

Mission Likely

Another world is necessary'. That is precisely the message emanating from what they call 'maoist menace". But the persons in authority refuse to see reason in tribal anger that suddenly finds its violent manifestation in different regions. And political parties, ruling or opposition, are working overtime to link tribal dissatisfaction to maoist cause. Over the months the big press has played up maoist plan to destabilise the system, reporting that the maoist party is getting funds and weapons from abroad. Maybe they are planning a genocide against their own people—poor tribals. The Sri Lankan Government carried out the genocide against the Tamils because they treated them as aliens. Pakistan military resorted to mass murder of Bengali people and physical liquidation of Bengali intellectuals because the ruling Punjabi elite of Pakistan always treated the Bengalis as inferior race and utilised the then East Pakistan, now Bangladesh as their internal colony. But it is not the case when the Centre and different state governments declare war against the agitating tribals who are incidentally under the sway of Maoists. The maoists too say they are at war with the state but it is an unequal war having the prospects of leading to a genocide. And it would be a genocide of different kind. The heart of the matter is land and it is alienation of tribal land that is the root cause of sporadic violence. It all started during the British period. But the foreign rulers tried to maintain a kind of balance by enacting a few safeguard legislations while acquiring tribal land. Today's ruling circles who are the torch-bearers of British legacy don't bother about even the semblance of legal protection that the British instituted against the backdrop of numerous tribal peasant rebellions. In the name of development and industrialisation they have uprooted thousands of hapless tribal and other backward people from their land only to woo multinationals.

After all the maoists have not appeared on the political scene out of the blue. Whether they like it or not, of late, the maoists have managed to get some tribal support as well as fire power which they are certainly over-using to their own peril.

As tribal land alienation coupled with age-old deprivation lies behind the current upsurge led by the maoist party it is worthwhile to recall Vinoba Bhave's Bhoodan Movement. Vinoba, being an ardent follower of Gandhian social thinking realised the land question well. In truth he was more forward looking than the so-called socialists and communists in initiating land reforms in his own way. He started the 'Bhoodan' movement of begging a sixth part of land from the landlords in order to give away those parcels of land to the landless tillers. At that time the Soviet influence on the Indian polity was enormous, albeit planned economy to build a socialistic pattern of society was in an incoherent state and the government supported the movement. Euphoria was all around and tens of thousands of acres of land were distributed among the landless. Tragically enough, there was no follow up registration. In course of time Government lost interest in land distribution and the 'Bhoodan' movement died. It was thought to be an alternate model to state acquiring surplus land through legislation and re-distributing it among the landless. But this alternative proved to be as much a

failure as the state model. As a result, in the eye of law, the parcels of land belonged to the landlords as before. Then private armies or mercenaries raised by notorious landlords of Bihar with all their caste prejudice forcibly ousted the tillers from the soil. In a sense maoists took up the unfinished agenda of Vinoba Bhave and organised the poor villagers to face state-landlord terror.

The way some people in the main stream media are reacting to "maoist terror" borders on hysteria. They are accusing the central government of not taking tough measures against the maoists. As if operation by paramilitary forces—in case of Bengal it is joint forces—against agitating tribals and dalits, indiscriminate arrest of ordinary daily labourers while parading them as maoists, night raids, taking liberty of women at will, raping of teenagers in tribal hamlets are not enough. Maybe they want total elimination of tribal population.

Right now what disturbs the civil liberties activists most is the Centre's decision to launch an all-out anti-maoist drive involving the army. To what extent troops can go may be guessed from what is happening in North-East and Kashmir—rampant violation of human rights. The security establishment has a plan to out-number the maoist guerillas by deploying as many as 40,000 men in uniform to be backed by army helicopter if the situation so demands. In other words this unequal war means pogrom as the strength of maoists is being continually exaggerated with a ploy to isolate the followers of maoist party and annihilate them to terrorise ordinary people who find it increasingly difficult to have two square meals because food price inflation scenario may soon reach the Latin American stage. The maoists look too desperate to establish their political hegemony—it may be suicidal for them and their social base as well. Middle class wage earners don't subscribe to their ideology and they cannot succeed in making a revolution, even of their kind, without broad mass support.

What all political parties, particularly communist parties talk about confronting maoists politically is sheer nonsense. They are not interested in it. Nor do the maoists seriously conduct political and ideological struggles against their adversaries. Their too much reliance on guns may backfire. It all makes the Centre's mission—mission to Janglemahal, Chattisgarh, Orissa and Maharashtra more likely any time soon. □□□