to enforce a boycott over an unwilling population that has enthusiasm for casting their votes. 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. Let us take up these questions in turn. How far is the contention of SB that the vast majority of people are not ready for boycotting elections true? Does SB know the facts regarding the actual percentage of votes polled in the Maoist strongholds about which he asserts so authoritatively? Did he tour 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/police officials, and faithfully represented by the commercial 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 put forth not only by police officials but also people like K Balagopal as seen in his critique of the

novel, Raago, where he cynically concludes that the interests, aspirations and goals of an adivasi girl like *Raago* are different from those of the party and hence one cannot expect people like her to continue in the revolution until the end. The statistics are deliberately distorted to present such a picture to show that the party is isolated and uses force to obstruct the people when the latter go against the decisions and goals set by the party.

SB's conclusion sounds subjective and biased and hence ridiculous, particularly after seeing the apathy, disillusionment and boycott as a major trend by a significant chunk of the population in the 15th Lok Sabha elections. In fact, never before had boycott become such a potent weapon in the hands of the people as during the Elections 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, multinational corporations, media foundations, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) carried out non-stop propaganda about the virtues of democracy, the sanctity of the vote, how not casting the vote was tantamount to aiding criminals win, and so on. There was no end to web sites 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 corrupt elements, and to elect the virtuous, as if there were virtuous people left in the parliamentary pigsty.

The reactionary rulers have grasped the dangerous trend of boycott emerging throughout the country in the 2009 elections – a trend that SB failed to recognise. 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 16 April, 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% votes polled in Gaya district. “Despite Red Terror 50% Polling in Jharkhand” crowed another paper. “Ballot Wins against Bullet” ran another headline. There was no limit to such hollow claims and empty phrases to prove that the so-called democracy got the upper-hand in this sham drama. The Chief Election Commissioner-designate Navin

Chawla howled that “democracy triumphed over Naxalism on 16 April”. Despite such appeals to the voters by all and sundry, hardly 50% turned up at the polling booths. 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 even less. Then on whose behalf is SB speaking? If he comes to a conclusion based on the 43% who voted in Mumbai, then how undemocratic would his stand be for neglecting the majority of 57% who had refused to be drawn to the polling booths even when popular actors and NGOs engaged in intense campaigning calling on them to vote? He agrees that people had indeed used boycott as a form of protest relating it to their local issues.

Yet, he 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 cast their votes but not because they are “proud of their democratic right and hopeful of some change through the electoral process” as imagined by SB. What percentage of the electorate actually exercised its vote and how much of the vote was rigged? What percentage of the voting population voted out of compulsion, material and other incentives, caste, communal, ethnic, regional and other factors? And, how many voters were forced into voting due to threats and intimidation by gun-toting khaki goons or local rowdies? If all these are taken into account what would be the percentage of voters who actually exercised their franchise freely and of their own accord? Voting in Naxalite Areas 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”, where did SB get his figures from? If he goes through the local media in each of these states instead of relying on the Delhi-centric press, 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 re-poll, over a 1,000 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 No 7. In Anthagadh constituency, polling personnel did not go to the polling centre in Partap Pur, Chota Pakhanjur, Chote Bethiya, and Aakmetta. About 1,50,000 voters in 176 villages spread across 13 Lok Sabha constituencies in the state of Jharkhand boycotted the polls this time. In Lalgarh, in West Medinipur district of West Bengal, no votes were cast in several booths. Of the 30,000 voters in Lalgarh, not more than 100 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 successful boycotts or nominal polling runs long. In Andhra Pradesh, it is true there has been a setback to the revolutionary movement. No wonder, there has been an increase in the polling percentage. But even in the best of times rigging and voting at gunpoint ensure that in the villages considered to be the strongest bases of the Maoists the polling percentage would go up to even 80 to 90%. Deployment of the police can ensure a high percentage of polling even in Maoist strongholds. And in the native villages of the party leaders, the percentages go up to 80 to 90%. All the political parties are one in ensuring such an outcome to show that people do not heed the call of the Maoists and that democracy had won. In the recent elections, the headlines in most newspapers and the electronic media show how paranoid the rulers are about the boycott call of the Maoists and their desperation to prove that democracy was, after all, the victor. SB must do some homework before venturing to make sweeping comments and conclusions that people in Naxalite areas also do not heed the call given by the Maoist party.

What exactly he is driving at is not very clear. But from his remarks and the tone and tenor of his arguments it seems he wants the party to contest the 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. He naively asks: 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? He strongly believes that the boycott call should not be given as the majority of the people are not ready. 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?

He agrees that our party does not use force and intimidate the voters and hence gives scope for “villagers in their strongholds to cast their

votes without fear, instead of heeding to their boycott call". And hence he concludes: "This should be an eye-opener to the CPI(Maoist) leadership". We think that 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 People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) makes impressive gains and wins 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 upperhand over the enemy in a significant area, one cannot imagine people coming out in huge numbers 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 Parliament and the contesting political parties. Learning from Our Mistakes We welcome any frank and meaningful criticism of our line, policies and practice such as SB'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 acceptable 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 by various sections of the poor all over India. Moreover, the problems in the advanced areas and plains, and in the urban areas are of a different nature and we admit our party has not been able to address the problems of the poor living there. Thus, whatever has been achieved in a few pockets of the backward areas does not provide a wide-ranging viable alternative model by itself. A lot more has to be done to convince the people about a viable alternative model.

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 the 16 April, SB 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 paranoiac Maoist guerrillas who suspect them of being police agents" based on concocted police reports or the biased reports in the media. 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, the above allegation needs some explanation from the party. We 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 a higher party committee; those responsible are censured, lessons are drawn, and measures are initiated to rectify such mistakes and weaknesses. The hue and cry of the police, the mainstream political parties and the media over the punishments to police agents should be seen in the correct perspective.

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 Andhra Pradesh. Learning from the lesson, we have been more cautious and have succeeded in breaking the 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. Do We Disrupt 'Development'? Let us now briefly deal with SB's critique of our approach to the state's "development" activity. He writes:

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. 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" is 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 (known to the 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 is 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 roadbuilding 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 as they provide fortified shelters to the CRPF and other state 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 gonds – and now their very existence is at stake due to the so-called development that SB is worried about. We oppose only such development projects that harm the interests of the adivasis, 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. Boycott and Democratic Rights And finally, coming to the key question posed by SB: 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 the two rights. 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 give the voter a chance 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 that we do not attempt to stop the process of election but mobilise 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 organise 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-fulfilment of promises, or because they see the futility of the very system of parliamentary democracy and the drama of elections.

Interview on Government's Military Offensive

In this Interview, Comrade Azad answers a whole range of questions dealing with the current centrally-planned massive offensive against the Maoists and the counter plans of the Maoists, the question of state violence and revolutionary counter-violence, the issue of Talks with the government, the real meaning of Chidambaram's campaign for recapturing territory from the Maoists, and several misconceptions regarding: Maoist stand on development, on the charges of extortion, on recruitment of child soldiers, on the beheading of Francis Induvar, and so on.

Q: There is lot of talk about an unprecedented massive military offensive due to begin anytime now. How will your Party confront it?

Azad: The fact is, the unprecedented massive offensive has already begun. In the Chintagufa area in Dantewada district almost 4000 police and central forces led by around 600 elite commandos of the anti-Naxal CoBRA force had carried out their biggest-ever counter revolutionary operation called Operation Green Hunt in the third week of September. Some media reporters described it as Operation Red Hunt. Whatever is the name, it was the first major attempt by the central and state forces to wrest a part of the territory from the hands of the oppressed people led by the Maoists. This operation was a sort of a rehearsal for the forthcoming centrally-planned country-wide simultaneous offensive on all our guerrilla zones. When the enemy attack took place near Singanamadugu village, our forces present there were hardly 50 or 60 in number. But they fought heroically, and successfully repulsed the attack by a superior force, by

Interview

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totally relying on the people. It was the people who gave us the information regarding each and every movement of the enemy force. Hence our guerrillas could deal the first biggest blow to these so-called CoBRAs who were specially trained in jungle warfare and sent to wage an unjust war against the Maoist revolutionaries. Six of their men including two assistant commandants—one from Manipur and another from UP—were wiped out in the real battle. These brave CoBRAs demonstrated their heroism and courage by murdering seven unarmed adivasi villagers, including two aged men and a woman, and burning four villages. Not a single Maoist was killed contrary to the false claims of the police that 22 Maoists were killed. Our forces chased them for about 10 kilometers. The people of the entire area stood with us in this counter-attack on the thugs sent by Manmohan-Chidambaram's khadi gang at the Centre and Raman Singh's saffron gang in Chhattisgarh. This heroic resistance by a handful of Maoist guerrillas underscores the superiority of the tactics of guerrilla war and the massive mass support enjoyed by the Maoists. It demonstrates the ability of our Maoist guerrillas to confront and defeat a numerically far superior enemy force equipped with all the sophisticated weaponry, aerial support and what not, by relying on the sea of people in which we swim like fish.

In the second week of October once again Chidambaram's men unleashed another massive offensive by amassing 10,000 men in Gadchiroli district in Maharashtra with MI 17 choppers surveying the area from the skies. It was as if an army from an enemy country was waging war on the Indian people. In the face of it our forces had successfully carried out a massive political campaign against the farce of the Assembly elections that were held on October 13 in Maharashtra.

"All our plans, policies, strategy and tactics will be based entirely on the active involvement of the vast masses of people in this war of self-defence. The enemy class cannot decimate us without decimating the entire population in the regions we control. And if it dares to go into an all-out war of extermination of the tribal population the entire socio-political scene in India will undergo a fundamental shift and will witness a radical realignment of class forces."

Here I shall not go into the concrete details of our precise tactics to confront and defeat the unprecedented, massive, brazen offensive on the most oppressed people being unleashed by the Indian ruling classes on behalf of the imperialists and the comprador big business houses. I can only confidently say one thing for the present: All our plans, policies,

strategy and tactics will be based entirely on the active involvement of the vast masses of people in this war of self-defence. The enemy class cannot decimate us without decimating the entire population in the regions we control. And if it dares to go into an all-out war of extermination of the tribal population the entire socio-political scene in India will undergo a fundamental shift and will witness a radical realignment of class forces. All peace-loving, democratic, patriotic, secular forces, all the downtrodden sections of the society will polarize into one pole while the most reactionary, anti-people, authoritarian, traitorous, jingoist counter-revolutionary forces will end up at the opposite pole. Such a polarization is bound to take place as the war advances and the enemy's mercenary forces attempt to turn central and eastern India into a graveyard. The war-mongers will be isolated and will face unprecedented social and political crises. However, on behalf of our Party, PLGA, revolutionary mass organisations and organs of people's democratic power, I can assure the people of our country that with their support, direct as well as indirect, we shall deal crushing blows on the enemy's mercenary forces and defeat their plans to hand over these regions to the international and domestic bandicoots.

Q: But your forces had killed around 20 policemen, most of them C-60 commandos, in Laheri in Gadchiroli district on the eve of the elections in Maharashtra. Is it not due to incidents like this which is provoking the government to deploy huge forces in these areas?

Azad: No, no. It is the other way round. It is because of the indescribable atrocities perpetrated by the specially trained anti-Naxal forces that we are compelled to carry out such attacks. If they do not harass the poor, unarmed adivasi population; if they do not arrest, torture, murder them, and rape their women; if they do not engage in destroying the property, burn villages and crops of the adivasis, if they do not indulge in cold-blooded murders of abducted Maoists and declare them dead in so-called encounters, then why will our forces undertake such attacks? How can this be a provocation? You know who the C-60 commandos are? They are specifically formed as an elite anti-Naxal force whose one and only task is to kill Naxalites and Naxal sympathisers. If no Naxalite is found they pounce on hapless adivasi villagers, arrest them, torture them, and murder them. And adivasi women have become their objects of rape. You might have heard of the heart-chilling story of a 13-year-old girl from Pavarvel village in Dhanora tehsil who was gang-raped by 5 or 6 commandos led by the notorious Munnasingh Thakur in

March this year. Or the case of the gang-rape and murder of 52-year-old Mynabai from Kosimi village by several policemen in Gyrapatti PS in the same Danora tehsil in May last year. For the directors of this war on adivasis-Manmohan Singh, Chidambaram, GK Pillai and others-the gang-rapes of a 13-year-old girl or a 52-year-old woman are only collateral damage in their larger war for capturing the region to plunder its wealth. These rapists are immune from the "rule of law" advocated by Chidambaram & Co. Even after this poor little adivasi girl had identified Munna Singh Thakur by name, you know! Notwithstanding such solid evidence, the loud-speakers of the reactionary rulers- Arnab Goswamys, Chandan Mitras and others-had never bothered to raise a voice against such crimes against humanity perpetrated by these brutes. And what is worse, they even venture to describe these rapists as "brave commandos"! So what these brave commandos are doing in Dhanora tehsil is nothing but creating terror in the hearts of the people. That is why we wiped out around 50 policemen, most of them C-60 commandos, in the past eight months since February. No right-thinking citizen of this country would condemn these heroic offensives by our PLGA against murderers and rapists in police uniform against whom no criminal case will ever be filed under this system and no "rule of law" applies to them whatever be their inhuman crimes. We boldly and unequivocally declare to the world, notwithstanding the shrill cries of the reactionary rulers and their henchmen about our blood-thirstiness and our 'senseless violence', that we shall punish these mercenaries if they continue to indulge in such crimes against the downtrodden masses. Every act of ours is in defence of the poor adivasis who are oppressed and suppressed by these policemen who have created extreme insecurity for the people residing in large parts of Gadchiroli.

Our attack in Laheri should be seen as part of our fight against state terrorism. The more such forces enter our areas, the more they will become vulnerable to such attacks. We will continue to wipe out the C-60 commandos, the CRPF, the BSF and other forces who are sent to the area to unleash terror. For your information, I can confidently say that there are hardly any violent incidents in Gadchiroli on the part of the Maoists this year except the attacks on the C-60 commandos and the cruel policemen. Unfortunately some civil rights organizations and well-meaning intellectuals too had fallen into the trap of the reactionary ruling class propaganda that we are killing innocent policemen some of whom are even adivasis. If they really bother about the escalating violence and sincerely wish to put an end to it, they should question the government

as to why it was setting up more and more special anti-Naxal commando forces and spreading terror in the adivasi-inhabited regions; why it is recruiting the local adivasis into the anti-Naxal police force and making them into cannon-fodder in the war against their very people; why it is setting up informers from the poor tribals by threatening them or bribing them with huge sums of money. They should ask where is the law & order problem from the Maoists who had actually stopped the illegal felling of forest trees, stopped the exploitation by the forest officials, forest contractors, timber smugglers, government bureaucrats, police officials, money lenders, non-adivasi landlords who had taken over tribal land against the provisions of the Indian constitution. They should ask themselves whether Maoists had done good or bad by securing a massive increase in the rate for plucking tendu leaves, cutting bamboo, laying roads, selling the minor forest produce and so on. And they should expose and oppose the conspiracy of the government in sending massive repressive force armed with the most sophisticated weapons against the Maoists. We appeal to all peace-loving citizens of the country to objectively see for themselves who has been creating violence and spreading terror in Gadchiroli and other regions of so-called red terror. They should play a responsible role in reducing violence by demanding the withdrawal of the forces of state terror who have made the lives of the people a veritable hell. They should understand the just nature of our war. There need be no doubt at all that peace will certainly prevail once these forces of state terror are withdrawn from these regions.

Q: The general opinion among people outside is that the Maoists are resorting to senseless violence and that many innocent people have become victims in their hands. For instance, the beheading of a Special Branch Inspector recently in Jharkhand. Was it not a cruel act?

Azad: First of all, it is sheer hypocrisy and double-speak on the part of those who are making such a big fuss about the plight of one Francis Induvar. They never speak of the thousands who had died unsung, unwept, unheard in the secret torture chambers maintained by the Indian state flouting every constitutional provision. Not only Maoists and their sympathizers. Every day how many common people are tortured by special branch officers like Induvar in these torture chambers is not recorded. And our honourable Chidambaram calls this sadistic, beastly behaviour of his mercenary force as the "rule of law".

Do you know how many hundreds of adivasis were beheaded by the salwa judum-police-CRPF combine in Bastar region? And these

sadistic forces set up by the Centre and state had even cruelly cut off the wombs and threw out the fetuses. If you just glance through the pages of the fact-finding reports of several independent organizations like the PUDR, Human Rights Forum, Human Rights Watch, CAVOW, and several others you will find an unending list of the crimes committed by the security forces and state-sponsored vigilante gangs. Why are the so-called analysts who appear on TV channels and throw mud on the Maoists accusing them of mindless violence, completely silent when more than a thousand unarmed adivasis are murdered in cold blood by the CRPF and salwa judum gangs in Dantewada and Bijapur districts in a matter of just three years? Why does their blood boil when one inspector is decapitated while keeping mum regarding a thousand other beheadings and mutilations that make the case of Induvar a relatively insignificant thing? I once again assertively say that the case of Francis Induvar is an exception and not the rule. This has to be kept in mind while trying to pass judgements on Maoist violence. As for the act itself we do not encourage such beheadings even if the police carry out such brutalities. We will punish the enemy but there is no necessity for using cruel methods. No doubt, the anger of the victims of police violence is too difficult to control. When our guerrillas capture a cruel police officer especially one who has been responsible for the murder of several of our comrades there is bound to be serious reaction due to pent-up anger.

However, cruelty is the trait of the policeman who serves the exploiting classes. For the Maoist revolutionaries who serve the masses of the people and aspire to build a new socialist society free of all class exploitation, cruelty is an anathema. We will educate our cadre so that such beheadings do not occur in future. We also appeal to the policemen and intelligence officials not to engage in activities against the Maoists and the people. They should realise how they are being used by the reactionary rulers as cannonfodder in unleashing a war of terror against their own people, how they have become pawns in the hands of unscrupulous self-seeking politicians who sell the country's interests for a few crumbs thrown by the imperialists and the big business houses, and we assure them if they desist from such activities we have nothing against them. We Maoists are aware that it is the poor and the starving people who are forced to join the police force and we do not wish their families to be left grief-stricken. We too share the grief of Ms Sunita Induvar and her children. But the rulers have compelled us to take up such actions for our own self-defence. Our violence is revolutionary counter-violence. It is neither indiscriminate nor mindless as alleged by

the reactionary ruling class representatives who cite some instances without context in their desperation to prove that Maoists are blood-thirsty monsters. When the enemy knows he is fighting an unjust war against the overwhelming majority of the people, when he knows that Maoists enjoy enormous support of the masses, when it is clear to him that he is fighting a losing battle, particularly during periods when he is losing his men in the war against the Maoists, what would he do except spreading lies and slander to boost up the morale of his own forces?

Q: But there are reports in the media that 6000 people were killed in Maoist-related violence in six years? How do you explain this?

Azad: This is a part of the propaganda war and psychological war unleashed by the reactionary rulers. There is as much truth in this as there is in the propaganda of a George Bush that Saddam Hussein was in possession of weapons of mass destruction. A George Bush destroyed an entire country with his one big white lie. And our Sonia-Manmohan-Chidambaram gang wants to destroy the entire adivasi community in the mineral-rich areas under Maoist influence by spreading deliberate lies of senseless violence by Maoists. It is really unfortunate that a section of the media has become a vehicle for the proliferation of such lies and distortions. We challenge the TV channel which spoke of 6000 killings by Maoists to come out with a concrete split-up of the figures. You select any period and analyse the violence on both sides, and you will find that the total number of unarmed innocent civilians and Maoist revolutionaries murdered by the police and state-sponsored vigilante gangs has always been far greater than the policemen and people's enemies punished by the Maoists. More than half of the 6000 deaths you are speaking of consists of those killed by the police and gangs like salwa judum. The hypocritical manner in which some papers and tv channels report on violence makes disgusting reading. If a hundred Maoists are murdered by the police and 50 policemen killed by the Maoists, a paper writes that "150 people killed in Maoist-related violence". This creates an impression in the public mind that 150 were killed by Maoists.

Some of the distortions and lies appearing in the media about Naxal violence are extremely obnoxious. For instance, Chhattisgarh DGP Vishwa Ranjan spread a lie that eight of a family, including a two-year-old and five women, were burnt alive in the village of Kesikodi in Kanker district in the second week of August. The entire media ran banner headlines condemning the Maoists for their inhuman and sadistic act and calling upon the government to crush the Maoists with an iron hand.

