

'Hul' Again?

There is great disorder under the sun across the country. Global economic crisis has its impact on all economies, big or small. India otherwise dubbed as the next destination of global capital, only second to China, is also feeling the pinch much to the dismay of Manmohan Singh and Chidambarams. And this crisis is nowhere so grave as in tribal unrest throughout the country. In tribal Chattisgarh an armed revolution is fighting an armed counter-revolution under the banner of the maoists. In Orissa tribals are up in arms against forcible acquisition of their land for big business houses under the leadership of different people's initiatives, albeit maoist presence in some pockets has added extra dimension to the on-going agitation. In Jharkhand tribal unrest is often reflected in violence and counter-violence, again against alienation of tribal land. And in neighbouring West Bengal which is no longer seen as a red bastion of traditional left, the Santals virtually created the second *hul*—revolutionary upsurge—when they revolted enmasse against police atrocities. The history of Mahesh daroga and Sidhu and Kanu returned with a difference in a different context of course.

The recent flare-up in West Midnapore district's *Lalgarh*, literally meaning red fort, against police barbarism in the wake of foundation stone laying ceremony of the much publicised Salbani Steel Project of Jindals, a SEZ project, got such a momentum that the administration had no option but to negotiate with the Sara Bharat Jakat Majhi-Madowa Jan Gaounta which has been spearheading the movement. Initially the authorities described them as maoist but the movement was in fact against blanket imposition of maoist label on the tribal community and terror unleashed by the police in the name of combating maoists.

In truth the maoist party would be in a happier situation had they succeeded in securing mass support in such a grand scale. It is precisely the absence of popular mass mobilisation that stands in their way of quick spread of their political and ideological influence.

The police have the free hand to kill anybody in false encounter with the maoists. As per the latest press release issued by the eastern regional bureau of CPI (Maoist) it was a spontaneous response to police terror and indiscriminate victimisation of tribal people by the persons in authority. The main party in power as alleged in the maoist leaflet, tried to recreate a Nandigram like scenario by deploying private militia and police to make the showpiece of industrialisation—Jindal Steel Plant—a grand success but the ruling marxists had to bite dust in no time.

Incidentally the maoists in their press statement did not claim the responsibility of 'Salbani' land-mine blast which actually tempted the police to go berserk, though for an earlier blast in which some health workers were killed, they apologised for the mistake.

The Lalgarh agitation by the tribals proves among other things that maoist violence is being exaggerated by the security establishment all the time to unleash repression on the underprivileged in backward regions. It's a nice way, rather a tested way, to silence any voice of dissent, Gandhian or non-Gandhian.

