

# This Way Forward!

Something weird is happening to the people of Nandigram. Suddenly all are speaking vociferously of peace. They are speaking of defending human rights and democratic norms, rather parliamentary niceties. They are speaking of protecting normal family life. They are speaking of preserving security and safety of the displaced. No doubt peace initiative is thriving but the language of peace has in reality fallen on the hard times, thanks to the marxist left's secret agenda. But the much publicised all-party peace process, at the time of writing is beset by non-cooperation, inconsistency—and growing campaign in favour of further liberalisation of industrial culture.

Spontaneous mass upsurge despite its severity is no answer to any regimented establishment anywhere in the world. And it is no answer to Nandigram barbarity by the ruling elite. Rightist opposition to Left Reaction in Nandigram seems to be petering out. Quite expectedly the political right cannot dig its own grave by radicalising the land question beyond a certain point. And Jamat-e-Ulema Hind is no longer in the news. Maybe, they are busy to prepare ground for the next panchayat election. So long as it is an issue of toilers fighting toilers, creating almost a civil war like situation, it is fine because fratricidal violence does not challenge the status quo. Nor does it attack the roots—the neo-liberal policies, the source of continuing social unrest and economic bankruptcy for the vast majority of the underclass.

With the Nandigram peace process started by three junior partners of the CPM-led left front and tacitly approved by the main opposition party—Trinamul Congress—everyone hopes somewhat against hope that Nandigram may not witness the horror scenario for the second time. Despite peace talks ground reality remains tense and peace continues to elude Nandigram as it does against the same backdrop of neo-liberal industrial onslaught in Chattisgarh and Orissa.

True, the ruling marxists of Bengal have not yet officially gone the Chattisgarh way of BJP-Congress by promoting any death squad like Salwa Judum but in effect they too depend heavily on rural lumpens to further their partisan interests and terrorise unwilling villagers. But all this peace drama in which the big brother of the front seems to have decided to lie low for the time being is as farcical as anything else. While the Opposition is trying to get out of the killing fields through a face-saving device, the marxist rulers too need some time to rectify their blunders before launching a fresh wave of encirclement and suppression.

The hard fact is that the marxists can enforce peace allowing Nandigram to return to normal within twenty four hours if they so wish simply by abandoning their idea of overt and covert coercion and not insisting on unconditional loyalty to their party and the party-led institutions. Peace, even if it is brokered honestly by the junior partners of Left Front is unlikely to last long unless the veiled threat is withdrawn.

In all fairness the ruling marxists have not totally rejected the idea of acquiring land in Nandigram, no matter what they are saying—or not saying—publicly. They say they are not going to acquire land for SEZ if the people of Nandigram are unwilling to part with their tiny parcels of land. But there are people—absentee landlords to be precise—who are too willing to sell their land on government terms. Incidentally they mostly belong to Sonia Gandhi's Congress. So the Congress Party has every reason to agitate over the Nandigram issue as it serves their purpose of making their presence felt in the region after a long time. After organising a central rally in the capital they virtually

withdrew from the scene only to tell their marxist friends in the Writers Buildings that they won't rock the boat they were jointly sailing at the moment in New Delhi. They want to remain in the race so that they could update their land-related documents for encashment in due season.

Meanwhile, Singur seems to be a closed chapter even for the most vocal opposition party despite sporadic mass protests and violence on the eve of first anniversary of Singur Agitation. And the Tatas are happy that they can carry the 'red flag' because resistance is not as stiff as it is in Orissa and Chattisgarh.

It's a tragedy that the far left too is dancing to the tune of spontaneity without really addressing the peasant question in the changed context. Today no issue is more global than global warming. Reckless industrialisation and destruction of greens at an alarming rate to make room for super profit by foreign and domestic investors, is directly related to global warming affecting the rural people most. And Nandigram is no exception. Nor can the people of Chattisgarh and Orissa escape the greenhouse effect if Tatas and South Korean tycoons are allowed to go ahead with their grandiose plans of steel plants there. Most of the naxalites still live in the Yenan age but the Chinese model of yester years is unlikely to deliver the goods in the present era. 21-05-07 □□□