Within two days it turned out that such an incident had not occurred at all. But the media lacked the honesty to admit its mistake and apologise to the Maoists for having run a vicious campaign against them. What was worse, the police gave the episode an added twist by charging the Maoists with spreading the lie so as to trap the policemen and carry out a massacre! And once again the media faithfully churned out this police story. Let me take another instance which occurred just over a fortnight ago. On October 2, there was a massacre of 16 people belonging to Kurmis and Koeris by Musahirs over a land dispute in Khagaria district in Bihar. For two days, the entire media spat venom against the Maoists describing us as murderers and blood-thirsty monsters but by 4th the chief minister of Bihar and the police top brass clarified that Maoists have no connection whatsoever with the said incident. However, none of the newspapers or the electronic media bothered to tender an apology for their irresponsible and vicious attack against the Maoists. Even worse, channels like the Times Now had even continued this vicious propaganda a full week after Nitish Kumar himself ruled out any Maoist link with the incident. But images get implanted in the public mind and the media is mainly responsible for spreading such lies and false propaganda against Maoist violence. In this context, I would draw your attention to one such incident that happened five years ago. Howrah- Delhi Rajdhani express was derailed for reasons best known to the railway authorities and several passengers died in the accident. The blame was immediately put on the Maoists. We had explained that we had nothing to do with the mishap but the media continues to repeat this lie against us and a section of well-wishers too fall prey to this vicious propaganda.

As for our revolutionary counter-violence, you should note that it has always been selective and organized. Our targets are proven die-hard class enemies, leaders and activists of armed vigilante gangs, policemen and special police officers who unleash attacks on the people and our revolutionary forces, corrupt officials, anti-people political leaders who are instrumental in policy-making, and proven police informers and covert agents who are sent by the police into the ranks of the revolutionaries. Without verifying the incidents, the media is just parroting the police version in the most irresponsible and casual manner. I agree there have been some mistakes in the course of our people's war which are an exception. However, each and every mistake committed by our forces has been frankly and promptly admitted publicly, and the comrades responsible for such incidents are warned or punished in accordance with the seriousness of the mistake. We have never hidden

our mistakes, lapses, weaknesses and shortcomings. Our review documents reveal this very clearly.

Q: Manmohan Singh and Chidambaram have been repeatedly appealing to the Maoists that they are prepared to sit down for talks if the Maoists lay down arms. How do you respond to this call?

Azad: I can say this is the most absurd proposal which only stupid minds can think of. It shows that these men are either completely ignorant of the historical and socio-economic factors that had given rise to the Maoist movement or are too intoxicated by the brute force that they possess by which they dream they can stamp out a movement rooted in the socio-economic causes. With such men at the political helm of India one can only foresee a terrible tragedy for the vast masses of the Indian people who reject this system and opt for a revolutionary alternative. Manmohan and Chidambaram and all the brains in their think-tank should understand why a significant section of the people led by the Maoists have taken up arms in the first place. Can anyone who has a capacity to think imagine that Maoists have taken up arms only to lay them down without arriving at a solution to the issues confronting the Indian society? If Manmohan and Chidambaram think they are doing us a favour by offering the proposal for talks without touching upon the actual issues that serve as the basis for our armed struggle they are only living in a fools' paradise. It is not that these men who occupy the highest pedestals in the government do not know these things. They only want to pretend that they are for peace and that it is the Maoists who are intransigent and reluctant to sit down for talks. If these representatives of state terrorism really want to sit for talks then they have to fulfill several conditions all of which, of course, fall within the ambit of the very Constitution by which these gentlemen terrorists swear.

Q: What are those conditions?

Azad: I am just coming to the point. They should stop illegal abductions of Maoists and people suspected to be supporting Maoists. They should put an immediate halt to tortures and murders of unarmed people, instruct their so-called security forces to desist from raping women in Maoistdominated areas, abandon their policy of destroying the property of the people and burning adivasi villages. They should withdraw the police and para-military camps from the school buildings, panchayat community buildings and from the interior areas so as to instill a sense of security among the people. They should disband the state-

sponsored armed vigilante gangs like salwa judum, sendra, gram suraksha samiti, nagarik suraksha samiti, shanti sena, and various types of cobras and tigers since all these blood-thirsty gangs are unconstitutionally established by the police top brass and the political leaders. An impartial judicial commission of enquiry should be formed to go into the inhuman atrocities by the police, CRPF, other central forces and the vigilante gangs on Maoists and the people at large and basing on the investigations the culprits should be punished as per the law. All political prisoners i.e., those arrested for being Maoists or on suspicion of aiding the Maoists, should be released unconditionally. They should repeal all draconian laws and Acts such as the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), Chhattisgarh Special Powers Act, etc. They should disband the government-organised concentration camps in the name of rehabilitation of the adivasis displaced from their villages, pay adequate compensation to over one lakh adivasis who were forcibly displaced by the salwa judum gangs and the CRPF-police combine.

Likewise, all those who have become victims of state and state-sponsored terror, i.e., those who were murdered, maimed, raped and pushed into a state of mental trauma should receive adequate compensation. Through all these measures they should create a conducive democratic atmosphere in all these regions before placing their proposal for talks. As for socio-economic issues, the lands of the tribals should be handed back to them wherever they are snatched whether in Salboni (West Bengal), Kathikund (Jharkhand), Lohandiguda, Pallamad, Bodhghat, (all in Chhattisgarh) Niyamgiri (Orissa) and elsewhere. The mining and other so-called development projects that lead to displacement of the tribals and destruction of their way of life should be immediately disbanded. All the MOUs signed with the imperialist MNCs like Vedanta and the big business houses like the Tatas, Mittals, Essar, Jindal, etc should be scrapped. The lands snatched away from the tribals by unscrupulous landlords, other non-adivasis, and by the government should be restored to their rightful owners. These demands might sound utopian and revolutionary but there is nothing extraordinary in them. Most of these fall within the ambit of the Indian Constitution while others are needed for creating a conducive atmosphere for talks. If these are fulfilled, then one can think of talks to discuss on the deeper issues that are blocking the real development of our country.

Q: What you say will never be accepted by Manmohan and Chidambaram as it would mean betraying their own class interests. So don't you feel that by

laying down arms without such pre-conditions you can save your forces from the brutal offensive by the Centre?

Azad: We know that these die-hard agents of the ruling classes whose real social base comprises of hardly five per cent of India's population can never think in terms of the interests of the remaining 95 per cent of the population. They will not accept even these Constitutional demands unless the people rise up and bring enormous pressure or rebellions break out in their own police and other armed forces.

No people's force in history has preserved itself through meek submission to the enemy. Maoism teaches us that self-preservation is possible only through war. You cannot defend yourself against a powerful and extremely cruel enemy by submitting to him meekly. You have to choose the appropriate method to fight a relatively superior and powerful enemy and only by this one can ensure the preservation of one's forces. Whoever had surrendered to the enemy or had laid down arms had gone over to the enemy camp. For instance, the leadership of the communist party had betrayed the people by laying down arms in 1951 in the midst of the glorious Telangana armed agrarian struggle and turned revisionist. So a war of self-defence alone can ensure the preservation of the revolutionary forces. And once you lay down your arms then of what use is your force to the people who are daily groaning under the oppression and suppression by the feudal forces, land and forest mafia, and the various wings of the Indian state? Without a people's army can the people achieve even a bit of justice? How can you expect an army, however small it may look at the present juncture, to abandon arms when the state's armed forces are engaged in brutal suppression of every people's movement? It is yet another thing if an agreement could be reached by both sides on a cease-fire without preconditions. On this thing there could be some discussion and some agreement may also be reached if men like Chidambaram give up their irrational, illogical, impracticable, absurd condition that the Maoists should abjure violence if they have to sit for talks.

Q: When you take into account the serious setbacks suffered by the armed national liberation movements recently in many parts of the world such as in Sri Lanka, how do you think you can confront the mighty Indian state and succeed?

Azad: Every war has its own particular, specific features. The war waged by the LTTE in Sri Lanka received a severe setback due to several

mistakes which were explained vividly in a recent interview by our Party Secretary comrade Ganapathi. You cannot compare a people's war waged under the leadership of the proletariat over a vast territory spread out over a few lakh square kilometers of area with a war waged by non-proletarian leadership in a small area roughly the size of a big district in India. Moreover, the people's war we are waging is based on the Maoist principles of guerrilla war. Until the time we reach a decisive stage in our war, we will not fight a positional war in a small area against a superior force that is likely to resort to aerial bombardment if needed. We can fight the mightiest enemy by properly adhering to the principles of guerrilla warfare. We will hit the enemy when and where it is convenient to us, and not when and where he provokes us. His aerial surveys cannot locate the guerrillas who mix up with the people or are in constant mobility. His air sorties too would fall on the wrong targets, may be sometimes on his own men (smiles). It has happened several times in Iraq and Afghanistan. We will even change our battle fatigues and move in the dress of civilians. It will be impossible for the enemy to target us if we adhere to these methods. He will only end up killing civilians and help us in getting more recruits into our guerrilla army. That's what the salwa judum had done. Thanks to salwa judum our guerrilla army has expanded rapidly. It is the same story everywhere. A George Bush had created more enemies for the American imperialists. He helped Al Qaeda, Taliban and several other Islamic organizations find recruits and provided them with a justification for waging a jihad.

The unfolding explosive situation makes it impossible for these reactionary rulers to maintain stability or control the mass uprisings and armed resistance even if they continue their mad policy of continuously increasing their repressive forces while the vast majority of the Indian population languishes in extreme poverty and misery. The more these vultures spend people's funds to strengthen the state apparatus and the state's forces in order to ensure their own security and marginalize the vast majority of the Indian people who are left without even food, drinking water and the minimum necessities of life, the more they will become the objects of people's wrath and hatred. By stepping up repression instead of addressing the problems of the oppressed the reactionary rulers of India are digging their own graves by creating hundreds of thousands of Maoist guerrillas.

Guerrillas will learn how to fight and defeat the Indian army, or for that matter, even the US Marines. That's how the guerrilla army was

born and developed to this stage. They learnt how to fight and inflict lethal blows on the elite anti-Naxal special forces and various Commando forces, they learnt how to fight the central para-military forces, the Naga, Mizo Battalions, who are projected as an the more Chidambaram's men go about terrorizing people, killing, torturing, raping and creating havoc in the adivasi areas, the more intense and extensive will be the armed resistance of the masses, and the stronger will our army become." "What is it if not a bloody war when 75,000 well-trained para-military forces are mobilized against their own citizens aided by helicopter gunships, mineproof vehicles, mortars, rockets and heavy artillery?.. This is a force which is greater in size than the armies of most countries in the world." invincible force. They had also dealt the first big blow to the COBRA force. They will teach the Indian Army too a fitting lesson if they ever dare to enter deep into the Maoist guerrilla zones. With tremendous mass support and participation in the people's war, the Maoists are confident of defeating the conspiracies of Chidambaram & Co and grow stronger from an escalation of the war just as it grew into a qualitatively stronger and highly steeled force after the reactionary rulers unleashed the cruel terrorist campaign through salwa judum in Dandakaranya, sendra and NSS in Jharkhand, harmad vahini and the social fascists in West Mednipur. Repression breeds resistance. And the more Chidambaram's men go about terrorizing people, killing, torturing, raping and creating havoc in the adivasi areas, the more intense and extensive will be the armed resistance of the masses, and the stronger will our army become. This is the logic of historical development. Hence we will utilize the situation created by the enemy's white terror to organize armed resistance on a far wider and extensive scale than ever before. As I said before, we live among the people and if the enemy destroys the entire population, we are willing to die with them rather than submit to the enemy. It is the people who make history and not a George Bush or a Manmohan Singh or a Chidambaram. These vultures who prey on the corpses of millions of helpless people will be washed away by the unfolding tsunami of people's revolts throughout the country.

Q: Then will you never be ready for talks with the government by laying down arms as a pre-condition?

Azad: Never, not even in our dreams we can think of such a step. We have taken up arms for the defence of people's rights and for achieving their liberation from all types of exploitation and oppression.

Laying down arms means a betrayal of the people's interests. We may lose some forces in this brutal offensive by the enemy. But you must keep in mind that when the people's war began we had only a handful of committed cadre. Today it has grown into a mass Party with an All India character and we have a people's army for the first time in the history of the revolutionary movement in India. Even if we lose some forces we shall rebuild the movement as we are now doing in Andhra Pradesh. You will see the results of our painstaking underground work in the near future.

Q: Chidambaram has been saying that this is not a war against the Maoists but only a police operation. How do you describe the ongoing offensive?

Azad: This is sheer deception and a jugglery of words which the rulers of this country have mastered right from the days of Chanakya. What is it if not a bloody war when 75,000 well-trained para-military forces are mobilized against their own citizens aided by helicopter gunships, mine-proof vehicles, mortars, rockets and heavy artillery? And add to this an equal number of the police forces of the states in the war zones. This is a force which is greater in size than the armies of most countries in the world. And this force is trained and guided by the Indian Army which is playing a key role in the entire operations. The IAF has deployed its Garuda commandos and is ready to fire on the people and other non-combatants under the pretext of self-defence. Only a Goebbels and Chidambaram have the guts to say it isn't a war. In fact, armed revolutionary war has been confronting armed counter-revolutionary war ever since the Naxalbari armed revolutionary upsurge. But there is a hidden reason why Chidambaram has been repeatedly saying his military onslaught is not a war on the Maoists. Chidambaram is a shrewd and cunning man. He is aware of the implications if he officially declares a war. If it is a war then he has to adhere to the provisions of the International Geneva Convention. But nevertheless, Article 2 of the Fourth Geneva Convention states that signatories are bound by the convention even in situations of armed conflicts where war has not been declared. We hope all civil rights organizations and democratic forces will bring pressure on the Indian government to abide by the Geneva Convention even if it deliberately denies going into war with the Maoists. We hope Chidambaram will instruct his forces waging war against us not to harm non-combatants or civilians, not to kill those who are wounded or detained during the war, not to indulge in mutilation, cruel treatment and torture; not to indulge in rape of women guerrillas arrested

and the adivasi villagers, and to adhere to all judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples. It will be the bounden duty of the civil rights organizations and the media to ensure that Chidambaram who talks of the 'rule of law' ad nauseum will ask his men to adhere to these minimum provisions of the Geneva Convention during the current war.

Q: The government, leaders of mainstream political parties, and even some civil society leaders have been emphatically saying that there is no other option before them but to go for a military solution as the Maoists are blocking development work in the areas they control and are keeping the people in abject poverty. Why don't you allow development work to take place?

Azad: This is another myth circulated by the ruling classes and parroted by the media and some circari (pro-establishment) intellectuals who hide behind the façade of civil society. Even supposing the Maoists are blocking the so-called development work by the government, how much percentage of the population is affected by it? If we take the Maoist-controlled areas as such, they embrace hardly 2 % of the Indian population. Even if we consider the areas under our direct influence, it would be no more than five per cent though the geographical area may be more. Then what are these gentlemen, who yell incessantly about lack of development in Maoist-held areas, doing in the rest of the areas that are home to 98 % of the Indian population? Who is keeping 77 % of the Indian population in abject poverty? Why are they living in grinding poverty with just Rs. 20 a day? Who is stopping the government from bringing development in these regions and improvement to their lives? Who has caused the suicides of two lakh farmers in just ten years? Are not Manmohan Singh and Chidambaram responsible for this great human tragedy which is a direct fall-out of their imperialist-dictated neo-liberal policies? The BJP and the Congress have both turned the lives of the common people into a veritable hell. They brought forth SEZs to fatten the comprador business houses and the real estate mafia who are their blood brothers. How much of the funds sanctioned for development in the areas outside the Maoist influence actually reach the poor and the needy and how much goes into the pockets of these political leaders, bureaucrats and contractors?

Several independent studies had revealed that more than 50 % of the funds allotted for the so-called development are siphoned off by these very bureaucrats, police top brass and political leaders who spit venom against the Maoists. If a people's committee consisting of

independent eminent personalities and social activists is set up and an enquiry is conducted into the assets of all the bureaucrats, police officials, political leaders, and businessmen, I think we can ferret out several trillions of rupees worth of illegal assets that can be put to good use. It is the imperialists, the feudal forces and the comprador big business houses that are blocking genuine development. It is the local gentry, the land mafia, the hoarders, unscrupulous moneylenders and landlords who are blocking real development in the rural areas. In the name of development, lakhs of adivasis and other sections of peasantry have been displaced from their villages by successive governments whether it is led by the saffron gang of Vajpayee or the khadi gang of Manmohan Singh. What these rulers are carrying out in these regions is not development but destruction, pure and simple. It is also not a fact that the Maoists are opposing or obstructing all the schemes of the government. No scheme that is really beneficial to the poor is blocked by us whether it is by the government or an NGO. A visit to our areas would prove this beyond any doubt. Can you imagine that Maoists who work for the people will oppose anything that is really beneficial to them? And if they do, would they not be isolated from those very people? How can you explain the ever-increasing mass support to our Party if we are doing anything against the will and wishes of the people? We are only opposing projects that lead to massive displacement, submerge entire villages, or snatch away fertile lands from the peasantry—projects such as the Netrahat Firing Range that displaces 224 villages in Palamau, Latehar and Gumla districts, dams like Mandal and Auranga, Abhijeet Power Project and Ssar steel plant in Latehar, Bhushan and Jindal projects in East Singhbhum and Saraikela-Kharsewan districts, all in Jharkhand, Pallamaad mines, Bodhghat project, and Tata steel plant in Lohandiguda in Chhattisgarh, Jindal steel plant in Salboni, POSCO and Kalinganagar steel plants in Orissa, Jindal's bauxite mining project in North Andhra, and so on. The sanction for these projects was done without the consent of the local people, and in most cases, the land was forcefully acquired with the help of the police and the goondas of the management. In some cases, a drama of convening the gram sabhas and taking their consent (through intimidation and even at gun-point) was enacted. We shall lead the people against these anti-people projects and the secret deals made by the rulers with the imperialists and the comprador capitalists. Only anti-people die-hards can say this stand of ours is against real development.

Q: Chidambaram has been describing you as bandits, terrorists, murderers, extortionists and so on?

Azad: This belligerent attitude on the part of the Home Minister, who has many resemblances to the hawkish Donald Rumsfeld, is not at all surprising to us. It reflects the fascist mind-set and political bankruptcy of our reactionary rulers who are incapable of waging political battles with the Maoist revolutionaries. It is a sign of their desperation and their extreme ideological-political weakness. Now I wish to make three points on Chidambaram's refusal to recognize the CPI (Maoist) as a political party. Firstly, this guy is too enamoured of a military solution to the Naxal issue; he wants to just bomb us out of existence by describing us as terrorists. If he recognizes the CPI (Maoist) as a political party then he would have to logically try the political solution to begin with. But once you describe your enemy as a terrorist and a bandit engaged in ruthless, mindless violence, then you have no hassles in bombing him out of existence. Not a political party, hence no political solution—so runs the perverted logic of this gentleman heading the Union Home Ministry who received his apprenticeship in the thriving "war on terror" industry from the American imperialists. The war cabinet comprising of Manmohan, Chidambaram, GK Pillai remind us of the war cabinet under George Bush.

Secondly, the infamous statement that equates Maoists with bandits betrays the utter ignorance of the man who, to the misfortune of the vast majority of the Indian people, has come to occupy the helm of the Home Ministry. He is ignorant of the ideology, political programme, strategy and tactics of one of the biggest political parties in this country, a Party that is the only real opposition to the so-called mainstream political parties. One cannot but feel sorry for this ostrich that refuses to utter the truth even as he yells that Maoists are the "single biggest threat to the country", that they are spread over 2000 police station areas in around 200 districts in 17 states, and so on. Then what prevents him from calling the CPI (Maoist) a political Party is something he will never be able to explain. I suppose he imagines that a political party should be something akin to his own Congress party run by coterie and cliques comprised of a handful of leaders and extra-constitutional powers who are answerable to none, obnoxious dynastic culture, or in one word, a non-transparent, autocratic structure without any democratic functioning in the real sense of the term. In fact, none of the mainstream parliamentary parties can come anywhere near our Party in terms of democratic functioning. Our Party holds plenums at all levels every two years, conferences as frequently as we can, and a central Congress every five years. Every Party committee is elected at these forums. Not only in the Party, in all

our mass organizations, organs of people's power and other departments too, the same practice is followed. And you can imagine how extremely difficult it is for an underground party operating in the midst of the severest enemy onslaught, to practice such democratic methods. Thirdly, I should say that in one sense, the title of bandit by our die-hard enemy is a compliment to us. When we hear such an attacking tone from our enemies we are doubly assured that we are going in the correct direction. In China, the reactionary ruler and traitor Chiang Kai-shek, who was an agent of the Anglo-American imperialists, described the Communist Party of China as a bandit party and the communists as red bandits. Comrade Mao took it as a complement and said that if the communist revolutionaries expected good words from the enemy then there must be something basically wrong with their line and practice. Even supposing we are red bandits who rob the rich to feed the poor, like some sort of robin hoods, as some believe, it is still not too bad a thing.

