

What is at Stake

After the draconian emergency rule of Congress Party, the worst thing that has happened to the hapless people of Bengal is the CPM-led Left Front Government. Terror upon terror! Misinformation upon misinformation! Hypocrisy upon hypocrisy. But the ruling marxists of Bengal continue to defend their unmarxist actions in Singur. Tapasi Malik, an 18-year-old woman activist of 'Save Farmland Movement' against large-scale land-looting by the left front government for the proposed assembly plant of Tata Motors, was brutally raped and then burnt alive in the wee hours of December 18, 2006. Barely 24 hours earlier she participated in a token hunger-strike to support the agitating peasants of the area. And yet the authorities tried to project the entire episode as a case of 'suicide' which it was not. No doubt Tapasi committed a 'grave crime' because she refused to kowtow to the party in power and despite being a daughter of a landless agricultural labourer, she showed audacity to get Singur landlosers mobilised for fighting against forcible acquisition of multi-crop agricultural land by the official left to woo the Tatas. Earlier Tapasi was beaten up twice by the police for organising agitation against land-grabbing.

Singur symbolises a cover for a witch-hunt. The Left's aggressive and brazen turn towards Right in Singur signals the emerging pattern of fascistic culture—it has followed Salim's special economic zone and would precede Haripur nuclear power plant. This is how fascism comes—with a show of 'development' followed by high-profile economic deals at the cost of the under-privileged and environment as well. Singur stands for open patronising of the privileged. This is how fascism works, with secret business deals and everyone feeling insecure. So the Tapasis will have to die.

Singur's Tapasi is Manipur's Manorama—cruelly raped and killed by the guardians of law and order. At the time of writing Mamata's fast is approaching Sharmila's—an indefinite fast for the last six years(!) embodying the spirit of resistance and freedom defying despotism and death in Manipur. In the North-eastern state Manorama's "curse" and Sharmila's "grouse" is the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act 1958, which has been in force in Manipur for decades. The notorious Act gives arbitrary powers to the military. Under the Armed Forces (SP) Act, the security forces have the power to arrest and enter property without warrant; the power to shoot, even to cause death, at the hint of mere suspicious activity; and immunity from any legal action for the misdeeds of the murderers and killers in uniform. Singur is fast approaching Manipur. The only difference is the camouflage of parliamentary vote-based democracy which gives the party-in-power to usurp all powers vested in the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act and in civil dress to intimidate, enter the premises, and to cause death to the dissenters, freedom fighters and savers of the means whereby they live.

But all these atrocities and killings by the state machinery and its hangmen are holy because they are constitutional! People on both sides of the 'Save Farmland Movement' are shouting aloud about fundamental rights. But part III of the constitution of India, on which the parliamentary politicians swear, give no guarantee to the Right to Private Property in land. There are Right to Equality, Right to Freedom, Right against

Exploitation, Right to freedom of Religion, Cultural and Educational Rights enshrined as fundamental rights in the Constitution of India. But there is no mention of the fundamental right of private property in land. On the contrary the Article 31A inserted by the constitution (42 Amendment) Act, 1976 and put into effect since 03-01-1977, clearly lays claims to “any estate or any rights therein” provided that “payment of compensation at a rate not less than the market value thereof” is paid. This brings Mamata’s indefinite fast in support of the ‘Save Farmland Movement’ before a paradox. She is a parliamentarian and she swears by the constitution which gives teeth to Buddhhababu’s CPI(M) government of West Bengal to “extinguishment” (constitution of India’s holy language!) of any such rights by the private individuals in respect of the *estate*. Now if the scope of the term “estate” is enlarged to the hut and hearth and body and family of the aggrieved one will find raping, burning, looting and killing by the long arm of the state machinery whether or not in uniform, in any part of India, Singur or Manipur, *lawful* and *constitutional!* This paradox again sends cold waves down the spine of Mamata’s Trinamul and NDA supporters. They want to hide behind the constitution which is empty. That is why they are bringing on to the stage old skeletons from the cupboard to find an amicable settlement among the hollow constitutionalists. The ruling Congress Party at the centre, being CPI(M)’s friend in need, seems too clever by half as the born-again Gandhians, true to their tradition think it wise to compromise their way to fascism, deserting Mamata’s anti-left camp.

But Singur also stands for defiance by the defenceless against the regime of dark terror unleashed in the name of ‘development’ and ‘people’. ~~████~~ 25-12-2006