

IN DEFENCE OF NEPAL MAOISTS

INDIA'S 'DISARMED' MAOISTS

Sumanta Banerjee

This is apropos of the letter by Azad of the Central Committee of CPI(Maoist) which appeared in FRONTIER of December 10-16, 2006. While admonishing the Maoists of Nepal for agreeing to disarmament, he ends his letter with the words: "...without the people's army it is impossible for the people to exercise its power." What, pray, has his own party done so far to build up a people's army and exercise power in India?

It is better for Azad's party to refrain from advising the Maoists of Nepal. Unlike his party, the Nepali Maoists have been successful in using their armed might (whether you call it a 'people's army' or not) to bring about a major change in the course of Nepal's history. They have emerged as a decisive force in the decision-making process there. They are therefore in a better position than Azad's party to decide about their strategy in the new political scenario in their own country, and have the right to revise their tactics of armed struggle. Let us not underestimate the sagacity, as well as the flexibility, that have marked the theories and practice of the leadership of the Nepal Maoist movement and which have led them to the present position of power. Let us watch the developments in the coming months before rushing to pass a verdict based purely on the panicky assumption that the agreement "could lead to the disarming of the oppressed masses of Nepal." It may, it may not.

Indian Maoists should also try to get rid of the obsession with displays of violent actions alone (to the exclusion of other forms of struggle) as the sole arbiter in the popular struggles to change society. The tactics of armed struggle should not be worshipped as a god in the strategy of revolutionaries. Violence *per se* had never been a credo of Marxists. Revolutionaries have always changed their tactics in accordance with the changing situations - while remaining loyal to their basic ideals. The Indian Maoist revolutionaries should leave it to their counterparts in Nepal to work out their own way of devising a strategy to construct an egalitarian society that their people demand in a particular situation.

In the meantime, Azad's party should do well to engage in a bit of introspection as to the weakness of their strategy and tactics of armed struggle in India. Barring a few success stories (confined to narrow forest stretches in border areas of Chhattisgarh-Andhra Pradesh-Orissa, and pockets in Bihar, where they have been able to mobilize the rural poor and gain some achievements), their main actions consist of sporadic attacks on railway stations, burning of trains, killing of village panchayat heads—and even innocent villagers who are branded as spies! Even when attacking the state, they choose soft targets like subordinate members of the police and security forces. Compared to them, the Indian armed revolutionaries of the anti-colonial movement in the past showed more courage. They were able to win wide-spread popular support and sympathy by striking terror in the hearts of the British administrators by carrying out

daring attacks on notorious police officials and administrators in the higher echelons, as well as on the institutions that represented their power (e.g. the throwing of bombs by Bhagat Singh and Batukeswar Dutta in the Central Legislature in 1929; invasion of the headquarters of the Auxiliary Forces of India in Chittagong in 1930). Such symbolic acts—described as ‘terrorist’ by the colonial administrators and politicians of the non-violent variety in those days—served to satisfy the people’s desire for retributive justice and created a popular base.

Apart from choosing soft targets and avoiding the more powerful representatives of state repression, the leaders of the present Maoist movement have also consistently shown a remarkable reluctance in confronting the main enemy of the Indian people – the communal forces represented primarily by the Hindu Sangh Parivar. Today, they pose the main threat not only to the secular and democratic future of India, but also to the base of the Maoist movement (by infiltrating into and dividing the tribal poor and rural peasantry). Yet, when it comes to armed resistance against the goons of the RSS, the VHP or Bajrang Dal, the Maoists develop cold feet and become Gandhians! There has not been a single instance –to my knowledge—where the Maoists had struck any of the major ganglords of the Sangh Parivar, who are national leaders, or even provincial leaders in states like Andhra Pradesh, Orissa or Chhattisgarh - where the Maoists claim to have set up bases. May I request Azad to provide me with information of any action that his party had taken against these high-profile leaders of the Sangh Parivar, who are the brain behind communal riots that fissure the base of the Maoist movement ?

Even in Orissa’s tribal areas which CPI(Maoist) claims to be its stronghold, the Vajrang Dal rides roughshod over the Christian tribal poor, whom the Maoists have failed to protect. In Chhattisgarh—another Maoist ‘base’—instead of daring to take on the ministers and officials of the BJP government who are behind the infamous anti-Naxalite Salwa Judum, the Maoists are killing the tribal poor mercenaries who have been recruited by that government in Salwa Judum—thus reinforcing conflicts among the tribal communities and indirectly serving the purpose of the BJP government.

If the CPI(Maoist) seriously believes in the tactics of armed struggle as the only means of bringing about a radical socio-economic transformation in India, by its logic it should train its guns against its main enemy –the powerful combine of RSS-VHP-Bajrang Dal armed opponents, which is backed by a national political party, BJP. It is this combine - more than the faction-ridden, nationally weakened, ideologically confused Congress party - that poses a future challenge to the Maoists. With their aggressive ideology of Hindutva and orthodox social practices, these Sangh Parivar-led political power brokers are threatening to turn India into a Hinduized replica of the fanatical Islamic regimes of Saudi Arabia and other similar regressive Middle Eastern countries. The BJP national executive meeting in Lucknow recently has given a call for a full-fledged Hindutva-driven campaign—calling for the building of the Ram temple at Ajodhya—which is sure to ignite again Hindu-Muslim communal riots. Already, in BJP-ruled states like Gujarat, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh,, the armed vigilantes of the Sangh Parivar are on a regular rampage against members of the minority communities. It is shameful that the CPI(Maoist), which claims to be a revolutionary party, stands a silent spectator to the mayhem that the Sangh Parivar fascists are unleashing.

Instead of taking on the role of a patronizing big brother towards the Maoists of Nepal, and indulging in petty acts of violence in the Indian countryside in the name of class-struggle, the CPI(Maoist) should learn to identify the main class enemy in the present Indian situation, and concentrate its offensive against the Sangh Parivar gangsters and their political leaders. ✍✍✍✍