But Chidambaram & Co are white bandits who rob the poor to pay the rich. Interestingly, while Chidambaram refuses to recognize us as a political Party, even some police officers like the former DG of BSF, ML Kumawat, have better clarity at least on this question. People like Arnab Goswamy of Times Now, who not only reflect the views of Chidambaram and the police top brass but also embellish them with their own perverted logic, become wild when someone says CPI (Maoist) is a political party. How can a party that beheads an Inspector be called a political party, he thunders. But even a schoolboy knows that not just beheading, but burning alive and massacring, thousands of Muslims, Sikhs and Christians, raping women of the minority communities, and organizing mass murders of over 10,000 revolutionaries in the past four decades, have not disqualified the Congress and the BJP as political parties. On the contrary they remain the two biggest representatives of the ruling classes. If violence alone is to be taken as the criterion to determine whether an organization is a political party or not, then there will not be a single party left in the country's political scene. For instance, even at the peak of the revolutionary war in Andhra Pradesh, studies had shown that in any given period, the violence between the two ruling class parties, the Congress and the TDP in Rayalaseema region alone, took a far higher toll of people's lives than the casualties in the entire state in the hands of the Naxalites. Stories of such rampant, brutal violence between sections of the ruling classes in their dog-fight for power abound in the states of West Bengal, UP, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and several other states. Then with what logic do these so-called analysts argue that a few

punishments on the part of the Maoists disqualify it as a political party? All these ostriches betray their stupidity by imagining that they can transform a political party into a non-political entity with the wave of a hand. Will these ostriches ever lift their heads from the sand?

Q: Speaking to some TV channel Chidambaram said he would love to be the Minister for Environment and Forests so that he can sit in a forest lodge and study books. Any comments?

Azad: (laughing loudly) This is the cruelest joke of the decade. If, to our misfortune, Chidambaram becomes the Minister for Environment and Forests, then would there be any forests worth the name left?

The reason why Chidambaram is longing for the environment ministry is not difficult for any keen observer of the unfolding events to understand. The files of many mining and so-called development projects are languishing in the shelves of the Ministry of Environment for want of clearance. The bauxite project of Vedanta Aluminum Ltd, a subsidiary of UK-based Vedanta got the clearance from the Environment ministry in April this year after pending for a long period. The Company is devastating the Niyamgiri Hills in Kalahandi and destroying one of the oldest indigenous tribes of India—the Dongria Kondhs. The big steel, aluminum magnates and forest contractors want someone very close to them who will clear their projects without any hassle. If the Environment Ministry is in the hands of their loyal agents that would be the end of all their woes. No wonder, Chidambaram is longing to take over this job. One thing is certain: with Chidambaram at the helm of the environment ministry several more millions of adivasis would be displaced from their traditional homes, the forests would be decimated, the traditional way of life and the cultural identity of the adivasis would be destroyed, water sources polluted, and ecological imbalance would further aggravate. Moreover, the entire forests will be on fire as the people's war will spread even more rapidly due to the current repressive policies of the government. So can poor Chidambaram fulfill his longcherished wish to study books in peace?

Q: Now tell us something about the development work in the areas under your control?

Azad: If you visit the adivasi villages in our areas running into a few thousands in the vast hinterland of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Maharashtra you will see what real development means to the poor of this country. The most essential

thing and a pre-condition for achieving real development in the lives of the people is an end to feudal and other types of rapacious exploitation. In the adivasi areas, the ruthless exploitation by the forest officials, revenue officials, contractors, village mukhiyas, non-advasi landlords and traders, and the policemen makes their very survival an impossible thing. Manmohan Singh and Chidambarams may go on shouting from roof-tops about trickle-down effect, percolation of growth, and such abstract phrases that have absolutely no meaning or relevance to the poorest of the poor. As long as the poor masses are in the vice-like grip of the rapacious exploiters who are ruthless to the core, you cannot imagine any sort of improvement in their lives. This is true not only in the adivasi areas but throughout the country. So the first thing I wish to emphasise is that our people's war had put an end to this terrible exploitation and oppression of the people living in the areas of our struggle. This itself has brought about a qualitative leap in their living conditions. From a life of slavery and animal-like existence these down-trodden masses are now living in relative freedom, administering their own lives and deciding their destiny. However, they have to ward off the attacks by the state's armed forces and statesponsored vigilante gangs who are desperately trying to re-establish their lost hegemony and bring these proudly independent communities under their rapacious exploitation. Hence the people will fight unto the last man and woman to defend their new-found freedom and life of dignity and independence under the people's governments. The second point I wish to emphasise is that development is basically linked to the class struggle of the masses. I will not dwell into the details of the struggles waged by the adivasis under our Party leadership. There is literature on that.

I only wish to point out that people had increased their real incomes quite significantly after we took up struggles against exploitation by the tendu contractors, bamboo contractors, forest department, road-laying contractors, traders, money-lenders, landlords, and so on. Through these struggles the adivasi peasants have been able to increase their incomes and standards of living. The liberation of the people from feudal customs, traditions, values and attitudes due to the conscious effort of our Party has also contributed to releasing the initiative of the masses, particularly women, tremendously. Now after the formation of the people's governments, there has been further improvement in their lives due to improved productivity in agriculture, formation of co-operatives, mutual-aid teams, proper utilization of local resources, marketing of minor forest produce, setting up poultry farms, piggeries, fish farming

and other productive activities. The development in our areas is carried out by the people's governments. You must keep in mind that we are carrying out the development activities in the midst of the incessant murderous attacks by state's armed forces and state-sponsored vigilante gangs, i.e, under the most severe constraints. Hence defence of the people's government and the gains achieved by the people too is an important task of these governments. We had eight departments under each people's government. A few months ago we established the trade and industries department taking the total government departments to nine. These are: agriculture, education & culture, health & social welfare, defence, economic affairs, justice, forests, and public relations.

We have set up schools in villages where the government had never bothered to go. And where school buildings were built, these are used for accommodating the police and the central forces; there are no teachers worth the name in schools which exist only on paper. In all these villages it is our teachers who teach the boys and girls basic subjects and make them basically literate. We have developed the language of the adivasis, published text-books in their mother-tongue, and thus facilitated a flowering of their culture and rich heritage. There is also a conscious people's movement for the preservation of forests and an improvement in agricultural productivity. Now no dispute in any of our villages goes to the police station, so naturally, the policemen are angry that they are losing their illegal incomes. Health conditions have significantly improved when compared to those existing a decade or two decades ago. We have set up basic medical facilities in the villages. However, all this development is taking place within the framework of the existing socio-economic system in the country and hence it has its limitations. Moreover, the incessant attacks by the Indian state and vigilante gangs sponsored by the state are obstructing development and even destroying what has been achieved.

Q: The government wants to establish its authority over the areas controlled by the Maoists. Chidambaram has been talking of a policy of clear-and-hold or wrestcontrol- develop or area domination in the major pockets of Maoist control. His argument is there can be no development without recapturing territory from the Maoists. How do you counter this policy?

Azad: Although we have influence over a wider area, our actual control is confined to a small area when compared to the vast geographical area of our country. And this area is witnessing real development as I had explained earlier. The exploiting classes have

absolute control over more than 90% of the country's geographical area. If at all they wish to reach out to the masses with their so-called reforms, who is preventing them from doing so? Instead of addressing the burning problems of the poor in these vast regions under their absolute control they are talking of recapturing territory from the Maoists.

This policy of clear-and-hold as against the search-and-clear operations or sweeps is a carbon copy of the policy pursued by British imperialists in Malaya and the American imperialists in Vietnam during the 1950s and 60s. This policy was described at length by Robert Thompson in his book "Defeating Communist Insurgency". The dual purpose of the clear-and-hold policy is to kill the insurgents and destroy their infrastructure. The key element in restoring state authority and control is the programme of strategic hamlet. The enemy has realized that short-term raids into the guerrilla bases and zones, however large-scale they might be, will not fetch lasting results and the revolutionaries can regroup. Hence, there is an increasing emphasis on clear-and-hold operations with the creation of strategic hamlet as the key. The basic military strategy of the enemy is to deploy as many of his forces as possible in the same area of operation as that of the guerrillas. And the strategic hamlet is a pre-condition for restoring state authority as this ensures the physical and political isolation of the guerrillas from the population. So run the basic principles of this policy of Thompson now pursued by Chidambaram & Co starting with Lalgah.

The success of the British in Malaya was not due to the greatness of this policy but due to the revisionist line of the leadership of the Communist Party leading the revolution in that country. Coming to our own experience in India, we find that in the glorious Telengana armed agrarian struggle of 1946-51, around 3000 villages were liberated but we lost them to the enemy control due to the betrayal by the leadership of the Communist Party. If a revolutionary line is pursued by the Party and uses the principle of guerrilla war properly, it will be impossible for the enemy to completely clear and hold an area for long, not to speak of development. The colossal failure of the strategic hamlets created through the combined salwa judum-state military campaign is a proof of this. The Indian government will pour in huge funds and carry out some reforms to win over a section of the people in a few areas. But even in these areas they cannot sustain for long nor can they set up strategic hamlets in a vast region. Anyway their chief aim is to clear the areas of Maoists and hand over the mineral wealth to the corporate sector. So

even if they compel us to retreat from some areas through their brute force, the entire population will be on our side and our war will be waged on a far extensive scale against the occupiers. The case of Vietnam is a classic illustration of the total failure of the clear-and-hold policy propounded by Thompson. Although 8000 strategic hamlets were established in just two years, the enemy could not protect them or insulate them from the influence of the Vietcong, and several of these were recaptured by the guerrillas or used for their operations against the enemy forces. The most important thing to keep in mind is: Guerrilla warfare is precisely developed to hit and run i.e., to hit at the enemy where he is vulnerable, harass the enemy day in and day out, cut off his supplies, create instability and a sense of insecurity among the enemy forces, annihilate them bit by bit, and finally throw them out from the area.

Hence if the enemy wants to set up police and army camps in the interior, he will not last long. He will be under constant attack and harassment from our PLGA and the people's militia. How long can the enemy stay in these malaria-prone, water-scarce, inhospitable regions without any support or co-operation from the people? It will ultimately turn out to be a graveyard for these mercenary forces. I can confidently say that within a short period, there will be demoralization and desertion from these repressive forces. We have to wait to see how Chidambaram would deal with these desertions and what measures he would adopt to boost up the morale of his forces. Raman Singh and Vishwa Ranjan have been boosting up the morale of their forces by carrying out massacres of unarmed adivasis in Singaram, Tongapal, Singanamadugu, etc and claiming that several Maoists were killed by their brave forces. Chidambaram too has to travel along this beaten path thereby sending us more recruits. And the more areas his forces try to "recapture", the deeper they will get bogged down in an unending civil war. The one lakh and odd forces that Chidambaram is currently deploying in the Maoist areas cannot control a fraction of the entire region. These forces which spread state terror—the CRPF, BSF, EFR, IRB, CISF, ITBP, NSG, Cobras and various anti-Naxal special forces and elite commandos like the Greyhounds, STF, SOG, C-60, and so on—and their state-sponsored terrorist gangs like the salwa judum, sendra, TPC, JPC, NSS, Shanti Sena, Tigers and Cobras under various names, will get more and more bogged down and sucked ever deeper into the quicksands of people's war. Chidambaram's fond dream can never be fulfilled even if he turns the so-called red corridor literally into a corridor of red with the blood of the adivasis and Maoist revolutionaries by enacting gory blood-baths.

The reactionary rulers can neither wrest, nor control, nor develop any of the regions but will get embroiled in a war of attrition causing thousands of deaths of innocent adivasis and losing their own forces in huge numbers. They can only destroy the villages through their policy of "kill all, burn all, destroy all" as pursued by their reactionary counterpart Chiang Kai-shek in pre-revolutionary China. The more destruction and havoc these mercenary forces cause the faster our people's army will grow and our guerilla war will spread to wider regions in the country. Thanks to salwa judum, our war had achieved in four years what it would have otherwise achieved in two decades. Now thanks to Chidambaram, our war will expand to wider areas, mobilise wider masses, and also will gather new momentum and get new dynamism. Every mercenary repressive force, by its very nature and sense of insecurity in rebel-held areas, will end up murdering people and destroying their property. This is what even the mightiest army is doing in Iraq and Afghanistan and getting rapidly alienated from the people.

Q: But the Home Minister says the government is duty-bound to establish the "rule of law"?

Azad: The "rule of law", huh! Is the Home Minister serious about it? If so, why does he allow his police and the army to abduct people, illegally detain them for days without end, torture them in secret torture chambers in the most brutal manner, and murder them? Why did he permit the SIB of AP to abduct, torture and murder our central committee member comrade Patel Sudhakar? Why did he not ask his men to produce comrade Kobad Ghandy in the court within 24 hours after his arrest and instead kept him in illegal detention for four days? Chidambaram revealed how big a liar he is by announcing that Kobad was arrested on the 20th of September and produced in the court within 24 hours. Just ten days ago, two of our comrades Ravi Sharma and Anuradha, were arrested from Jharkhand but the police vehemently denied even after the news was flashed in the media and the AP High Court called for an explanation from the police after a habeas corpus petition was filed. Only after they were completely exposed and all-round pressure was built up, the police produced them in the court on the 14th claiming they were arrested only the previous day. The list of such incidents is endless. As regards the atrocities on innocent people I had already described in some detail.

The so-called "rule of law" bandied about by Manmohan, Chidambaram, Raman Singh, Buddhadeb and others is only an empty

phrase that exists on paper. In the eyes of the people it is merely an eye-wash and, moreover, is an instrument used to oppress and suppress them. If the "rule of law" is really implemented, the entire corrupt and lawless bureaucracy, police, and the political class would be languishing in jails.

Q: What of the child soldiers? Some papers and TV channels have even shown some photos of child soldiers recruited by the Maoists. How is it correct to arm the children when you say you are fighting for liberation from all exploitation?

Azad: Child soldier is another myth that is deliberately concocted and circulated by the police, the various reactionary parties ruling the country, some so-called political analysts employed by the reactionary rulers and dishonest media personnel as part of the enemy's psychological warfare. Some media channels have been carrying out vicious propaganda that Maoists are preventing children from going to schools, using them in various war-related activities, and so on. They exhibit photos of young boys and girls in our guerilla camps and conclude that they are used by us for fighting the enemy.

Shame be on these liars and distorters! They do not even have the minimum honesty and integrity to verify the facts before telecasting such falsehoods. Besides these deliberate distorters and liars, there are also some well-meaning friends and human rights organizations who to are misled by this propaganda. At the same time, the employment of young boys and girls under 15 as SPOs in Chhattisgarh is conveniently forgotten by the very same people who cry hoarse about the nonexistent child soldiers in the Maoist PLGA.

I can confidently tell you that there is not a single child soldier in our PLGA. Boys and girls in the villages do create problems when our PLGA squads visit them. They want to come with us and even parents request us to take them and teach them as there are no schools in the villages, or, even where there are schools, there are no teachers. So we take them to our camps and use the period to teach them basic knowledge-the three essential Rs. Then they go back home. They do PT exercises but no arms are given to these youngsters. It is these photos of children doing exercises that some channels have been showing and claiming that these are child soldiers. Our Party is a highly disciplined party with proletarian values and culture unlike the lawless lumpen goons of the ruling class parties who have the sole aim of gaining power

and money. Even if a single case of recruiting someone who is under 16 years of age comes to the notice of any Party committee action is taken promptly. 16 years is the minimum age for joining the PLGA. One may debate on this as the minimum age in the armed forces and police is 18 years. We have already explained in several interviews why 16 years is good enough in the conditions obtaining in the war zones where children are associated with the Party and the people's army from a very young age. We can proudly say that the adivasis have received basic education only after our Party gained a foothold in these areas. Successive reactionary governments, whichever party they belonged to, have done absolutely nothing in this regard even though they were in existence for almost six decades. And now light has dawned upon rulers and they talk of development! Can there be greater hypocrisy than this? Moreover, why are Manmohans, Chidambarams and all the ostriches refuse to free the children held captive in millions of sweatshops, quarries, and innumerable other places and send them to school? The children in the Maoist areas are a small fraction of the total child population in the country. What prevents the rulers from stopping child labour and providing education to them? And even worse, why are these gentlemen allowing their mercenary forces who call themselves C-60 commandos to rape pre-teen girls like the 13-year-old girl in Pavarvel village in Dhanora tehsil in Gadchiroli district, and leaving Munna Singh Thakur and other rapists scot-free even after they are identified by the victim?

Q: There have been several reports of extortion by your armed cadre. Some media reports allege that extortion money by Maoists reaches a whopping Rs. 2500 crores annually.

Azad: This is again a part of the dirty propaganda war of lies and falsehood unleashed by the reactionary rulers who thrive on extortion. These rulers have more than a trillion dollars (almost 50 lakh crores) of black money sucked from the surplus produced by the Indian toiling masses and also siphoned off from the funds meant for the people. The top one per cent of the Indian population-the fatty layer thriving on fraud and extortion-wallow in filthy luxury, possess palatial buildings and what have you. Sonia, Manmohan, Chidambaram and the leaders of the major parliamentary parties are the political representatives of this filthy parasitical class. They have no right to speak against the selfless, dedicated revolutionaries who have given up everything to serve the people, literally live among the people, and have become martyrs for the people's cause. The extortion money you are talking about is perhaps

the money which the reactionaries could not extort from the people due to Maoist presence. In all the Maoist-controlled areas the local police, the government bureaucrats, forest contractors and other exploiters are unable to procure money from the people. They might have calculated how much they had lost due to the ongoing people's war and hence concluded that this money is going into the hands of the Maoists.

As far as our funds are concerned, we rely mainly on the people. We also collect taxes from the traders and others in our areas of dominance but it is nominal. This is not extortion. Extortion means what the political leaders, government bureaucrats, encounter specialists and police officials collect through coercion and intimidation from businessmen and people from all walks of life. The entire world knows who are the extortionists and yet the very same extortionists and other pseudo-intellectuals have the audacity to accuse the Maoists as extortionists. One is reminded of a thief himself shouting "Thief! Thief!" There are cases of extortion by state-sponsored pseudo-Naxalites like TPC, JPC, PLFI and so on who share the booty with the police officials.

Some of the pseudo-intellectuals and police top brass even allege that Maoists derive huge income from narcotics business as the DGP of Chhattisgarh, Vishwa Ranjan, has been doing. If our Party had some legality we could have sued this rogue for spreading lies and defaming the Party. The fact is, it is the police who had encouraged the cultivation of ganja in Malkangiri and when the Maoists tried to stop it, the disgruntled elements from the ganja growers were turned into their informers by the police and used against us.

Q: Lastly, what is your Party's call to the people at large?

Azad: We appeal to the people of our country to stand up boldly against this unjust cruel war on the poorest of the poor waged by the central and state governments in the name of suppressing red terror. The only terror that is terrifying the people of our country is state terror, saffron terror, and the terror of the exploiters and oppressors. Violence is a structural feature of our society: it is an inbuilt, inherent characteristic of the existing unjust, authoritarian, hierarchical, oppressive and rotten society. Just think of it! A mere five per cent of the country's population oppresses and suppresses the remaining 95 per cent through extremely brutal violence reminding us of unthinkable medieval brutalities. All tools for perpetrating violence are monopolized by the ruling classes and their representative state apparatus. The poorest sections of the

society, who live a life of extreme misery and destitution, are forced into meek submission to the exploiters as they have no means to fight the violent repressive tools in the hands of the state. It is these hungry and angry masses who form the backbone of our revolution. Their violence is only defensive violence or counter-violence to the eternal state violence. Every peace-loving democratic citizen of this country should realize this truth and defend the revolutionary violence of the oppressed led by the CPI(Maoist). We must all ask the question: who is spreading terror? Whose policies have led to the suicides of two lakh farmers in just one decade? Who has been spreading insecurity and pushing the vast majority to live under daily fear of hunger and starvation? Who is artificially hoarding essential commodities and terrorizing the people? Who is snatching the lands from the adivasis, dalits, poor and middle peasants and handing them over to a few rich business houses and MNCs? Who is indulging in the massacre of religious minorities with the aim of ethnic cleansing and creating terror among the 20 crore minority communities? Who is setting up vigilante gangs and unleashing a brutal reign of terror, butchering adivasis, raping women, destroying property, and displacing over one lakh adivasis in just two districts of Dantewada and Bijapur? Who is abducting Maoists and supporters of revolution, cruelly torturing them and murdering them? Who is a terrorist? And who has given Sonia-Manmohan-Chidambaram clique the right to wage war on the Maoists?

It is time for every Indian to raise these crucial questions and declare boldly: "Stop this brutal war against the people! Not in my name, fascist Chidambaram!" It is the organized resistance of the people and people alone that can stop this brutal war waged by Delhi's war-mongers-Sonia, Manmohan and Chidambaram-and the warlords in the states, for serving the class interests of their masters. This alone can ensure that the biggest traitors who publicly mortgage the interests of our beloved motherland to their imperialist masters-the Sonia-Manmohan-Chidambaram fascist clique-can never achieve their fond dreams of handing over huge chunks of our land to the imperialist marauders and their comprador agents in India. Terrorism and "Left-wing extremism" are used by the reactionary ruling classes as a pretext to step up their fascist offensive on the people at large. This is necessary for the reactionary rulers in order to enforce their imperialist-dictated, anti-people, market fundamentalist, policies on a reluctant population.

