

Maoism in Crisis

If Maoism survives in India it is unlikely to take the Maoist model of yenen. Similarly if fascism comes to India it will not appear in the literal form of swastika-sporting, goose-stepping brownshirts.

Having failed to contain naxalite (or maoist) violence by way of increasing paramilitary presence in troubled regions, the ruling establishments are now looking for bloody 'civil war' and the notorious American concept of strategic hamlets *a la* South Vietnam to crush maoist movement. So *Salwa Judum* is the answer of ruling and opposition parties in central India otherwise most backward. If the *Salwa Judum* experiment succeeds in Chattisgarh, it may be repeated elsewhere because twelve out of twenty-eight states are said to be under naxalite influence, though with varying degrees of intensity. The maoist response to the twin official offensives—civil militia and strategic hamlets, rather concentration camps—has so far been bewildering, if not counter-productive. There are a lot of negative things they are doing at the moment that will repulse people. Random violence is one; lack of popular massline is another one.

Despite, maoist triumph in Nepal Mao is no longer a charismatic saviour of the oppressed of the third world economies. Nor do maosits seriously offer any ideological and political alternative to different political tendencies nurturing status-quoism in the name of progress and democracy. What is practised as maoism in India is being described by the big-business media and ruling dispensations as 'terrorism', rather terrorism with Maosit tag. Terrorism is not viewed as a weapon of the weak. It is demonised in every possible means.

After each maoist action, people get scared apprehending retaliation by security forces. This maoist (or naxalite) strategy has been suffering from the crisis of mass appeal since the 1970s. What gets prominence these days is the scale of violence and sophistication associated with it. The way liberation army was created in China and elsewhere in pre-revolution days, cannot be imitated in the Indian situation that demands a different approach, rather a non-traditional approach. People's war is fine. But in most cases it becomes a war without the real warriors—people.

One wonders why the maoist project has so far failed to evolve a general line of mass organising. 40 years later it is the same old question of how to win the masses in their millions.

The traditional way of party-affiliated mass-fronts—trade unions, peasant associations, women's bodies, students unions—has created its opposite—mass apathy to such organisations, thanks to politics of status quo-ism and opportunism. Now all political parties, left and right alike, have their own central trade unions, all India peasant associations and other mass organisations. Only the maosits have no such central mass organisation because they have banned themselves right from the beginning making organised legal work difficult. Having failed to make quick headway among toilers they decided not to take the trouble of pain-staking mass organising and boycotted it as revisionism. True, of late they have changed their old line to some extent but no mass organisation worth the name, central or regional, in the existing legal framework, can be identified with the Maosits.

Semi-legal (non-registered) outfits that operate with a view to mobilising masses without specifically exposing maoist identity cannot be termed as mass platforms in classical sense. As a result they continue to rely on violent actions, sometimes directed against wrong targets to spread their message. In the absence of broad participation of masses this kind of violence is equated with individual terrorism. The only mass movement that can be broadly identified with the maoist struggle is not really controlled by the maoist party. Also, it is viewed more as a civil society response to the maoist cause. It is human rights movement from a perspective of liberal democracy. There are a number of civil rights and human rights bodies across the country that continually protest against state terror, particularly state repression against maoists and dissenters of any political shade. As a result human rights activists are being increasingly labelled as naxalites. In other words they too are being legally and illegally harassed by different state governments.

Not that there is no model of combining legal and extra-legal work by communists. In South Vietnam during anti-imperialist liberation struggle, communists developed a wide network of mass fronts without officially branding them as communist controlled, to supplement their armed resistance.

Maoists in India never gave any serious thought to mass line. Organised sector unionised workers are not with them. As for unorganised sector workers the maoist party has no agenda other than reacting to spontaneity. Today's official communists once clandestinely did factional work inside mass organisations controlled by Congress, socialists and liberals and succeeded enormously to spread their idea. They even had their men in the security establishment. But the maoists continue to wander in political and ideological wilderness in search of a correct tactical line to transform enormous goodwill they still enjoy into a popular support base. A vague notion about people's war cannot produce required results. □□□