

NOTE

NANDIGRAM: SEARCH FOR TRUTH

A B writes:

Nandigram remains in a state of turbulence. Of course, it is true that many forces are trying to fish in troubled water, and the struggle for securing political hegemony over the area is on. It is also noticeable that there is a lot of dishonesty in the circle of journalism in interpreting the reasons for the continuing unrest. For example, on 18 June, it is remarked in the first editorial (*Area of Darkness*) of a leading English daily : “Faced with protests and bloodshed, the state government has made the announcement that no chemical hub will be built there and no land will be acquired. The normal expectation based on common sense would be that this would close the chapter of protests and violence.” The editor, true to the ideology of loyalty to the principle of neo-liberalism, has found it convenient to forget the massacre, coupled with rape, of 14 March and the reluctance of the Government to punish the guilty. Here also common sense is involved. Common sense suggests that the guilty police officers, the guilty CPM activists who entered the area and fired on the people under police cover, and the guilty Chief Minister and his party colleague who had threatened to encircle Nandigram and make a hell of the lives of the people should be punished, This is no less important than the withdrawal of the decision to acquire land. The editor who swears by democracy has also found it convenient to forget that the government declaration came only when the villagers of Nandigram rallied themselves after overcoming the initial shock due to police-hooligan attack and showed their determination not to let their land be acquired.

It is perfectly clear what had happened. The Government hoped to bring the people to their knees, liberate the area for the CPI (M) and then to declare that the chemical hub would be built with the consent of the people. This is the way they tried to make people understand that sacrifice of their land for the sake of the Salim Group would be beneficial to West Bengal. The failure of this nefarious game left no other option to the Government but to cancel the decision of acquisition of land. But the memories of dead human beings and the bodily presence of raped women will continue to haunt the people, and until and unless the government can punish the guilty, it is least likely that the tension will be abated. But it is almost certain that the Government will not try to do so, because that would be a dangerously double-edged sword. The Government can only resort to the old dilatory tactics, and hope that the matter will be erased in due course of time. It is quite likely that the enquiry commission formed for probing into the incident will try every means to extenuate the conduct of the policemen and the CPI (M) activists who killed and raped people.

Conduct speaks and it does not lie. The ten hooligans, brought by their political masters from outside with the purpose of launching a fresh attack on Nandigram in the aftermath of the gory episode of 14 March and arrested from a brick-kiln with firearms in their possession, are now released on bail, because although they were caught red-handed, the CID failed to produce any charge-sheet against them. This failure is suggestive of the collusion between the police and the ruling party. The CPI (M) is perhaps nursing the hope that they will be able to recover their lost ground after some time, as they did in Panskura a few years ago. This is one type of self-delusion in the sense that the balance of class forces opposing the state and the ruling party in Nandigram is very much different with a large number of erstwhile CPI (M) supporters now bitterly opposed to their mother party. Only an extermination campaign on the part

of the Government can win back the hegemony for the CPI (M), but that is a dangerous gamble after the fiasco over 14 March that has only brought disrepute to the Government and almost destroyed its image as a leftist party, except in the eyes of those to whom 'privilege of the right and prestige of the left' is the supreme consideration of life. The fiasco has also added to the miseries of the CPI (M) supporters who, enthused by their party, went against the general sentiments of the people and had to flee the area!

No doubt, there are academics and professionals who, in line with Manmohan Singh and his followers, continue to assert that not to take advantage of globalization would be disastrous. Some of them are vociferous supporters of Buddha Babu although not in complete agreement with his coercive method. The world of these pro-establishment academics collapsing because the crisis is very much evident. Nobody can now ignore KalingaNagar, Singur and Nandigram. □□□