We also call upon the policemen, who are sent to suppress their brothers and sisters for the benefit of a handful of exploiters and oppressors, to understand the conspiracies of the ruling classes, and appeal to them to desist from opening fire upon our own people. We have nothing against them so long as they cooperate with us and do not harm the people. We also call on them to join the revolutionary ranks or to help us through various means to defeat the cruel war being waged by a handful of hawks against the overwhelming majority of the Indian people. Finally, we appeal to the media to verify the facts before propagating them and not to be carried away by the outright lies, deliberate distortions, baseless allegations, and the incessant mud-slinging by the police, bureaucrats, political leaders, and some so-called political analysts, who have unleashed a dirty psychological war against the Maoists and the revolutionary movement. The rulers have launched an all-out multi-pronged war and are engaged in a vicious propaganda campaign against us. You know that our Party has been banned and our members and supporters are constantly being hunted. Hence, we have hardly any scope to explain our stand-point to the people of our country and answer the unending baseless allegations against us. Let us not make truth a casualty during this war. We hope the media will provide some democratic space to the other version of the Maoist revolutionaries while leaving the ultimate judgement to the people themselves.

Maoists on Talks

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Home Minister P Chidambaram have been putting forth the most absurd proposal for talks with the Communist Party of India (Maoist) [CPI (Maoist)] provided the latter abjured violence. While amassing thousands of paramilitary forces and carrying out brutal attacks against unarmed adivasi people and the Maoist revolutionaries, they are talking of violence by Maoists. It is state terror, saffron terror, and state-sponsored terror that have become the greatest threat to peace and security in our country. The Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government has to its credit the massacre of over 2,000 people and Maoist revolutionaries in the past five years. And yet, the government says it is implementing the "rule of law" and asks the Maoists to lay down arms and sit for talks.

Asking Maoists to lay down arms as a precondition for talks shows the utter ignorance regarding the historical and socio-economic factors that had given rise to the Maoist movement. The Central Committee (CC), CPI (Maoist), makes it crystal clear that laying down arms means a betrayal of the people's interests. We have taken up arms for the defence of people's rights and for achieving their liberation from all types of exploitation and oppression. As long as these exist, people will continue to be armed.

However, an agreement could be reached by both sides on a ceasefire if the government gives up its irrational stand that the Maoists should abjure violence. They should be introspective and decide whether they are prepared to abjure state terror and unbridled violence on the people. If at all they

are serious about talks then they should first create a conducive atmosphere by earnestly implementing at least what is guaranteed by the Indian Constitution by which they swear.

They should stop illegal abductions of Maoists and people suspected to be supporting Maoists. They should put an immediate halt to torture and murder of unarmed people, instruct their so-called security forces to desist from raping women in Maoist-dominated areas, abandon their policy of destroying the property of the people and burning adivasi villages. They should withdraw the police and paramilitary camps from school buildings, panchayat community buildings and from the interior areas so as to instil a sense of security among the people. They should disband the state-sponsored armed vigilante gangs like Salwa Judum, Sendra, Gram Suraksha Samiti, Nagarik Suraksha Samiti, Shanti Sena, Harmad Bahini, and other gangs.

An impartial judicial commission of enquiry should be formed to go into the inhuman atrocities by the police, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), other central forces and the vigilante gangs on Maoists and the people at large and based on the investigations the culprits should be punished as per the law. All those arrested for being Maoists or on suspicion of aiding the Maoists, including people in particular who do not have any connection with our organisation, should be released unconditionally. They should repeal all draconian laws and Acts such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), Chhattisgarh Special Public Security Act, Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), etc. They should dis-band the government-organised concentration camps in the name of rehabilitation of the adivasis displaced from their villages, pay adequate compensation to over two lakh adivasis who were forcibly displaced by the Salwa Judum gangs and the CRPF-police combine. All those who have become victims of state and state-sponsored terror, i e, those who were murdered, maimed, raped and pushed into a state of mental trauma, should be given adequate compensation.

As for socio-economic issues, the mining and other so-called development projects that lead to displacement of the tribals and destruction of their way of life should be immediately disbanded. All the memoranda of understanding (MOU) signed with the imperialist multinational corporations (MNCs) like Vedanta and the big business houses like the Tatas, Mittals, Essar, Jindal, etc, should be scrapped. The much trumpeted policy of special economic zones should be immediately scrapped along with the colonial policy of land acquisition.

The lands snatched from the tribals by un-scrupulous landlords, non-advisees, and by the government should be restored to their rightful owners. If these are fulfilled, then one can think of talks to discuss the deeper issues that are blocking the real development of our country.

The CC, CPI (Maoist) unequivocally asserts that the government's proposal for peace talks is only a propaganda ploy. After the Cabinet Committee on Security had given the final approval for the massive offensive against the Maoists, they are talking of peace. We appeal to all democratic and peace-loving forces to oppose the war preparations against the oppressed, down-trodden people of our country.

Red Salutes to Balagopal

The sudden demise of the veteran leader of the civil rights movement in our country and a great people's intellectual, Dr. K. Balagopal, due to heart stroke on October 8, has come as a gret shock to all democratic and revolutionary forces in the country. The oppressed people of our country and particularly the people in the police state of Andhra Pradesh have lost a close friend and an indefatigable, bold champion of their cause. As a stead fast and intrepid fighter against state terror, fake encounters, violation of basic human rights and police atrocities, Balagopal has remined a close friend of the oppressed people of our country and a well-wisher of the revolution throughout his life. The CC, CPI(Maoist), on behalf of the entire party rank and fule and the oppressed people of the country, expresses its deepest anguish and extreme grief at the sudden demise of this untiring fighter for the democratic rights of the oppressed people groaning under the weight of the semi-colonial semi feudal Indian fascist state. Balagopal's death is an irrecoverable and grave loss to the civil rights movement in India.

Balagopal stands out as a shining example to the intellectuals of the day. He has set a glowing poorest of the poor- a trait that is lacking in most intellectuals who only have contempt for the toiling masses, lack of ego and individualism that are generally the traits of the intellectual section, single minded devotion to the civil rights cause, enormous courage on the part of an individual to confront the might of the state in the face of continuous persecution by the police, all these qualities stand out in sharp contrast to the hypocrisy, sycophancy, snobbery, elitist and

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self-seeking attitudes of the pro-establishment and ivory-tower intellectuals who dominate the country's political scene today. Balagopal's bold exposure of the fake encounters staged by the AP police under the Congress and TDP regimes, his objective investigation into hundreds of fake encounters in Andhra Pradesh and his critical writings against the government and the police raj in AP had infuriated the oppressive rulers and their mercenary police to such an extent that they made several attempts to silence this bold voice. He was arrested in the mid-1980s, again state-sponsored terrorist gangs kidnapped him in 1989 and threatened him not to take up investigation into encounter champion of people's rights and he continued his fight against state terror until his last. His analysis on several contemporary issues too had helped the people in getting a correct grasp of even very complex issues. He was a mathematician, historian, social scientist and civil rights leader combined into one.

Ever since the mid-1970s when he was doing his research in Warangal, Balagopal had close relationship with the revolutionary movement led by erstwhile CPI(ML) [People's War] but by the mid-1990s he gradually drifted away from the Party due to ideological-political differences. Although by late 1990s he drifted away from Marxism Leninism and went under the influence of post modernism, and though he made sharp criticisms on the Party line and practice, Balagopal had always remained sympathetic to revolution and a well-wisher of the Maoists. He chose the civil rights front to carry on his battle against the state as he felt he would be able to contribute more to the people in the civil rights movement. And in this field he remained most committed, tenacious and unshaken until his last breath. The intellectual sections of our society have a lot to learn from Balagopal's life and work.

On Telangana

The 40 million people of Telangana region who comprise almost 40% of the population of the state of Andhra Pradesh have stood up boldly and unequivocally for their long-cherished democratic demand for a separate state. The people of Telangana region not only suffer from discrimination and neglect by the state and central governments that serve the imperialists, comprador big business houses, and big landlords, but also from the oppression, exploitation and discrimination by the landlords, bourgeoisie and the neo-rich class hailing from the relatively developed Andhra region. Hence the democratic aspiration for a separate state has taken firm root in the minds of the neglected people of Telangana region.

The demand for separate Telangana was raised several times over the past few decades and had even assumed the form of a violent year-long agitation in the year 1969. But it was then brutally suppressed by the Congress government led by Indira Gandhi and betrayed by the Telangana Praja Samiti led by Chenna Reddy. 400 people, most of them students, were killed by the fascist Congress regime in 1969 but it could not kill the democratic aspiration of the people of Telangana. Successive regimes of the Congress and TDP, which were captive to the pressures of the Andhra lobby, had opposed the demand tooth and nail. However, during the elections to the state Assembly in 2004 and again in 2009, the Congress, with an eye on the votes, promised that it would fulfill the demand for a separate state if it came to power.

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But this comprador Party, known for its long history of betrayals of promises, went back on its promise of Telangana state and

began to dilly-dally on the issue for over five years. The other major party of the big landlord big bourgeoisie classes of India, the BJP too, had promised Telangana state with the catchy slogan of 'one vote—two states' way back in the 1999 elections but betrayed the people after it came to power in the Centre. Today the opportunist parties such as the BJP and TDP, CPI and CPI (M), are claiming that they support Telangana only with the ulterior motive of gaining some mass base and convert it to their vote banks. TRS, which contested elections on the sole slogan of separate Telangana in 2004 in alliance with the Congress, and again in 2009 in alliance with the TDP, had wasted more than five years begging Sonia and lobbying in the corridors of the Parliament for a separate state. The TRS and its leader KCR are opposed from the very beginning to people's agitation for achieving Telangana state. Their sole fear was that any mass agitation would become militant and slip out of their hands. Hence the TRS had been trying by all means to dilute the real struggle and confine it to the corridors of the Parliament and Assembly with an occasional demonstration to pretend that it is also for struggle. KCR, who claimed all along that his Party would achieve statehood for Telangana through lobbying among the Congress high command, has gone on an indefinite hunger-strike thinking this step would keep the movement under his control.

But the present mass upsurge in Telangana has gone beyond the control of any single party. It is gradually freeing itself from the manipulations and narrow selfish interests of the parliamentary parties and a new leadership is emerging out of the struggle. That is why the rulers are scared to the hilt by the unfolding events and by the prospects of formation of a democratic Telangana. The Congress-led UPA regime in the Centre and the Congress government in Andhra Pradesh are trying to suppress this spontaneous mass upsurge and the emerging young militant leadership by any means. It has closed down the universities and colleges for 15 days imagining that through this step it can douse the agitation. The government is also trying to divert the issue and legitimize its use of brute force in the name of anti-social elements entering the movement and also saying that Maoists will take advantage of the situation. It is trying in vain to separate the Maoists from the people. Maoists have always supported and will continue to support and participate in all people's movements including separate Telangana movement. The reactionary rulers cannot isolate the Maoists from the people.

The Central Committee, CPI (Maoist), which has consistently placed the demand for a separate democratic Telangana hails the students, workers, peasantry, middle-class employees, and the intelligentsia of Telangana for their resolute struggle in face of the fascist suppression by the reactionary ruling classes. It pledges its total support to the fighting masses of Telangana for whose liberation thousands of our comrades had sacrificed their lives in the past three decades. It calls upon the people of Telangana to beware of the conspiracies of the various parliamentary parties to hijack this movement for their electoral ends and their attempts to take it along the path of compromise.

While uniting all forces, including the parliamentary parties that are willing to join the struggle we should formulate appropriate plans to defeat the enemy's brutal onslaught and to sustain the agitation with a clear long-term plan. We should force the so-called people's representatives belonging to various parliamentary parties in Telangana to resign and to particularly concentrate on wiping out the Congress party from the Telangana region. We appeal to the people of Telangana, particularly the students, not to indulge in suicides but to step up their mass movement until victory.

People and people alone are the real heroes. They are invincible. However much the fascist rulers try to suppress the people's struggle in rivers of blood through their uniformed mercenaries they will certainly be washed away by the tsunami of people's struggles. Let us intensify the mass movement by adopting all forms of struggle to defeat the offensive by the Manmohan-Chidambaram government at the Centre and Roshaiah's government in the state and continue the struggle resolutely until we achieve separate Telangana.

On Sakhamuri Appa Rao and Kondal Reddy

On March 12, 2010 a former state committee member of Andhra Pradesh and current incharge of military intelligence wing of CPI (Maoist), comrade Sakhamuri Appa Rao, and a district committee member, comrade Kondal Reddy (also known as Tech Ramana), were murdered in cold blood by the notorious goon belonging to Andhra Pradesh Special Investigation Bureau and the AP Grey Hounds. The two leaders were abducted two days earlier from Chennai and Pune respectively, cruelly tortured by these neo-Nazi mercenaries hired by the Indian State, and taken to the forests where they were shot dead.

As usual, the story of an encounter was put forth by the government and the top police officials. As is the practice of the AP Grey Hounds and the SIB, the bodies were placed in the forests where these comrades had earlier worked—Comrade Sakhamuri Appa Rao's body was thrown in Nallamala forest while that of Kondal Reddy in Eturnagaram forest in Warangal. Through these SIB-Grey Hounds-mark murders the reactionary rulers want to demonstrate to the people of these regions who were associated with the revolutionary movement for a long period of time, and amongst whom these leaders had once worked, that they will ruthlessly crush any revival of the revolutionary movement in these one-time hot-beds of revolution. The decision to murder these comrades was taken by fascist Chidambaram himself in order to create a reign of terror, boost up the morale of his mercenary forces, and to boast how his fascist state offensive is yielding results. But the Andhra Pradesh police and Chidambaram, who had been claiming all the while that Nallamala forest has been cleared of the

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Maoists, had not even thought how the so-called encounter with such a big Maoist leader in the Nallamala region would mock at their own claims of the past three years. The entire people know that Maoists had retreated from Nallamala almost three years ago but in their hastiness to complete their ghastly murder before civil rights and other organizations get alerted, the lawless police goons chose Prakasham district which is nearer to Chennai.

Comrade Ravi had been to Chennai on some work on the 24th of February and was in touch with other comrades of the Party until two days prior to his murder. It is clear that he was abducted on March 10. Three more comrades are still illegally detained by the SIB and Grey Hounds. There is every danger that these would be murdered in cold blood. Comrade Ravi is one of the senior most leaders from Andhra Pradesh and hails from Khanapur area in Warangal district. He was elected as an alternate member of the AP State Committee of the Party in 1991. He was arrested in early 1993 and spent 7 1/2 years in prison where he displayed extraordinary revolutionary mettle and led many struggles of the prisoners along with comrade Patel Sudhakar. He commenced his work as a member of the AP State Committee after his release in late 2000. He became a member of the State Military Commission and carried on his work in Nallamala forest region until 2006. Later, he guided the Party's Intelligence department in AP and the Action Teams. He played a prominent role in planning and executing tactical counter-offensives against the police forces and attacks on political targets such as the one on the SP of Prakasham district in 2005 and on former chief minister of AP, Janardhan Reddy, in 2007.

Comrade Kondal Reddy hails from Medak district in South Telangana and has been working in the production department of the CPI (Maoist) in Andhra Pradesh for over a decade. He played an important role in the production and distribution of hand grenades and pressure mines. He never hesitated whenever any extremely risky work was allotted to him by the party leadership and was highly disciplined.

The cold-blooded murders of these Maoist leaders are an integral part of the unprecedented fascist offensive unleashed by the central and state governments against the CPI (Maoist) in the name of Operation Green Hunt. While the chief objective of this brutal armed offensive is to create genocide of the adivasis and steal their lands and the forest-mineral wealth, the focus of this joint offensive led by the central forces under the direct supervision of fascist Chidambaram is to eliminate the Maoist

leadership in the country. In a similar episode last may, comrade Patel Sudhakar, a member of the central committee of CPI (Maoist), was abducted and murdered in cold blood by the APSIB-Grey Hound goons. Central leaders like Ashutosh, Kobad Ghandy, Balraj and Chintanji were arrested and placed behind bars, along with several state Party leaders in the past one year. Popular mass leaders like Lalmohan Tudu of PCAPA are murdered in cold blood and Chhatradhar Mahato arrested on false charges. Even those who question police atrocities and the state's brutal onslaught against innocent people, civil liberties and human rights activists, sincere Gandhians and other social activists, are not spared the rod. Private vigilante gangs are set up in all areas where the Maoist movement is strong and indiscriminate attacks are unleashed on unarmed adivasi people.

Let us pay our red revolutionary homage to comrades Sakhamuri Appa Rao and Kondal Reddy by pledging to carry forward their cherished dreams with redoubled determination and relentless spirit. Let us vow to avenge their martyrdom by defeating the biggest country-wide brutal armed offensive unleashed by the comprador-feudal ruling classes backed by imperialists, transform PLGA into PLA, guerrilla war into mobile war, and guerrilla zones into base areas. Let us train up thousands of able Red successors to our beloved martyred leaders. Let us foil the desperate attempts by the reactionary rulers to deprive the Indian people and the CPI (Maoist) of their leadership by preserving our leading cadres and developing innumerable Maoist leaders from the oppressed masses of India.

On Dantewada Guerilla Attack

The heroic PLGA guerrillas led by the CPI (Maoist) have created history by wiping out an entire Company of the central paramilitary force in Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh. The PLGA had wiped out over 80 CRPF mercenaries— a part of the huge armed mercenary force of over 60 battalions sent by Chidambaram to Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, West Bengal, Bihar and Maharashtra to carry out the genocide of adivasis. Several more mercenaries were injured in India's biggest ever guerrilla attack till date. A huge cache of highly sophisticated arms and ammunition was seized from these mercenaries that include mortars and LMGs. The CC, CPI (Maoist) sends its heartiest revolutionary greetings to the brave warriors of PLGA who have given a fitting reply to fraud Chidambaram and nailed his unabashed naked lie that his brutal Operation Green Hunt is a myth invented by the media.

The Dantewada ambush is a logical culmination of the unending terrible provocation by the uniformed goondas sent by Chidambaram and Raman Singh to the adivasi areas to create a brutal reign of terror. In just eight months, 114 innocent unarmed adivasi people were abducted, tortured and murdered in cold blood by these uniformed goondas. Several women were gang-raped by these lawless goons. Neither they nor their khadi-clad bosses have any respect for the Indian Constitution. They have an unwritten licence to abduct, torture, rape and murder any adivasi or Maoist without any questions being asked. This dehumanization of the police and paramilitary forces is consciously encouraged by Chidambaram, Raman Singh, Vishwa Ranjan and others, notwithstanding their holy chants of peace and ahimsa. Behind their

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sophisticated-looking rhetoric lie the raw, beastly, cannibalistic passions that devour human beings for establishing their absolute control over the resources and lives of the people. Their vision goes no farther than that of a local daroga, as aptly pointed out by a JD (U) spokesperson referring to Chidambaram. And their tactics fare no better than those of a street rowdy. As long as their fascist mind-set refuses to see the socio-politico-economic roots of Naxalism and continue to treat it as a disease or a problem while the oppressed people see it increasingly as a remedy and a solution to their problems, Dantewada-type attacks will continue to take place at an even greater frequency and intensity.

The atrocities committed by these forces, along with the state-sponsored Salwa Judum goons, Koya commandos and SPOs in Dantewada and Bijapur, make one shudder (leaving out Chidambaram and his animal species of cobras, jaguars, greyhounds etc) with horror and repugnance. Besides tales of unending abductions, horrifying torture, gruesome gang-rapes, and ghastly massacres of ordinary adivasis, the so-called "security forces" have kept in their illegal custody at least 20-30 adivasis from every village. Whenever they feel the need to show some success over the Maoists in terms of body count some of these hapless adivasi captives are bumped off with the claim that the "security forces" had killed Maoist guerrillas in "fierce encounters". And to prove their claim to the world these Chidambaran liars put on military

uniforms on the dead bodies of poor adivasis. With such a bizarre drama enacted by those supposed to be the guardians of law, then what other option do the Maoists and the adivasi masses have but to retaliate for their own self-defence?

Now the war-mongering hawks in the Union Home Ministry and various state governments, the political leaders and spokespersons of the parliamentary parties, the so-called defence analysts, police top brass and their agents employed in the media are yelling that an all-out war should be declared and the Maoists should be wiped out. The fact is, an all-out war has already been declared and executed in the most ruthless manner. What these vultures want is perhaps

bombing of entire areas under Maoist control and achieving the peace of the graveyard. If they indulge in such mindless barbaric acts, the Maoist revolutionary counter-violence will take on new and deadly forms which these apologists of state terror and state-sponsored terror cannot even imagine.

The BJP and its saffron gang of Hindu fascist terrorists have been yelling like lunatics that Maoists had declared a war on India and that the BJP would endorse every move of the Congress to finish off the Maoists. In reply to these saffron terrorist gangsters we assert once again that ours is a war waged by the real India—the India of the oppressed, suppressed and depressed sections of society; the India of the hungry, impoverished, undernourished masses—against the India that shines for a handful of parasitic corporate elites, imperialist agents deriving enormous commissions and kickbacks through nefarious deals, real estate mafia gangs who grab the land of the poor in the name of SEZs and various projects, unscrupulous contractors and mining syndicates who run a parallel state, horribly corrupt and degenerate political leaders and bureaucrats, licensed murderers in police uniforms who are infamous for the worst crimes against humanity, and such other traitors. Ours is a revolutionary war on the saffron gang of terrorists who are armed to the teeth and dream of transforming our country into a Hindu fascist state by enacting Gujarat-type genocides of religious minorities. Ours is a genuine People's War for achieving the real liberation of the people from all types of oppression and exploitation, and to establish a genuine people's democratic India. It is not a war on India but a war for the liberation of India from the clutches of rapacious plunderers.

The sole responsibility for the death of the CRPF men in Dantewada lies with Sonia-Man Mohan-Chidambaram-Pranab gang and the saffron terrorist Raman Singh regime in Chhattisgarh who are recruiting young boys and girls in an amassive way and using them as cannon-fodder in their dirty counter-revolutionary war against Maoist revolutionaries, against the Maoist model of development, and in their greed hunt for the mineral wealth of the adivasi regions. The CC, CPI (Maoist), while offering its heart-felt condolences to the bereaved families of the dead jawans, appeals to the state and central paramilitary personnel to realize that they are being used as cannon-fodder in this war waged by the exploiting ruling class in the interests of a tiny parasitic elite against the poor and oppressed people of our country led by CPI (Maoist).

We appeal to all peace-loving, democratic-minded organizations and individuals in India to understand the context in which the Maoists are compelled to annihilate the so-called security forces who are creating a virtual reign of terror in adivasi areas armed with mortars, LMGs and grenades. When dacoits try to loot your house you have to fight back. And that is what the masses led by the Maoists are doing in all these areas. When the CRPF dacoits enter and loot

the houses of adivasis is it not justified to hit back? The daring attack by our heroic PLGA on a superior enemy force in terms of fire-power became possible through the enormous mass support the Party and guerrillas enjoy. With the intelligence inputs from the people who are our eyes and ears and with their active participation we are confident of defeating the brutal enemy offensive in the name of Operation Green Hunt. There is no short-cut for achieving peace. Only the most ferocious, most resolute, and the most heroic resistance on the part of the people can defeat the warmongers and bring democratic space and peace for the people.

Interview to The Hindu

In an exclusive interview to The Hindu, Azad, spokesperson of the Communist Party of India (Maoist), answers in writing questions on his party's attitude to dialogue with the Union Government. The following is the edited text of the full interview:

1. In recent weeks one has seen statements by the Government of India and leaders of the Communist Party of India (Maoist) saying they are in favor of dialogue and talks but each side seems to lack seriousness. There has also been an element of drama or more precisely, theatre, with Kishenji and P. Chidambaram exchanging statements through the media. Our first question is whether Kishenji's statements can be treated as authoritative pronouncements of the CPI (Maoist) central leadership in pursuance of a national strategy? Or are these tactical announcements by him keeping only the specifics of the Bengal situation in mind.

Azad: It is true our Party leadership has been issuing statements from time to time in response to the government's dubious offer of talks. But to generalize that there is lack of seriousness on both sides does not correspond to reality. To an observer, exchanging statements through the media does sound a bit theatrical. And it is precisely such theatrical and sensational things the media relishes while more serious things are swept aside. Now the stark fact is lack of seriousness has been the hallmark of the government, particularly of the Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram. It is Mr. Chidambaram who has been enacting a drama in the past four months, particularly ever since his amusing 72-hour-abjure-violence diktat to the CPI (Maoist) in the

course of his interview with Tehelka Magazine some time last November. As regards Kishenji's statements, they should be seen with a positive attitude, not with cynicism. Though our central committee has not discussed our specific strategy with regard to talks with the government at the current juncture, as a Polit Bureau member, comrade Kishenji had taken initiative and made a concrete proposal for a ceasefire. Whether comrade Kishenji's statements are the official pronouncements of our Central Committee is not the point of debate here. What is important is the attitude of the government to such an offer in the first place. Our central committee has no objection to his proposal for a ceasefire. But as far as the issue of talks is concerned, our Party will pursue the guidelines given by our Unity Congress-9th Congress held in early 2007.

2. Both the Government and the Maoists are also laying down preconditions. Chidambaram says the Maoists should "abjure violence and say they are prepared for talks... I would like no ifs, no buts and no conditions". Oow 'to abjure' can mean to renounce or forswear violence, or even to avoid violence, i.e. a ceasefire. What is your understanding of Mr. Chidambaram's formulation? What do you think is the implication of what he wants the Maoists to accept?

Azad: It is a very pertinent question as no one knows exactly what Mr. Chidambaram wants to convey by his oft-repeated, yet incomprehensible, abjure violence statement. Hence I can understand your confusion in interpreting Mr. Chidambaram's "abjure violence" statement. It is not just you alone but the entire media is left in a state of confusion. His own Party leaders are a confused lot. Some interpret Mr. Chidambaram's statement to mean that Maoists should lay down arms. Some say it means unilateral renunciation of violence by Maoists. Yet others say what this could mean is a cessation of hostilities by both sides without any conditions attached. It is indeed very difficult to understand what Mr. Chidambaram wants to convey. This seems to be a characteristic trait of Mr. Chidambaram whether it be his pronouncements on Telangana, which are mildly described by the media as "flipflop" behaviour and interpreted by both pro and anti-Telanganites according to their own convenience; or on Operation Green Hunt which he describes as a "myth invented by the media" even as the entire political and police establishment, and the entire media, give out graphic descriptions of the huge mobilization of the security forces, and the successes achieved by Operation Green Hunt; or on MOUs signed by various MNCs and Indian Corporate houses with the governments of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, West Bengal and others.

The Home Minister himself had displayed his split personality, not knowing what exactly he wants when he says Maoists should “abjure violence.” To a layman what this proposal obviously implies is that the state too would automatically put a stop to its inhuman atrocities on the adivasis, Maoist revolutionaries and their sympathizers. But not so to our Home Minister! When you ask us what our understanding of Mr. Chidambaram’s formulation is, our answer is: we are very clear that the real intent behind his rhetoric is not a ceasefire between the government and the Maoists, like that with the NSCN, but an absurd demand for a unilateral renunciation of violence by the Maoists. Anyone with a bit of common sense would understand the unreasonableness of the Home Minister’s demand. It is not that our so-called political analysts and others who appear on TV channels or write articles in the print media lack this common sense. It is their vested interests that come in the way of questioning the Home Minister in a straightforward manner. Can they not put a simple question why the government cannot stop its brutalities on the people, adhere strictly to the Indian Constitution by putting an end to the police culture of fake encounters, abductions, rapes, tortures, destruction of property, foisting of false cases and such indescribable atrocities on the people and the Maoists? Chidambaram is cosy in studios and press conferences before English-speaking TV anchors and correspondents but can never answer the questions put by illiterate adivasis. That is the secret behind his skipping the Jan Sunwaayi in Dantewada last December. For, drama and real life are entirely different. The implication of what Mr. Chidambaram wants the Maoists to accept is crystalclear. He wants the Maoists to surrender. Or else [the state’s] para-military juggernaut would crush the people and the Maoists under its wheels. It is total surrender, pure and simple. While repeating that he never wanted the Maoists to lay down arms – as if he had generously given a big concession – he comes up with an even more atrocious proposal: Maoists should abjure violence while his lawless forces continue their rampage creating more Gachampallis, Gompads, Singanamadugus, Palachelimas, Dogpadus, Palods, Tetemadugus, Takilodus, Ongaras, and so on. Not a word does he utter even as scores of inhuman atrocities by his forces are brought to light by magazines like Tehelka, Outlook, a host of websites, and, to an extent, some papers like yours. What is it if not sheer hypocrisy on the part of the Home Minister to ask Maoists to abjure violence while his paramilitary forces indulge in crimes every day, every hour, in gross violation of the very Constitution by which he swears?

3. The Maoists also have their preconditions for talks. In his recent interview to Jan Myrdal and Gautam Navlakha, Ganapathy made the following formulation on the issue of talks: "To put concisely the main demands that the party has placed in front of the government [of India] for any kind of talks are 1. All-out war has to be withdrawn; 2. For any kind of democratic work, the ban on the Party and Mass Organizations have to be lifted; 3. Illegal detention and torture of comrades had to be stopped and they be immediately released. If these demands are met, then the same leaders who are released from jails would lead and represent the Party in the talks." My question is whether these are realistic preconditions. For example, the "all out war" can be suspended first before it is "withdrawn," i.e. a ceasefire, so why insist on its withdrawal at the outset? Are you asking for a ceasefire or something more than that?

Secondly, you want the ban on the Party and its mass organizations lifted and prisoners released. Usually in negotiations of this kind around the world between governments and insurgent groups, the lifting of a ban is one of the objects of talks rather than a precondition and the release of political prisoners an intermediate step. Is the Maoist party not putting the cart before the horse, making demands that the government may be unlikely to accept as a starting point, rather than positing the same as one of the end points of the proposed dialogue?

Azad: I concur with the logic of your arguments. It is logically a valid argument that such demands could be resolved in the course of actual talks and not as a precondition for talks. But you must also understand the spirit of what comrade Ganapathi has said in his interview given to Mr. Jan Myrdal and Gautam Navlakha. Some clarification is required here. I will try to clarify what comrade Ganapathi has said.

Firstly what he meant when he said the government should withdraw its all-out war is nothing but a suspension of its war, or in other words, mutual ceasefire. Let there be no confusion in this regard. What Chidambaram wants is unilateral ceasefire by Maoists while the state continues its brutal campaign of terror. On the contrary, what the CPI (Maoist) wants is a cessation of hostilities by both sides simultaneously. This is the meaning of the first point. A ceasefire by both sides cannot be called a precondition. It is but an expression of the willingness on the part of both sides engaged in war to create a conducive atmosphere for going to the next step of talks.

Secondly, if peaceful legal work has to be done by Maoists as desired by several organizations and members of civil society, then lifting of ban becomes a prerequisite. Without lifting the ban on the party and mass organizations how can we organize legal struggles, meetings etc in our name? If we do so, will these not be dubbed as illegal as they are led by a banned Party? According to us, the ban itself is an authoritarian, undemocratic, and fascist act. Hence the demand for the lifting of the ban is a legitimate demand, and, if fulfilled, will go a long way in promoting open democratic forms of struggles and creating a conducive atmosphere for a dialogue.

Thirdly, what comrade Ganapathi had asked for is that the government should adhere to the Indian Constitution and put an end to the illegal murders in the name of encounters, tortures and arrests. We must include the term 'murders' which is missing in the third point. There is nothing wrong or unreasonable in asking the government to stick to its own constitution. As regards the release of political prisoners this could be an intermediate step as far as the nature of the demand is concerned. However, to hold talks it is necessary for the government to release some leaders. Or else, there would be none to talk to since the entire Party is illegal. We cannot bring any of our leaders overground for the purpose of talks.

4. Would the Maoists be prepared to establish their bona fides on the question of talks by announcing a unilateral ceasefire or, perhaps the non-initiation of combat operations (NICO) after a particular date so as to facilitate the process of dialogue?

Azad: It is quite strange to see intellectuals like you asking the Maoists to declare a unilateral ceasefire when the heavily armed Indian state is carrying out its brutal armed offensive and counter-revolutionary war. How would unilateral announcement of ceasefire or NICO after a particular date establish the bona-fides of our Party on the question of talks? What purpose would such an act serve? It is incomprehensible to me why we are asked to "display this generosity" towards an enemy who has the least concern for the welfare of the people and derives vicarious pleasure in cold-blooded murders, rapes, abductions, tortures and every 5 kind of atrocity one could ever imagine. And how would this "generous Gandhian act" on our part facilitate the process of dialogue with the megalomaniacs in the Home Ministry who do not spare even non-violent Gandhian social activists working in Dantewada and other places?

5. *What do the Maoists hope to achieve with talks? Are you only looking to buy time and regroup yourselves – which is what the government said the CPI (Maoist) did during the aborted dialogue in Andhra Pradesh? Or is it part of a more general re-evaluation of the political strategy of the party, one which may see it emerge as an overground political formation, engaged in open, legal activities and struggles, and perhaps even entering the electoral fray directly or indirectly at various levels in the kind of ‘multiparty competition’ that Prachanda says is necessary for the communist movement? When you say you want the government to lift its ban on the party, are you also undertaking not to indulge in methods of struggle (eg. armed struggle) which led to the imposition of the ban in the first place? There are other Maoist and revolutionary communist parties across India that is mobilizing workers and peasants through mass politics. They have not been banned. Why does the CPI (Maoist) not believe those are legitimate forms of struggle? In Kashmir, the Hurriyat conference stands for the self-determination of J&K and seeks to mobilize people for this but the Indian state, which may use violence and repression and excessive force against people who peacefully protest, has not banned the Hurriyat. Does this not indicate that there is some space in the system for the Maoists to press their demands through peaceful political means?*

Azad: Your question, or rather, a whole set of questions, requires a detailed answer. I am afraid it will take much space but I will try to be as brief as possible. Before I proceed, let me clarify at the very outset that the proposal of talks is neither a ploy to buy time or regroup ourselves, nor is it a part of the general reevaluation of the political strategy of the party that could lead to its coming overground, entering the electoral fray, and multi-party competition as in Nepal. Our CC had already dealt in detail with the question of multi-party competition in our Open Letter to the UCPN (M) and various articles and interviews by our Party leaders. So I will not go into it again here.

Now let me take up each of the points that you had raised. First, you asked me what we want to achieve with talks. My one sentence answer is: we want to achieve whatever is possible for the betterment of people’s lives without compromising on our political programme of new democratic revolution and strategy of protracted people’s war. People have a right to enjoy whatever is guaranteed under the Indian Constitution, however nominal and limited these provisions are. And the government is duty-bound to implement the provisions of the Constitution. We hope the talks would raise the overall consciousness of the oppressed people about their fundamental rights and rally them

to fight for their rights. Talks will also expose government's hypocrisy, duplicity, and its 6 authoritarian and extra-constitutional rule that violates whatever is guaranteed by the Constitution. So talks would help in exposing the government's callous attitude to the people and may help in bringing about reforms, however limited they may be. Another important reason is: talks will give some respite to the people who are oppressed and suppressed under the fascist jack-boots of the Indian state and state-sponsored terrorist organizations like the Salwa Judum, Maa Danteswari Swabhiman Manch, Sendra, Nagarik Suraksha Samiti, Shanti Sena, Harmad Bahini, and so on. Those who sit in studios and insulated rooms, and make their expert analyses about how Maoists want to buy time or utilize the respite to regroup themselves, can never understand the ABC of revolution or the ground situation. This is actually not an argument at all. If the Maoists try to utilize the situation, so would the police and the government. Wouldn't they? They created an extensive network of police informers during the six-month period of ceasefire in Andhra Pradesh in 2004. The intelligence hawks attended every open meeting and activity of the Maoists, took videos of people, and could easily target them after the clamp-down. Maoists had definitely increased their recruitment but so did the enemy. It doesn't need much of a common sense to understand that both sides will utilize a situation of ceasefire to strengthen their respective sides. Then could this be called an argument at all? These cynics, or, I would rather call them, war-hungry hawks, itch for a brutal suppression of the Maoists and the people they directly lead, even if it means genocide. They do not care if in the process thousands of police and paramilitary personnel too perish for they are nothing but cannon-fodder in the eyes of these gentlemen. So let me make it crystal-clear: the proposal of talks is meant neither to buy time nor to regroup ourselves but to give some respite for the people at large who are living under constant state terror and immense suffering. How many of our countrymen know that three lakh adivasis were driven away from their homes, that half the adivasi population in our country is already living under conditions of chronic famine and even the rest of the population is now pushed into famine condition? And why? Because of the insatiable greed of the corporate sharks that is fuelling Chidambaram-Raman Singh's war in Chhattisgarh, Chidambaram-Naveen Patnaik's war in Orissa, Chidambaram-Buddhadeb's war in West Bengal, Chidambaram-Shibu Soren's war in Jharkhand, and so on. Whoever has the minimum concern for the well-being of the masses, no matter what his/her ideology is, would naturally think of how to save

them from being decimated. But those who have nothing but sheer contempt for the poor and helpless people and only think of how to maximize the profits of a tiny parasitic class, put forth weird and cynical arguments deliberately to confuse the people. They depict the Maoists as terrorists, create a fear psychosis in the middle and upper classes that the Maoists would soon come to your cities and disturb your supposedly secure lives; that they would seize power by the middle of this century, and what not. By such hysteria whipped up by the rulers through the various means at their disposal, they justify the brutal war on the people and make the massive displacement, mayhem, 7 massacres, rapes and atrocities appear like collateral damage in the larger noble objective of achieving peace, progress and prosperity for all.

Question of re-evaluation of political strategy of CPI (Maoist), demand for lifting of ban, and the issue of legitimacy of open, legal forms of struggle There are a lot of questions related to the above and I feel this needs some detailed explanation keeping in mind several misconceptions doing the rounds. Firstly you are wrong in assuming that it is the forms of struggle (armed struggle) pursued by the CPI (Maoist) that had "led to the imposition of the ban in the first place." On the contrary, it is the other way round. It is the imposition of the ban that had led the Party and mass organisations to take up arms in the first place.

People are easily misled to believe that it is the violence of the Maoists that had compelled the government to impose the ban. This is a classic example of how a white lie can be dressed up and presented as the truth by endless repetition. If you have even a cursory glance at the history of the revolutionary movement in our country you will find that the forms of struggle adopted by the Maoist revolutionaries from time to time basically corresponded to the forms of suppression pursued by the rulers. A stark example of the transformation of a peaceful mass movement into a violent armed struggle is right in front of our eyes. Lalgah's peaceful mass movement with simple demands for an apology from the police officials and an end to brutal police repression had transformed into a revolutionary armed struggle due to the brutal suppression campaign unleashed by the state and state-sponsored terrorists like the Harnad Bahini. So was the case of the movement in Kashmir and various states of North East. Even in Naxalbari in 1967, the first shots were fired on unarmed women and children by the police. The people retaliated in their own manner and the party took birth and evolved a correct political line for the Indian revolution. In Srikakulam,

Koranna, and Manganna were the first martyrs and these murders transformed the movement into an armed struggle. Even during the first great armed mass uprising of Telangana during the late 1940s, the spark was first lit when the cruel feudal lords murdered Doddi Komaraiah. If you take the case of the transformation of the movement led by the erstwhile CPI (ML)[PW] or MCCI or the present CPI (Maoist), you will find the same pattern. The revolutionaries go to the oppressed, make them conscious of their inherent strength and the reasons for their misery, make them aware of their fundamental rights, organize and unite them, mobilise them into peaceful forms of protest and struggle. Then the state enters with its baton in defence of the class of big landlords, contractors, industrialists, land mafia and other powerful forces that control the state and economy. Everywhere, the peaceful struggles are crushed brutally, entire areas are declared disturbed, fake encounters, abductions, disappearances, rapes, burning down villages, and untold atrocities become the order of the day. 8 The Indian Constitution is consigned to the dustbin by the rulers and is not even worth the paper it is written on. At that point of time any revolutionary party has to quickly switch to non-peaceful and armed forms of struggle if it is really serious about transforming the lives of the people and the oppressive conditions in the country. The alternative is to surrender the revolutionary aims, make adjustments with the system and sail with other parliamentary parties albeit with some revolutionary rhetoric for a while. This, however, will not work for long as people cannot distinguish between the bourgeois-feudal parties and the ML party that had turned into a new parliamentary party. When people are fighting a do-or-die battle you cannot turn your tail but will have to provide them with new appropriate forms of struggle and forms of organization. And this is what our Party had done right from the days of Jagtyal Jaitra Yatra. What shook the rulers at that time and compelled them to declare Jagtyala and Sircilla tauks in Karimnagar district of North Telangana as disturbed areas in 1978 was not the armed struggle of the Maoists (which had suffered a complete setback after the setback in Naxalbari, Srikakulam and elsewhere by 1972 itself) but the powerful anti-feudal militant mass struggle that upset the hitherto established feudal order in the countryside. And one of the main forms of struggle at that time was social boycott of the feudal lords and their henchmen, which witnessed the unity of over 95 per cent of the people in most villages. Social boycott had disturbed the peace and tranquility of the feudal barons who functioned like a state within a state. From then on, undeclared ban has been in vogue in parts of North Telangana

until 1985 when it encompassed the entire state. CRPF was deployed for the first time to suppress the peaceful mass struggles that broke out against liquor. I remember how the mainstream media like the Indian Express published stories of policemen selling arrack at the police stations and forcing people to consume liquor in order to foil the anti-liquor agitation of the revolutionaries.

We find the same story in the urban areas too. The Singareni colliery workers organised themselves into a trade union called Singareni Workers' Federation (SIKASA) in 1981 but it was unofficially banned within three years. An undeclared ban was imposed on the students and youth organisations, women's organizations, workers' organizations, cultural organizations and every form of peaceful, democratic protest was brutally suppressed. One must see the development of armed struggle in the background of the strangulation of even the limited democratic space available in the present semi-colonial semi-feudal set up, and the brutal suppression of the movement by unleashing the lethal instruments of the state. To cut a long story short, it is not the forms of struggle and forms of organization adopted by a party that had led to imposition of ban but the very ban (whether declared or undeclared) on every type of open, legal activity including peaceful public meetings that had compelled the revolutionaries to adopt non-peaceful and armed forms of struggle and underground forms of organization. Our Party 9 appeals to all independent observers and unbiased media personnel to look at this phenomenon historically and analyse this with an open mind. You will realize that what I have said is hundred per cent correct. We are prepared to enter into a debate with anyone on the course of development of the revolutionary movement led by our Party in our country and how, why, and when, armed form of struggle had to be adopted by the party.

Revolutionaries never mince words. There is no need to. We believe that ultimately people have to take up armed struggle to seize power. But this does not mean we take up armed struggle at the cost of all other forms of struggle and thereby invite the state to unleash its brute force on the people. On the contrary, it is only when all other forms of struggle fail to achieve the objective, when these are crushed under the iron heels of the state that we resort to non-peaceful and armed forms of struggle. It is very important to understand this as it has become a common practice for some so-called political analysts and representatives of the ruling classes to charge the Maoists as responsible for all the violence since

their very ideology talks of armed struggle. Hence, they conclude, there is no use of talks with the Maoists. These simpletons resort to the method of simple reductionism: Maoists believe in violence and armed struggle to overthrow the state; hence they indulge in endless violence; there is no use of talking to people whose very ideology is rooted in violence; and hence there is no other way than to crush the Maoists with all the means at the disposal of the state. Such goes their argument. I will deal with this later on. I didn't quite understand what you meant when you said referring to other open Maoist and revolutionary communist parties across India that are mobilizing workers and peasants through mass politics: "Why does the CPI (Maoist) not believe those are legitimate forms of struggle?", you ask. Who has said we do not believe these are legitimate forms of struggle? We consider all forms of struggle as legitimate, right from social boycott as we had practiced in Jagtyala, hungerstrikes as our comrades in various prisons are frequently taking up besides other places, and various militant demonstrations. Armed struggle is also a form of struggle and assumes importance depending on the tactical moves by the enemy.

While all forms of struggle are legitimate in our eyes, some so-called revolutionaries, veterans of yesteryears, surprisingly exclude armed struggle from the forms of struggle and lay one-sided emphasis on peaceful forms of struggle. They can well join the Gandhian organisations and fight for some reforms instead of calling themselves as part of the ML stream or as Maoists aiming for the revolutionary transformation of society. For some of them, ML ideology or label is only a fashion. They do not wish to bring about the revolutionary transformation of the society and state but only a few cosmetic reforms.

The question of imposing or not imposing a ban on a certain party or organization depends on several factors. It would be too simplistic to conclude that just because a Party believes in armed struggle and indulges in acts of violence it is being banned while those who pursue open, legal forms of struggle are allowed to function freely. During the Emergency, as we all know, both the revolutionary Left as well as the reactionary Right parties were banned. Even at the height of sectarian violence indulged in by the Hindu fascist gangs, they are allowed a field day. They carry arms, display them openly, threaten the religious minorities with genocide, indulge in violence against the Muslims and Christians, and yet are deemed as legitimate organizations since they are part of the ruling classes and their integral culture of violence.

The acts of destruction in the violence that was organized in a planned manner [in Andhra Pradesh] by a faction of the Congress in one day far surpassed the so-called violent acts carried out by Maoists in an entire year! Yet our Union Home Ministry issues advertisements against Maoist violence while keeping mum about the mayhem and arson by his own Congress party hooligans. Thus the question of how you look at violence is coloured with a class bias. The violence by the ruling class parties is considered legitimate while those by the oppressed masses and their organizations are dangerous and a threat to the security of the rulers. This has been true right from the time of Charvakas.

6. If the government believes the Maoists "misused" the Andhra talks, your party believes the dialogue there was abused by the authorities to identify and then target your leaders. How, then, do you hope to deal with the risks of once again entering into a dialogue with the Indian state?

Azad: The talks we held with the Congress regime in AP provided us with important lessons. And these lessons would guide us in any future talks with the governments of the exploiting classes. It would be too simplistic to conclude that the police could identify and target the leaders by utilizing the talks interregnum.

They used it to some extent just as we used it to take our politics widely among the people in the State and outside. The setback we had suffered in most parts of AP is not a fall-out of talks but due to several inherent weaknesses of our Party in AP and our failure to adopt appropriate tactics to confront enemy's tactics. This is an entirely different subject and can be dealt at some other time.

What is of relevance here is that the talks in AP have given us a rich experience and important lessons. If at all a situation for talks arises once again-which we do not foresee in the near future given the inexorable compulsions on the government from the corporate sharks for total control of the mineral-rich region-we can instruct our leadership in various prisons to take the responsibility. Our General Secretary had explained this in the course of his interview with Mr. Jan Myrdal and Mr. Gautam Navlakha. The mistakes committed in AP during talks with the government will not be repeated.

7. There is a contradiction between the recent offer for talks made by Kishenji and the spate of violence and killing by the Maoists which has followed that. The Home Ministry has compiled a list of such incidents and circulated it to the media. No doubt there has been no letup in the government offensive

during 11 this period and you could produce your own counter-list but many of these attacks by the Maoists do not appear to be 'defensive' but 'offensive'. Can the offer of talks go hand in hand with the intensification of offensive Maoist military activities?

Azad: This is not as complicated as it is made out to be. The crux of the matter is: no ceasefire has been declared either by the Maoists or by the government. The Maoists had made an offer of talks which was immediately dismissed by the government as a joke and spurned by Chidambaram himself who wants nothing short of total surrender, whatever be the language he uses. When the government is not serious about a ceasefire and dialogue, and is placing a condition that Maoists should abjure violence without spelling out whether it will reciprocate with a simultaneous declaration of ceasefire, then what is the use of grumbling about acts of violence by Maoists? The acts of violence by both sides will cease from the day a ceasefire is declared.

Now I am not going into the innumerable atrocities by the police forces and the paramilitary gangs sent by [the state]. There has been a wide coverage in magazines like Tehelka, Outlook and our own Maoist Information Bulletins. The statements and fact-finding committee reports by various organizations and Gandhians like Himanshu Kumar clearly show how savage the state has become. Equally atrocious is the list compiled by the Union Home Ministry regarding the violent acts by Maoists to justify its rejection of the Maoist offer. The annexure appended to your questionnaire speaks volumes about the duplicity and lies spread by the war-mongering hawks in the Home Ministry as part of their psywar. This is meant to lend an element of legitimacy to their rejection of the ceasefire offer by Maoists and also to their war waged for nipping in the bud the alternative organs of people's power, the alternative development models, and for grabbing the resources in the mineral-rich region for the benefit of the class of tiny parasitic corporate elite they represent. I will not go into all the incidents listed therein.

The very first "heinous act of violence" cited by the Union Home Ministry in its annexure circulated to the media to manufacture consent for its dirty war, goes like this: "In West Bengal (February 22, 2010) – attack on a State Police-CRPF Joint patrol party in PS Lalgarh, district West Midnapore. In the ensuing gun battle Lalmoham Tudu, President of the Police-e-Sangharsh Birodhi Janaganer Committee (PSBJC) was killed."

The above incident was said to have taken place within three hours of the offer of a 72-day ceasefire made by comrade Kishenji. Chidambaram himself had gone on record repeating several times this fabricated "heinous act" in a desperate bid to justify his rejection of the Maoist offer. Earlier too, Chidambaram had deliberately hurled an accusation against the CPI (Maoist) of massacring villagers in Khagaria district. Coming to the so-called attack by Maoists on the joint patrol party, it is a hundred per cent lie. There was no such attack at all. Ask anyone in Narcha village or Kanatapahari. Every villager, and not just the family members of Sri Tudu, will tell you how a hundred-odd CRPF men lay in waiting at his house on the night of 22nd, how they caught the three, and carried out the cold-blooded murder. That there had been no firing by the Maoists was corroborated even by the CRPF men guarding the camp.

Initially, the SP of Paschim Mednipur asserted that Mr. Tudu died when the CRPF men "bravely" retaliated an attack by the Maoist guerrillas on the fortresslike CRPF camp in Kantapahari. Later, realizing the hollowness of his own story and fearing that it would evaporate like dew drops with the first rays of the sun, they changed the version by [saying] that Tudu and other two were killed when a Maoist guerrilla squad attacked the CRPF's raiding party. This lie is being propagated consciously, with a clearly worked out strategy of justifying the gruesome offensive by our own brand of George Bushes and Donald Rumsfelds. Tehelka Magazine, Star Ananda and other media sources have graphically exposed this lie.

As for your question regarding offensive and defensive actions, I wish to clarify to every well-meaning person who desires a reduction of violence on the part of the Maoists that there is nothing like defensive and offensive actions once the war has commenced. However, our revolutionary counter-violence is overall defensive in nature for a considerable period of time. This does not mean we will retaliate only when we are fired at and keep silent the rest of the time when the police, paramilitary and the vigilante gangs unleash terror and engage in all-round preparations for carrying out genocide. To make this clear, let us suppose the men sent by Chidambaram are combing an area. When we come to know of it, we will carry out an offensive, annihilate as many forces as possible in the given circumstances, and seize arms and ammunition. We will also take prisoners of war where that is possible. This will be part of our overall defensive strategy although it is a tactical counter-offensive.

In the war zone, if you do not take the initiative, the enemy will seize the initiative. Likewise, we may have to attack ordnance depots, trucks carrying explosives, guards at installations such as NMDC, RPF personnel, and even outposts and stations far beyond our areas to seize arms, as in Nayagarh, for instance. To fight a well-equipped superior enemy force that has no dearth of arms supplies and logistical support, what other option do we have but to equip ourselves with the arms seized from the enemy?

Some of these men are killed when they offer resistance. We feel sorry for their lives but there is no other way. Chidambaram may yell that innocent CISF jawans 13 were targeted even though they were in no way related to the state's offensive against Maoists. But that is how things would be in a war zone. The war would get dirtier and dirtier, engulf new areas and affect hitherto unaffected regions and sections of society. But this is precisely what [the ruling] coterie want. We will also destroy the informer network built by the enemy, his supplies, bunkers, communication network and infrastructure. We have to confiscate money from the banks and other sources for funding the revolution. There is no use of yelling about the indiscriminate destruction by Maoists. We have to paralyse the administration, immobilize the enemy troops, cut off his supplies and perhaps even target the policemen engaged in removing the dead bodies of the enemy.

There was a hue and cry when our guerrillas placed mines under the dead bodies. But why such a hue and cry? Where are the rules in this war? Who has defined the rules? If there were rules, then why are the peace-chanting pigeons in the Home Ministry completely silent about the beasts in police uniform who had chopped off the breasts of 70-year-old Dude Muye before killing her, murdered in cold blood over 120 adivasis since August 2009 in Dantewada, Bijapur, Kanker and Narayanpur, and yet roam freely and continue their atrocities without hindrance? Chidambaram, Pillai, Raman Singh and their like should first define the rules of engagement and then, and only then, they have a right to speak of violations of the rules. I am sure they would never dare to discipline their own forces while preaching meaningless sermons about Maoist "atrocities."

We appeal to all peace-loving, democratic-minded organizations and individuals to ponder over this question, pressurize the government to adhere to the Geneva Convention, punish those who are creating Gompads, Gachampallis, Singanamadugus, Palachelimas, Tetemadugus,

Takilodus, Dogpadus, Palods, and several other massacres. If it is to be a war, then let it be but the state should clearly state whether it would abide by its own Constitution and the International Conventions on the conduct of war.

8. *The Maoists are engaging in armed struggle but have not hesitated in use violence against non-combatants. The beheading of a policeman, Francis Induvar, while in Maoist captivity, shocked the country and was a blatant violation of civilized norms and of international humanitarian law, which the Maoists, like the Government, are obliged to adhere to. If civil society condemns the security forces for killing civilians in places like Gompad village in Chhattisgarh and elsewhere and demands that justice be done and the guilty punished, it has an equal right to condemn the Maoists whenever they commit such crimes. There have been some reports that the Maoist leadership has apologized for the killing of Induvar but what steps have you taken to punish those who were involved? What steps have you taken to ensure such crimes are not committed by your cadres? If your answer is that the state has also not punished those among its ranks who have committed crimes, are you then admitting that the political culture and moral universe the Maoists represent is the same as that of the state which you decry as illegitimate?*

Azad: I had already covered part of your question in my answer to your earlier question. Our attempt will always be to target the enemy who is engaged in war against us. Non-combatants are generally avoided. But what about the intelligence officials and police informers who collect information about the movements of Maoists and cause immense damage to the movement? It is true most of them do not carry arms openly or are unarmed. What to do with them? If we just leave them they would continue to cause damage to the Party and movement. If we punish them there is a furore from the media and civil society. Caught between the devil and the deep sea! Our general practice is to conduct a trial in a people's court wherever that is possible and proceed in accordance with the decision of the people. Where it is not possible to hold the people's court due to the intensity of repression we conduct investigation, take the opinion of the people and give appropriate punishment.

I agree there is no place for cruelty while giving out punishments. I had clarified this in one of my earlier interviews while referring to the case of Francis Induvar.

But it is made into a big issue by the media when a thousand beheadings had taken place in the past five years by the police-paramilitary and Salwa Judum goons. You are saying the beheading of

Francis Induvar was a blatant violation of civilized norms and of international humanitarian law which both sides in the war are obliged to adhere to. Do you really think the government is adhering to the law? And has the media ventured to ask Chidambaram why [the state] hasn't been following the international law or at least the Indian Constitution when dealing with the people in the war zone or citizens elsewhere? Just ten days ago, two of our Party leaders-comrades Shakhmuri Appa Rao and Kondal Reddy-were abducted from Chennai and Pune respectively by the APSIB and the Central Intelligence officials and were murdered in cold blood. What cruel tortures these comrades were subjected to by the lawless goons of the Indian state no one will ever know. I can give a thousand such examples of killings of our comrades in cold blood while in police captivity in the past five years. Why is the media silent about these murders but becomes hysteric when one Police Inspector is beheaded?

What is the civil society doing when such cold-blooded murders are taking place in police custody? Why single out a rare case of the beheading of one Induvar and play it up whenever you need an excuse to bash the Maoists? When our comrades hear of these cold-blooded murders committed by the APSIB or other officials of the state, it is natural that their blood would boil and they will not bat an eye-lid to hack any of the perpetrators of these inhuman crimes, say a man from APSIB or Grey Hounds, to pieces if he fell into their hands. In the war zone, the passions run with such intensity which one cannot even imagine in other areas or under normal circumstances. Could someone who has seen women being raped and murdered, children and old men being murdered after hacking them to pieces in the killing fields of Dantewada and Bijapur, ever give a thought to your 15 so-called non-existent (I say non-existent as none of the combatants know what these are nor would follow these conventions as the history of fake encounters by the Indian state shows) international laws when the perpetrator of such crimes happens to fall into their hands? The pent-up anger of the masses is so intense that even the Party general secretary will perhaps fail to control the fury of the adivasi masses when they lay their hands on their tormentors. Maoists are not for crude and raw justice as some are trying to make it appear. Maoist guerrillas are not thugs and mercenaries like the men who carry out their brutal heinous acts in the name of democracy and the "rule of law." Maoists have great respect for human life. Democratic values and norms are an integral part of socialist and communist ideology. Yet at the same time we think it is necessary to destroy the few poisonous weeds to save the entire crop.

I once again request you and all others to think by imagining yourselves what would you have done when your mothers, sisters and daughters are raped in front of your eyes, your father, brother and sons are murdered after being hacked to pieces. And worst of all, when there is no guardian of the "rule of law" to receive your complaints and the complainant himself/herself is abducted. When we do not understand the feelings of the affected people, it is better to imagine ourselves in their place. This may help us in getting nearer to the truth.

9. The Supreme Court has asked the petitioners who filed a PIL against Salwa Judum atrocities to draw up a rehabilitation plan for those displaced by the violence perpetrated in Chhattisgarh by Salwa Judum, the regular security forces and the Maoists. Is the CPI (Maoist) prepared to give an undertaking that it will allow the rebuilding of schools and the establishment of basic government services (primary health care, anganwadi, PDS etc.) as part of a court-backed plan for the welfare of the tribals affected by the conflict? Will you agree not to attack government employees and officials who enter to provide services to the tribal masses?

Azad: Asking us to give an undertaking that we will allow the rebuilding of schools and establishment of basic government services in the areas we control and that we will not attack government employees and officials is quite bizarre, to say the least. The welfare of the masses is the first priority for the Maoist revolutionaries. You should request Mr. Chidambaram to allow you to visit the areas in Dandakaranya, Jharkhand, Orissa, or the villages of Jangalmahal by controlling his paramilitary forces, the SPOs, the Salwa Judum, Shanti Sena, Nagarik Suraksha Samiti and Harmad from obstructing you. Then you will see with your own eyes a hitherto hidden story of how the adivasis are prevented from pursuing their normal activity by the state and state-sponsored terrorists.

You will find how the forces had occupied school buildings for six months to a year, thereby preventing the children from pursuing their studies. You will find how the adivasis are prevented from buying their daily necessities from the 16 weekly bazaars most of which were forcibly closed through threats and intimidation by the so-called security forces. Who is blocking the development of the adivasis, who is preventing them from carrying on their normal activity like cultivating the fields, tending the animals, collecting minor forest produce, picking tendu leaves, obtaining their daily necessities, and so on will become as clear as day-light once you visit these remote villages. Hence the government, its

“security” forces, and vigilante gangs are hell-bent on preventing independent observers and fact-finding teams from visiting these areas.

It is worthwhile to keep in mind that it is not the lack of development that has become the problem in the rural areas, particularly adivasi-inhabited areas. On the contrary, it is its imperialist-dictated anti-people development model that is driving them to displacement and deprivation, death and destitution, and extreme desperation. There need be hardly any doubt that the poor adivasis have been a happier lot before the civilized [corporate] goons set their foot on their soil. The development model pursued by [the rulers] displaced them and made them aliens in their own land.

The so-called development that you are referring to is the development that India had seen under the British colonialists. The talk of roads in remote areas is not for the benefit of the people, who are without food and drinking water, but only for the speedier movement of the raw materials from the hinterland to the cities, to help the mining sharks to transport the mineral wealth and forest produce. And, of course, for rushing in the state’s troops to quell any militant people’s struggle against the rapacious plunder by the tiny parasitic class of blood-sucking leaches. The entire world knows that a George Bush invaded Iraq for oil even as the media in the US barked about Saddam’s non-existent Weapons of Mass Destruction. Entire India knows that [the rulers] and the vultures they represent are itching to lay their hands on the abundant reserves of iron ore, coal, tin, bauxite, dolomite, limestone and other minerals of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa and other States where their Operation Green Hunt is launched.

Lastly, banding together Maoists with the state and vigilante gangs, and equating their revolutionary counter-violence in defence of the rights of the people with the counter-revolutionary violence of the state and vigilante gangs like the Salwa Judum, is a despicable trick played by the rulers and those so-called democratic forces to obfuscate the stark reality of the brutal violence of the state and statesponsored terrorists. I can say with full confidence that there was no displacement, whatsoever, of innocent people due to the revolutionary counterviolence by the Maoists. It is only a handful of anti-people exploiters, tribal heads and landed gentry who had fled the villages in the course of the class struggle. 17 Many, however, had surrendered to the people, mended their behaviour, and continue to live in the villages like others. The Supreme Court should know that the displacement of the adivasis was done in accordance with

a pre-mediated plan to evacuate the villages and settle them in Vietnam-type strategic hamlets. And this policy is being continued by the BJP government in Chhattisgarh with full assistance from the Congress-led government at the Centre. The Supreme Court, if at all it is serious about the displacement of the adivasis, should direct the central and State governments to immediately halt its brutal armed offensive on adivasi villages in the first place, which is resulting in the massive exodus of the people estimated at around three lakhs since the current brutal war began in the name of Operation Green Hunt.

10. Human rights groups have condemned the security forces and the Maoists for not respecting the sanctity of schools. If the security forces take them over and convert them into barracks, the Maoists have also been guilty of destroying school buildings and infrastructure. Even in the absence of a ceasefire or dialogue, don't you think both sides need to come to an understanding that schools and school children should not become targets of this war?

Azad: It has now become a fashionable thing for some human rights groups and the media personnel to play the role of referees in a sports event. By criticizing both sides equally they imagine they are being impartial or neutral in the war. If someone says that both Indians and the British were responsible for the violence in India during the two centuries of British rule would you accept it? Or that both Iraqis and the American occupiers are responsible for the violence in Iraq? Any freedom-loving person would unequivocally say it was the British colonialists that caused the blood-shed in India and it is the American aggressors that are the cause for the unending violence in Iraq.

By criticizing both the so-called security forces and the Maoists for not respecting the sanctity of schools, these human rights groups imagine they are playing a neutral and impartial role. But they do not even see the cause and effect chain of events. They do not ask themselves the simple question: If the police and paramilitary do not occupy schools, then where is the need for the Maoists to destroy them? Do you know the fact that in many villages it was not the Maoist squads but the people themselves who had demolished school buildings since they did not wish to see the security forces create insecurity in their villages? How can you ask the Maoists and the people to assure you that they will respect the sanctity of schools occupied or likely to be occupied by their tormentors? My request to media people like you is: please do not be misled by an act, by how it happened, but go deeper into why it happened. Only then you will reach the truth. 18 However, we also agree with your proposition

that even in the absence of a ceasefire or dialogue, both sides should come to an understanding that schools and school children should not become targets of the war. We take this occasion to convey to the GOI that it should immediately withdraw all its forces from school buildings and stop recruiting school children as SPOs and as police informers. If they withdraw their forces and assure they would not reoccupy school buildings, then our Party will desist from targeting schools. And if the government stops recruitment of school children as SPOs and police informers, then the very basis for punishing these people disappears. But the more important thing and the larger issue is: can schools function even if the buildings are intact when the parents of the school children are murdered, raped, abducted, tortured, and are forced to flee? What do you have to say of the children of the three-lakh people who had fled the villages due to Operation Green Hunt I and II? What use are the school buildings and the talk of sanctity of schools when the villages themselves are deserted? A more rational proposal would be to ensure that the inhabitants of the villages are resettled with the assurance that the police and paramilitary would not continue their atrocities and let them live in peace. This is the most important thing and should assume first and foremost priority in the war theatres all over India, particularly Dandakaranya.

Is the Maoist party and leadership under pressure because of recent top-level arrests like that of Kobad Ghandy? Is there also a wider crisis of leadership with fewer activists from the intelligentsia getting attracted to Maoists? Azad: I did not understand what pressure you are referring to. Is it the pressure for a ceasefire and talks? If so, then I would say you are completely off the mark. One cannot overcome pressure through such tactics. Actually the Party and leadership will grow rapidly in times of war. Several new leaders are emerging out of the struggle. War is giving birth to new generals and commanders, which we never anticipated in normal times. While it took several years to produce a leader of calibre in relatively peaceful times, it is taking a fraction of that time in the midst of the war situation.

Today we find even children acquiring high level of consciousness at an early age. War is transforming the world outlook of the illiterate people, their understanding about the class nature of the state and its various wings, and how they have to get rid of the anti-people state and establish their own organs of power. People have begun to understand from their own lives what comrade Lenin had taught in his State and

Revolution. This transformation has contributed to the development of leadership at all levels. At the central level, I agree there is some problem, though not very acute, after the losses in the past two years. Overall, it is not true to say that there is a wider crisis of leadership due to drop in recruitment from the intelligentsia. You will be surprised to know that contrary to 19 the assessment of various analysts and media personnel, the appeal of the Maoist movement has actually grown stronger in the intelligentsia. And it is precisely this fact which is rattling [the rulers] and [their] trumpeters in the media. The threats and attacks on intellectuals have been increasing in tenor and there are growing attempts at isolating the intellectuals who seem to sympathise with the Maoists. The more the growth in popularity of the Maoists and their politics, the more is the cacophony about the erosion of the mass base of Maoists, especially among the intellectuals. You must also look at it from another angle, instead of concluding that [a] lack of intelligentsia has created a crisis of leadership. The mass base of the Maoists has actually grown stronger, notwithstanding the attempts of the rulers to destroy it by brute force. The more you try to crush it the more it bounces back. Our leadership is drawn basically from the oppressed class of adivasis, dalits, agricultural labourers and poor peasants. It is precisely because of this circumstance that our movement has become invincible. Intellectuals are a good asset for the party but it is the basic classes that are the life-blood of the Party. And we have plenty from these sections.

11. *In Ganapathi's interview to Jan Myrdal and Oavlakha he said: "I reiterate that at present no one party or organization is capable enough to be a rallying center for all revolutionary, democratic, progressive and patriotic forces and people. Hence, at present juncture our Party can play a significant role in rallying all revolutionary, democratic, progressive and patriotic forces and people." This suggests you see the Maoists as one part of a wider force of progressive, patriotic people. Who else do you consider part of these forces? Which organizations or parties do you regard as progressive and patriotic part of these forces? Does this not include the CPI and CPI (M)? Why then have Maoists in Bengal been involved in assassinating cadres of other communist parties like CPI (M)?*

Azad: It is not only now, but all along we have been considering ourselves an indivisible part of the broader force of other revolutionary, democratic and patriotic sections of people. Firstly, we are one of the several revolutionary detachments in the international detachment of the world proletariat and we see ourselves as a part of the broad world-

wide anti-imperialist front. Our mass organizations are a part of the International League of People's Struggles (ILPS) and are in the forefront of the struggle against American imperialism.

Within India, our party took birth in the midst of the revolutionary upsurge of the late 1960s, particularly with the glorious Naxalbari uprising, and hence we are an indivisible part of all that is revolutionary in the Indian political stream. We are also an heir to the great Telangana Armed Agrarian Uprising (1946-51), the Tebhaga uprising of 1946, and all the revolutionary struggles led by the Communist Party since its birth in 1921, notwithstanding the betrayals by its central leadership at every critical turning point in the revolutionary political history of our country. Second, and the one more pertinent to your query, is the fact that the Communist revolutionaries are politically (i.e., in terms of its programme), a part of the wider democratic stream of all anti-feudal and anti-imperialist forces in the country. This is the essence of our programme of new democratic revolution (NDR), which seeks to unite all those opposed to imperialism, feudalism, comprador bureaucratic capitalism into one broad front to overthrow these enemies and establish a government comprised of the four-class alliance of the working class, peasantry, urban petty-bourgeoisie, and the national bourgeoisie. Once you grasp this political basis of our NDR it will not be difficult to understand why we are trying to form numerous tactical united fronts as part of forming a strategic united front in various States and at the all-India level.

To identify the organizations or parties that can be called progressive (usage of the term 'democratic' would be more appropriate) and patriotic, one has to see not only whether they have any anti-imperialist, anti-feudal and anti-state or antiauthoritarian aspect included in their political programmes, but also their actual practice. We consider most of the ML revolutionary forces as part of this front. We consider national liberation organizations like the NSCN, ULFA, PLA of Manipur, and the JKLF in Kashmir as part of the wider democratic forces fighting the Indian state. We consider the various non-parliamentary trade union organizations, various progressive organizations belonging to the religious minorities which are persecuted by state-backed Hindu fascist organizations; various organizations of dalits and other oppressed castes, adivasis and women; the non-parliamentary organizations that are fighting for demands like separate Telangana, Gorkhaland, Vidarbha, Bundelkhand and so on; the organizations that are waging struggles

against SEZs, mining and other so-called development projects leading to massive displacement of people; organizations fighting against the Liberalisation-Privatisation-Globalisation (LPG) policies of the reactionary rulers; those which boldly confront the growing authoritarianism and unbridled state repression resulting in fake encounters, mass murders, and violation of all fundamental rights of the people; and so on, as part of this broad-based nonparliamentary democratic people's front.

There are also a large number of intellectuals and other democratic individuals who are concerned about the well-being of the people and the sovereignty of our country at large. We consider all these as genuine patriotic forces that are deeply concerned about the future of our country, about the well-being of the overwhelming majority of the Indian people rather than that of a tiny parasitical class that runs the country through the so-called mainstream parliamentary parties.

I am obviously leaving out the names of the organizations and individuals who, in our opinion could play a crucial role in the revolutionary transformation of our country into a self-reliant, genuinely democratic society. Today we are passing through a phase of Indian McCarthyism that brands every form of dissent and anyone who questions the authoritarianism of the Indian state as Maoist in order to legitimize its witch-hunting and brutal repression.

Today immense possibilities have unfolded for the rapid advance of the revolutionary war in India and the task of the revolutionary Party lies in how effectively and ably it can utilize the present situation, rally all those who have become the victims of the anti-people, imperialist-dictated policies of the comprador-feudal forces ruling our country, and forge a broad-based united front of all these affected sections of our society and all revolutionary, democratic and patriotic forces in the country. This task should be achieved by defeating the brutal all-out countrywide coordinated war unleashed by the reactionary ruling classes of our country with the aid and assistance of the imperialists, particularly American imperialists.

If we fail in achieving broader unity of all these forces, the fall-out would be disastrous for the Indian people at large since the aim of this cruel armed onslaught is not only to suppress the Maoist movement, but also to suppress every form of democratic dissent and struggle of the people against the authoritarian, feudal and autocratic structure of

the Indian state and socio-political system. As put forth by our General Secretary, comrade Ganapathi, in the same interview given recently: "This war is principally against Maoist movement but not limited to this movement and aimed enough against all revolutionary, democratic, progressive and patriotic movements and the movements of oppressed communities of our society including oppressed nationalities. At this juncture, all these forces have to think together how to face this mighty enemy and for this how to unite to go ahead."

Now coming to your specific question regarding the CPI and CPI (M). Are they not a part of the wider democratic and patriotic forces? I would say YES and NO. As far as the rank and file cadre of these parties is concerned, there is still some amount of sincerity and zeal among a section of them to work for the well-being of the people. But the leadership has completely capitulated to the exploiting ruling classes and pursues a reformist line that would only help sustain the status quo albeit with a few cosmetic changes. Here too, we have to differentiate the CPI from the CPI (M). We do not place both the CPI and the CPI (M) in the same category. The CPI leadership has been critical of the policies of the CPI (M), has consistently opposed counter-revolutionary vigilante gangs like Salwa Judum propped up by the State and central governments, and is opposing the Operation Green Hunt launched by the Centre.

One can witness the reactionary anti-people nature of the policies of the CPI (M), especially in States where it is in power. Singur, Nandigram, Lalgarh, and a host of other names have stripped the CPI (M) of its guise of anti-imperialism and antineoliberalism. The CPI (M) is not even a thoroughgoing democratic force, let alone being Communist. However, we are prepared to join forces with even these revisionists if they come forth into non-parliamentary struggles on the basic issues of the people, and to the extent they uphold democratic values.

It is wrong to say we are assassinating the cadres of the CPI (M). We are confronting the armed onslaught by the storm-troopers like the Harmad Bahini and other armed [men] maintained by their party leaders by putting up courageous resistance. The struggle against the CPI (M) is part of the class struggle of the people against exploitation and oppression. We challenge them to an open debate on any issue. Despite their diplomatic and opportunistic stand that their fight with the Maoists is mainly political, they are in the forefront in the war waged by the Indian ruling classes against the Maoists. Unable to confront us ideologically and politically, their leaders and spokespersons have

unleashed a vicious campaign of outright lies and slander against the Maoists.

We call upon the cadres of the CPI (M) and other so-called left parties to come forward to unite with other forces to fight against the disastrous policies of the central and State governments, to unite with others to oppose the brutal war waged by the reactionary rulers guided by the US imperialists against the Maoist movement and all forms of democratic dissent. We are prepared to unite with all sincere and genuine forces in these parties who take the side of the broad masses of people.

12. Why has the CPI (Maoist) decided to reach out through the columns of The Hindu? To use a newspaper to clarify its views vis a vis the Government?

Azad: Among the daily newspapers, The Hindu has a reputation for giving out serious news and less of sensational stuff that has become the genre of the media these days. Our party leadership has given interviews to this paper earlier too, such as my interview on the developments in Nepal, which was covered in two parts. On a lighter vein, I think it will reach out to our direct Enemy No. 1 at the present juncture, Mr. Chidambaram, too.

I think the media can play a role in carrying the views of a banned party to the government and the people at large, particularly at a time when facts regarding our Party are distorted, misinterpreted, and obfuscated in a meticulously planned manner. And when there is no scope for a dialogue given the determination of the rulers to carry out their pre-programmed war offensive that was worked out a year ago, we think it appropriate to reach out to the people at large through the media too.

Finally, I thank The Hindu for the thought-provoking and incisive questions it has placed before our Party. We look forward to more of such interaction with the media in future. On behalf of our Central Committee and our entire Party, I welcome any questions related to our ideology, political programme, strategy, tactics, and practice. I hope through regular and active interaction between organizations like ours that are proscribed by the government and the media, an opportunity is provided to the people to arrive at a correct judgment and seek truth from facts. Or else, truth is certain to become a casualty in this world dominated by corporate sharks that control virtually every source of information that is fed to the people.

Letter to Swami Agnivesh

Dear Swami Agnivesh

WE heard that you and other democratic intellectuals had gone on a peace march in Dantewada in the first week of May 2010 braving the disruption organized by the goons of the BJP and Congress. You might have realized how the state government and the Centre are determined to sabotage any attempt to bring peace to the region and to prevent anyone from making efforts in that direction. We appreciate the efforts of well-meaning intellectuals and social activists like you to bring peace to the region. We also appreciate the efforts made by you to convince the Union Government to come forward for a cease-fire and dialogue with our Party which had prompted the Union Home Minister to state the Government's position on the issue.

We had gone through the letter written to you by the Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram dated May 11, 2010 which mentions the Government's position on the peace process and its offer for talks with the CPI (Maoist). The essence of his letter is that "the CPI (Maoist) should announce they will abjure violence" and specify a date from which they will not indulge in violent activities; should "stop all violent activities" from that date for 72 hours, and that the security forces will not conduct any operations against the CPI (Maoist); that "talks" would begin "sometime during the period of 72 hours when there is no violence"; and that the CPI (Maoist) should "continue to maintain its position of no violence until the talks are concluded."

Letter May 31, 2010

Source

www.swamiagnivesh.com

We had already stated publicly our Party's position on cease-fire and talks with

the government several times in the past. We wish to reiterate our Party's position once again in light of the proposals made by Mr. Chidambaram in his letter sent to you.

Firstly we hold the opinion that the cease-fire should be mutual. You are well aware of the continuous persecution of ordinary innocent people by the security forces in all the regions where the latter are deployed as part of the Operation Green Hunt. Not a day passes without an incident of murder, rape, abduction, torture of the adivasis and destruction of their property or stealing their belongings by these so-called security forces. How can the people or the Party and its various wings get confidence that the Government is serious in its intent for peace when it allows its forces to indulge in heinous atrocities on innocent unarmed people, when the government itself allows the suspension of all basic democratic rights of the citizens and consigns their own Constitution to the dust-bin? In such a situation it is necessary on the part of the government to prove its seriousness regarding the peace process by first halting its operations against innocent unarmed people and unequivocally stating that it is ready to observe cease-fire simultaneously with the CPI (Maoist) starting with a specified date. The practical measure to really ensure peace is the declaration of mutual cease-fire for a definite period, say, 2 or 3 months, to start with. Insisting that the CPI (Maoist) should declare that it will abjure violence is an unsound and unreasonable proposal. It implies that the Maoists are indulging in violence while the Government and its security forces have been fighting for peace. The facts actually are vice versa.

It is the paramilitary, police, private vigilante gangs sponsored by the government that are unleashing violence on the people on an hourly basis and the people are compelled to retaliate for their own survival. The Party and the PLGA too are compelled to undertake counter-offensive operations in their self-defence and in defence of the people. Hence it is the Government that has to instill confidence among the people and the Party cadres about its seriousness by first halting its offensive operations and attacks on the people instead of asking the Maoists to unilaterally declare that they will abjure violence.

Even more amusing is the time period of 72 hours which means just nothing. Such a short period cannot prove the seriousness on either side. Even a minor incident on either side can be picked up to prove the violation by the other side. A relatively longer period is necessary if we wish to really bring peace. It is only after a period of peace and the creation

of a conducive atmosphere that talks can be held. Our Party is very serious about bringing about peace especially at the present juncture when lakhs of adivasis had fled, and are fleeing, their homes; when lakhs of adivasis are facing chronic conditions of hunger and famine due to their ouster from their lands and forcible closure of the weekly bazaars by the police and administration; when the adivasis are haunted by the threat of death any day by the most savage paramilitary, police, SPOs and private vigilante gangs. One should not be swayed by victories and defeats at this critical juncture in the life of the adivasi community in our country but try to create conditions whereby their survival is ensured.

You are also aware of the difficulties involved for an underground party that is proscribed by the government to proceed for talks. Hence we had proposed the release of political prisoners from the jails. At the outset the Government can take the initiative to release at least some of our Party leaders so as to facilitate talks with them. Without referring to any of these proposals made by our Party, Mr. Chidambaram proposes that "talks will begin sometime during the period of 72 hours when there is no violence." He also says that he expects that the CPI (Maoist) will "continue to maintain its position of 'no violence' until the talks are concluded."

The above-mentioned proposal by Mr. Chidambaram, though it might appear apparently as genuine, actually lacks seriousness and is intended only to satisfy people like you who have been insisting on peace. His insistence on a 72-hour-period of peace on the part of the CPI (Maoist) and to hold talks during this period is like a joke. It only shows how Mr. Chidambaram lacks seriousness on the issue and wants to somehow complete the formality of talks, if at all they materialize, in order to satisfy the civil society. If the government is serious it should speak in terms of mutual cease-fire, for a longer period of time, and spell out the government's stand on fulfilling the minimum requisites like release of leaders and lifting the ban on the CPI (Maoist) and the mass organisations. Its duplicity is also seen in its hectic preparations for stepping up its brutal armed offensive even as it speaks the language of peace and talks. Do you really believe that Mr. Chidambaram is earnest in proposing for talks when there are reports of how the central government is equipping its forces with several more choppers and preparing the Indian Army too for the war on people?

To sum up, our Party desires peace sincerely in the interests of the lakhs of adivasis who are being cruelly crushed under the jack-boots of

the forces sent by the Indian State and the people of our country at large. However, to ensure the establishment of peace there should be cease-fire or cessation of hostilities by both sides simultaneously instead of asking one side to abjure violence. If the government is really serious about reducing levels of violence then it should immediately lift the ban on the party and mass organisations so as to facilitate them to take up open forms of struggle. If the government is serious about holding talks it should initiate measures to release Party leaders as a prelude to the release of political prisoners and most importantly, it should stop all its efforts to escalate the war including the measure of calling back all the paramilitary forces deployed in the war zones.

Once again we appreciate the efforts made by you and many others who earnestly desire to bring peace.

We hope that you will pursue your mission of bringing peace taking into consideration the suggestions mentioned by us in this letter. We look forward to positive results for your well-meaning efforts.

On the Jnaneswari Express Tragedy

The removal of fish plates on the railway track near Jhargram in West Bengal leading to the accident of Kurla-bound Jnaneswari Express and consequent deaths of 150 innocent civilians and injuries to over 200 passengers is highly condemnable. The CC, CPI (Maoist), expresses its deep sorrow at the tragic incident and shares the suffering and pain of the families of the deceased. Strangely, the tragic incident which took place on the intervening night of May 28/29 is being used by West Bengal government, the police and some ruling class parties like the Hindu fascist BJP and the social fascist CPI (M) to tarnish the image of our Party - CPI (Maoist) - and gain legitimacy to the counter-revolutionary war unleashed by the Indian State against the poorest sections of the Indian society led by the Maoists.

Baseless accusations against the Maoist revolutionaries are part of the dirty disinformation campaign let loose by the reactionary rulers through their police-intelligence agencies and their pet media. For two days after the incident the police did not even confirm whether a blast had occurred at the site let alone finding any clue about the involvement of the Maoists or the PCAPA. However, they came up with the theory of Maoist involvement with the argument that the area is a hotbed of the Maoists, and Maoists had been targeting trains for some time. The entire media has been playing to the tune of the conspirators by running banner headlines that "Maoist terrorists" had taken the lives of innocent people, Maoists are blood-thirsty hounds and such trash which only insane people can say. Would anyone in his senses ever imagine that

Press Release

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September 2010*

the CPI (Maoist), which had been fighting for land, livelihood and liberation of the people for over four decades, which had sacrificed thousands of its leaders and cadres for the cause of the oppressed, which has no other interests than the interests of the people, can harm the lives of those very people?

It is the reactionary rulers who would stop at nothing to acquire power and retain it. They would set fire to their own houses to discredit others and gain the sympathy of the people. It is universally known how Hindu fascists like Narendra Modi had engaged VHP, RSS and Bajrang Dal hoodlums to unleash attacks on Muslims; how a *Sri Ram Sene* is hired to create riots in Karnataka; how a Raman Singh kills adivasis and accuses the Maoists of having committed the crimes. A fascist Hitler had set fire to the *Reichstag* to put the blame on the Communists and begin a witch-hunt. Likewise, these reactionary rulers themselves had organized the sabotage of railways with the aim of discrediting the Maoists. With an eye on the elections and unnerved by their fast-eroding social base, the social fascists think they can gain sympathy through such dirty tricks. The reactionary ruling class parties have degenerated to such a low level that they will go to any extent to be in power.

Strange is the manner in which most of the media had reported on the tragic incident. While they ran headlines attributing the cause of the sabotage to the Maoists, they report in their columns that the enquiry is on and that Maoist involvement is suspected. How can the media deliver its judgment even before any evidence is found or enquiry conducted? What morality do these reporters, some of them quite renowned at that, possess when they pass judgments based on their own ideological biases? Worse, some media sources have not even published or aired the statement issued by our Party representative in West Bengal denying our involvement. The media is becoming increasingly anarchic, irresponsible and unaccountable. While propagating falsehoods without investigation, the media does not even have the courtesy to admit its gross mistakes and irresponsible accusations when the truth comes out in the open. It had done the same kind of false propaganda against the Muslim community after the blasts in Mecca Masjid in Hyderabad, Ajmer Dargah blast, Goa blast and so on and remained unapologetic about its false and biased reporting even after it was clearly proved that these blasts were the handiwork of Hindu fascist gangs.

The CC, CPI (Maoist), condemns this kangaroo trial by the media and its irresponsible accusations against our Party's involvement in the

train tragedy. We consider this as a deep conspiracy by the rulers to defame the Maoist revolutionaries and gain legitimacy to their suppression campaign. We warn the reactionaries who have been vomiting venom against Maoists to stop their vicious campaign and hurling false allegations. We call upon the democratic and progressive forces, civil rights groups and people at large to see through the intrigues and diabolic designs of the reactionary rulers in spreading such lies and falsehoods against the Maoist revolutionaries. We demand an impartial enquiry into the incident to bring out the truth. Our Party will never hide the truth from the people. When we commit a mistake we frankly admit it, apologize to the people from the depths of our hearts, and assure them that we would not repeat such a mistake. This has been the hallmark of our Party in all its history. In this particular incident of the Jnaneswari express the Party leadership is not aware of the involvement of its cadre but if it is found that anyone close to our Party had indeed carried out the sabotage of the railways, then we will take stringent action against them and openly admit the lapse on our part. We will investigate into the incident and come out with the facts in the shortest time. We assure the people of our country that there will not be attacks on trains in future and we will instruct our Party care to abstain from such acts as they can cause loss of ordinary lives.

On Bhopal Verdict

The justice delivered by a Bhopal Court on June 7 sentencing seven of the murderers of 25,000 people and destroyers of the lives of at least half-a-million to two years in jail but permitting them to get immediate bail has shown for the umpteenth time what the world's largest democracy means to the majority of the people. The chief culprit of the genocide—Warren Anderson—who is considered to be absconding, has been enjoying full protection from the imperialist government in Washington and roams scot free. The story of Bhopal and the story of how the comprador agents ruling our country can save top criminals like Anderson in the name of 'rule of law' is the story of India's democracy.

Bhopal gas tragedy is not an accident; it is a genocide carried out by the multinational corporate sharks in collaboration with their native comprador agents who control the economic, political and military spheres. It is the story of treachery and betrayal of the people of India by successive regimes of Rajiv Gandhi, VP Singh, PVN Rao, Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh. These traitors and bootlickers of the imperialists are directly responsible for the crimes committed by the multinational companies operating in India and amassing super profits by not adhering to even the minimum safety measures. It is these traitors who had saved the murderers of Union Carbide with all the means at their disposal getting fat commissions in exchange for their shameless servility to their masters. It is these traitors who allowed Dow Chemicals to shirk its responsibility of cleaning up the toxic material from UCIL premises until date thereby exposing more people to suffer the effects caused by the poisonous chemicals. These traitors have absolutely no concern for

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the people and are interested in GDP growth and inflow of FDI which have no meaning to the majority of the people. While yelling loudly about extradition of small-time terrorists who are alleged to have a hand in some bomb blasts in India that had killed a handful of people, these criminals ruling our country allow a terrorist like Anderson, who had killed over 25,000 people, to fly back home and giving him VVIP treatment.

The Congress and the BJP are direct accomplices to the crimes committed by multinational sharks like Union Carbide in India. Even today, these criminals continue to invite such multi-national sharks into our country, most shamelessly roll out the red carpet, sign up MOUs, grant them extraordinary concessions like free land, water, power, tax-holidays, ban legitimate trade union activity in their companies, and allow them to rape the country's resources and ruin the lives of the people.

Now an even more ghastly scenario looms before our eyes: the hawkish nuclear lobby headed by Man Mohan Singh is pushing ahead to pass a Nuclear Liability Bill placing a cap of a paltry Rs. 500 crore in case of a nuclear "accident" like the Bhopal "accident". The experience of Bhopal shows that these nuclear suppliers too can get away like Anderson after a terrible nuclear disaster. Such disasters are all the more likely to happen in countries like India given the poor safety standards and callousness of the imperialist MNCs in the backward countries. Our Man Mohan Singhs and Chidambarams would be only too glad to make the Indians the sacrificial goats for their megalomaniacal dream of building a Shining India with two-digit growth rates and burgeoning billionaires even as the vast majority of the population live in extreme misery and destitution.

By facilitating the escape of butcher Anderson to the US and meting out nominal punishment to some of the chief perpetrators of the crimes these boot-lickers of the imperialist bloodsuckers are sending signals to the multi-national vampires that they can step into India without any fear, loot the country's resources, exploit the people at will, and go back happily with their super profits even if their low safety standards create genocides like Bhopal. Thus the danger of hundreds of potential Bhopals looms all over the country. If we keep silent now and allow the criminal rulers to have their way then entire India could become a Bhopal.

The CC, CPI (Maoist) expresses its deepest anguish at the terrible plight faced by lakhs of people of Bhopal as a result of the effect of gas leak due to the criminal negligence of the American imperialist sharks followed by even more criminal negligence by successive governments led by the Congress and BJP. It demands that the assets of Dow Chemicals be confiscated and the criminal be forced to clean up the toxic material

from the site of the UCIL, pay compensation to the 5 lakh victims, and the management be punished for continuing criminal negligence. It calls upon the people to realize that they can never obtain justice through so-called courts of law or from the traitorous ruling class parties whether it is the Congress, BJP or the so-called Left. 26 years is a sufficiently long period to grasp the fact that the existing exploitative system and its oppressive police, courts, jails, investigation agencies, etc are all at the service of the rich and the powerful. It can never deliver justice to the poor and helpless citizens of this country. Peaceful petitions, demonstrations, and other forms of struggle have not moved the rulers and their institutions to deliver justice to the victims. And there need be absolutely no illusion that they will. It is only a militant revolutionary struggle to overthrow this unjust cruel anti-people social system nurtured by the most reactionary parliamentary parties ruling our country, and usher in a just, equitable, genuine democratic order under people's democratic governments in its place that can bring real justice to the toiling majority. To obtain justice in a system where the 'rule of law' protects a handful of the rich and powerful, it is necessary to advance the struggle from peaceful demonstrations to the boycott of all parasitic political parties and the corrupt civil administration, setting up our own administrative organs, and defending our basic rights through all forms of struggle including armed struggle. We appeal to all democratic forces to unite, oppose and militantly resist the continuous sell-out of the country's interests to the imperialist sharks and a handful of comprador corporate houses by the Sonia-Man Mohan Singh government in Delhi and the saffron fascist, social fascist and other reactionary governments in the states. The time is running out.

Unless we act collectively and in a concerted manner against the disastrous policies pursued by the traitorous UPA government and the various state governments we cannot prevent entire India from becoming a Bhopal. Let us rise up as a collective fist to drive out the multinational companies from our soil and along with them sweep away the treacherous rotten regimes at the Centre and states that hobnob with them to plunder our country.

A Last Note to a Neo-Colonialist

Reading B.G. Verghese's article Daylight at the Thousand-Star Hotel in Outlook (May 3), one is stunned by the abysmal poverty of thought and colonial mindset of this renowned intellectual. How is it that the illiterate, seemingly uncivilised, backward, half-naked adivasi thinks, analyses and acts a lot better than an established, well-read, highly qualified intellectual like Verghese? The history of freedom in our country presents innumerable such contrasts: of the highly educated white man, with his vast, in-depth knowledge of the world and the natural and social sciences, glorifying the British raj as a regime with a civilising mission; and the half-naked, illiterate Indian who craved for freedom and independence. To justify the oppression of their subjects in the colonies, the "educated" colonial intellectuals invented phrases such as "white man's burden", "civilising mission" et al. The freedom fighter, however, was not impressed by the 'development' the British colonialists brought to India through their railways, roads, communication networks, plantations, mines etc.

Verghese is a typical example of the self-proclaimed civilisers of modern-day India, akin to the white 'civilisers' of yesteryear, who would have been the pride of a Rudyard Kipling. He reveals this colonial mindset by vehemently arguing in favour of the civilising mission of the corporate sharks and the Indian State to transform the poor, backward adivasis from savages into civilised people through a 'development' that destroys people's economy, social life, culture and all human values. Ironically, ignoramuses like him imagine that adivasis are the casualties of non-development.

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The corporate vultures and their police servants have said, through Verghese, what they think of a dialogue with the Maoists. Citing from my interview in *The Hindu*, Verghese gives his own interpretation to my proposal for talks. He derides my statement that “talks will give some respite to the people who are oppressed and suppressed under the jackboots of the Indian State...” and interprets this as “respite for the oppressed (cadres)”. Such is the wishful imagination, cynicism, trivialisation and vulgarisation of a life-and-death question confronting millions of hapless people!

Verghese also thinks that lifting the ban on our party, release of jailed leaders for the purpose of participating in talks, and respite for the oppressed are unreasonable preconditions. Would anyone, except Verghese and other war-hungry hawks, imagine that the Maoists had placed respite as a precondition? We had only explained why we think a ceasefire is necessary to give respite to the oppressed and suppressed people in the war-torn zones.

In any war, there can be several periods of peace depending on many factors such as natural calamities which affect a significant chunk of the population and need relative peace for reconstruction and assistance to the victims; war of aggression by another country which calls for the united resistance of one and all; war fatigue among the people and even the belligerents; chronic famine conditions for a sizeable proportion of the people arising basically out of prolonged periods of war; the needs of either side for a respite for various reasons, and so on. However, it is only when both sides in the war feel the need for peace that a mutual ceasefire and a situation for initiating a dialogue will arise.

Verghese does not speak like an impartial observer but betrays his conscious motive of tarnishing the Maoists with his ideologically bankrupt rhetoric. His inherent bias is clear from several of his remarks, such as his accusation that the Maoists pose like “Robin Hoods but rule by fear and authoritarian command over cowed camp-followers”. He further says: “Many comrades have broken rank in disgust over the Maoists’ brutality and hubris.” Can he cite any authentic source for his accusation, leaving out the disinformation campaign unleashed by the reactionary rulers and their police-intelligence wings? How many comrades have broken rank in disgust over our “brutality and hubris”? We challenge him to furnish a list.

For a common man who sees nothing but a culture of fear and authoritarianism everywhere, in virtually every party led by one or two

authoritarian individuals whether it be Indira Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi, L.K. Advani, M. Karunanidhi, Y.S.R. Reddy, Chandrababu Naidu, Jyoti Basu and so on, it is difficult to imagine genuine democracy and mutual trust that is the hallmark of a proletarian party like ours. Maoists have never considered themselves Robin Hoods and have even undertaken deep reviews of how the cult of the individual is part of the bourgeois culture, and how the people are the real heroes. Besides a strong ideological-political unity, the Maoists are marked by their conscious effort to promote collective functioning right from the central committee to the mass organisation committees, which is one reason why every attempt to split the party has failed right from the time of K.G. Sathya Murthy and Kondapalli Seetharamayya in erstwhile PW or Bharath and Badal in erstwhile MCCI.

One is also dumbstruck to hear Verghese chide Arundhati Roy saying: "Why scoff at a cancer hospital built near Raipur by Vedanta, the aluminium corporate, or the proposed Vedanta University in coastal Orissa? Are these by definition all wicked enterprises?" He then goes on to repeat Ms Roy's observations on the pathetic health conditions and lack of any healthcare in Dandakaranya and asks: "So where do we begin? By burning down the Vedanta hospital?"

Should one think it is because of his innocence or because of his false consciousness derived from the non-stop propaganda by the corporate sharks that Verghese poses such a foolish question? Vedanta might appear as a benevolent enterprise to Verghese, but life has taught the adivasis what it stands for. Even as Verghese comes forth as an apologist for the worst perpetrators of crimes against humanity, we find organisations like the Church of England, and several shareholders in Vedanta exhibiting better rationale by withdrawing their shares from Vedanta. Even the colonialists seem more humane and rational than the slavish intellectuals in their former colonies! Moreover, even the Supreme Court of India and the environment ministry have raised objections to the proposed Vedanta University and mining venture. Only a Chidambaram, who served as a member of its board of directors until 2004, and Verghese, with his "compassionate" colonial mindset of "civilising" the backward people, can stand up in support of vultures like Vedanta, Tata, POSCO, Jindal...

Verghese's colonial mindset is at its best when he says: "Yes, there will be land acquisition and displacement—that is the story of civilisation; but there will also be resettlement, compensation and training for new

vocations." The adivasis and poor peasants in our country can never imagine how people like Verghese can distort history so shamelessly. Ask the 60 million people who have been displaced by the land acquisition of the "civilisers". How and why such barbarism is called the story of civilisation, only Verghese knows best. To convince the sceptics, he further says: "Admittedly, this (resettlement, compensation) has not always been done wisely or well. But times are changing. New legal frameworks, better norms, closer monitoring, improved R&R and livelihood packages have continuously been put in place."

Verghese here comes out as an incarnation of the typical Indian bureaucrat, like a G.K. Pillai. All intellectual pretence is shed here and he reveals himself as a loyal servant of the Indian comprador sharks. So why is all this hullabaloo about land acquisition and displacement being raked up by people like Arundhati Roy and others?

Verghese states his imagined virtues of the corporates without a sense of shame: "There is much virtue in translating Gandhi's concept of trusteeship in a new and evolving idiom of csr to which corporates, the state and courts have variously given expression. The new deals being worked out by the POSCOs, Vedantas, Tatas, Mittals and others are greatly in advance of what was on offer even five years ago." What Verghese is trying to say is let the corporates enjoy the mineral wealth and loot the country at will as long as they throw some crumbs as charity or 'social responsibility' to the poor, helpless, wretched beings who are thrown out of their homes and lands. Why doesn't Verghese visit Balitutha, Dhinkia and Nuagaon in Jagatsinghpur district of Orissa and convince the anti-POSCO agitators to understand the new paradise that is being built for them by his corporate bosses? Or visit Baligotha, Chandia and Baragadia in Kalinganagar to make the "backward" adivasis protesting against the Tata Steel project see reason? After centuries of rapacious plunder by capitalist gangs that has led to the monopoly control of the world's resources by a handful of corporations, Verghese can actually call for a trusteeship by corporates!

Another interesting instance where Verghese distorts facts is in the growth in tribal populations. In order to disprove Arundhati Roy's apprehension about the probable genocide of tribals due to the war waged by the Indian State, Verghese asserts that "the tribal population of India was 19.1 million in 1951, rose to 84.3 mn according to the 2001 census and is estimated to be just short of 100 mn (8.1 per cent of the population) today." Had he exerted a little effort, he would have known

that the seemingly huge growth in the population figures of scheduled tribes in India is not because of an increase in the population of the tribes but due to the inclusion of several hitherto non-tribals in the ST category.

Verghe's attitude towards the occupation of schools by the security forces is also criminally casual. He says: "Yes, schools in Naxal-affected areas are often occupied by security forces, not to prevent education but because schooling and other developmental activities, such as they are, have come to a halt." Even worse, he accuses the Maoists of opposing schools and of being interested only in "agitprop centres to indoctrinate the young". This reveals the extent of indoctrination this intellectual mind has been subjected to by the omnipotent imperialist media and the servile education system he is a product of. He goes on to say, "Development and connectivity threaten them. Hence they destroy roads, culverts, bridges. Hence the wanton attacks on railway and highway projects that would, if completed, connect and open up remote, backward areas. If education, health services, roads, irrigation, markets and communications are provided and poverty rolled back, the Maoists would be out of business."

Throughout his article, Verghe acts as an apologist for the reactionary deeds of the rulers; and at times his language is indistinguishable from that of Chidambaram. For instance, Chidambaram too said at JNU recently: "Maoists want to ensure the tribals were inaccessible and incommunicado (from mainstream) by blowing up buildings, railway tracks and targeting developmental projects. Are they trying to create an archaeological museum in the tribal areas by keeping the tribals away from development?"

While one can understand Chidambaram, as a loyal representative of the corporate sharks, uttering such trash, it's really amusing to see intellectuals like Verghe imagining such things and drawing fantastic and subjective conclusions. On several occasions, we have clarified these questions. We have explained why we are targeting roads, bridges etc. Let alone opposing, our party has even led people's struggles demanding the setting up of schools, appointment of teachers, health services, markets, irrigation and so on. In fact, seeing the utter apathy of the rulers, we ourselves have set up schools, dug wells and tanks to develop irrigation and increase productivity and yields of crops, organised cooperatives, trained local doctors, built roads and bridges deep inside the forest.

Why would Maoists be threatened by development and connectivity? If Verghese and his brand of intellectuals think that concrete roads are the barometer of development, they are living in a fool's paradise. He falls prey to the ruling class scheme of development that displaces the adivasis and destroys their lives, lands and cultures. He says roads and railways open up remote backward areas. For whom? For the people or for a handful of mining and industrial companies, forest contractors and police tormentors who make adivasi lives a veritable hell?

Even more amusing is Verghese's allegation that the Maoists are working only among the adivasis and that they will be "out of business" once the adivasi areas become developed. He does not even know the programme of the Maoists, which is to mobilise the vast majority of the suffering people throughout the country. Can the Maoists seize power and establish the "totalitarian state" Verghese is talking of without organising the non-adivasi majority living in the advanced regions of the country?

Verghese refers to the Salwa Judum as a savage blot but concludes that "strategic hamleting" was confined to one district and prevented from being extended to any other district, even in Chhattisgarh. But who prevented it and how, he prefers to be silent on. It has been the heroic resistance, armed and unarmed, by the adivasi masses led by the Maoists since the end of 2005 that has upset the devious plans of the reactionary rulers to uproot the entire adivasi population. He doesn't say that Salwa Judum was defeated and prevented from creating havoc in newer areas because the Maoists and the adivasi masses had dealt a death blow to this state-sponsored terrorist gang by carrying out daring militant offensives such as in Ranibodili and Errabore; that the rulers had never given up their fond wish to drive the entire adivasi population into strategic hamlets; and that Salwa Judum Part II unleashed by the Sonia-Manmohan-Chidambaram gang is precisely to achieve that unfinished goal.

Lastly, Herr Verghese fondly hopes: "The Maoists will fade away, democratic India and the Constitution will prevail, despite the time it takes and the pain involved." If the Maoists fade away by the superiority of your development model, then why are the advocates of your development keen on brutally suppressing the Maoists and the adivasis they are leading? In which part of India is the Constitution prevailing, Mr Verghese? In Dantewada, Bijapur, Kanker, Narayanpur,

Rajnandgaon? In Jharkhand, Orissa? In Lalgah, Jangalmahal? In the Kashmir Valley? Manipur? Where was your Constitution hiding for 25 long years after thousand of Sikhs where massacred? When thousands of Muslims were decimated? When lakhs of peasants are compelled to commit suicides? When thousands of people are murdered by state-sponsored Salwa Judum gangs? When adivasi women are gangraped? When people are simply abducted by uniformed goons? Your Constitution is a piece of paper that does not even have the value of a toilet paper for the vast majority of the Indian people.

Finally, this comment by Verghese—"People's Tribunals keep mouthing yesterday's tired slogans.... They do not see tomorrow; maybe they fear it"—applies more to people like him. He keeps mouthing yesterday's outdated, monotonous slogans like "end of history", "there-is-no-alternative", "demise of Communism", "totalitarian state", and so on. He does not see tomorrow. He even fears it. The spectre of Communism sends shivers down his spine.