

The Ongoing Civil War in India

Jan Myrdal

There is civil war in India. No wonder. As the GDP goes up with about 8% in a year 77% of the population exists below the poverty line. In global hunger index India ranks below sub-Saharan Africa. The most oppressed are the untouchables—the dalits—in the Indian caste-ridden society. Together with the tribal adivasis they constitute a quarter of the Indian population. For the ruling class they are the only expendable group. They are oppressed and starving as when I first came to India 52 years ago and was totally shocked. The hungry 50% are getting hungrier.

The rich in India are getting richer. 36 billionaires constitute a third of India's GDP. They are disgustingly rich and behave like other such ruling classes always have. They are morally upset when the oppressed and starving demand their right. They talk with horror in their Parliament and their press if the victims defend themselves when private goondas or regular forces of the ruling class – *Salwa Judum* and *Green Hunt*—kill, rape and torch to establish law and order.

India has never been “non-violent”. Neither from the rulers or the ruled. As a movement against the rulers non-violence gave rise to a library of books but it was not non-violence that forced the British to (partially) leave. The oppressed masses have always been struggling. That everyone who looks at an uncensored history of South Asia knows. But the political censorship about India was so thoroughgoing that even officially non-political books for young people like the standard English version of Jules Verne “The Mysterious Island” was purged. Jules Verne's original text on Captain Nemo and 1857 was considered subversive and rewritten to suit British imperial interests.

The British had to give up their official rule in 1947 because they were broke; because the “Quit India” movement during the war had been far stronger than their official censorship allowed to be published; because the INA-trial and the Bombay naval mutiny proved that they could no longer rely on their armed forces. Gandhi was historically important but “non-violence” played no decisive part in the history of the popular struggle against the protracted—often extreme—violence of the rulers against the people in South Asia.

The projects and the policies in India I have witnessed, this more than half a century that officially have been aimed at the uplift of the unnecessary 25% of the population in the bottom layer of Indian society have not been only officialese and hot air. These projects and policies have provided a pleasant livelihood (partly by direct corruption) for bureaucrats, “aid workers” (state or NGO) and a multitude of politically servile writers in India and outside. The hungry are still as hungry and the oppressed still as oppressed.

But since Charu Mazumdar initiated the armed struggle in Naxalbari 43 years ago these people on the underside of India have been fighting the ruling elites not only politically but also with bows and arrows, knives and guns and bombs.

Much has happened in these years and there have been many changes. Charu Mazumdar is long since dead in jail and his followers, though they deeply respect him and read him, have found that special traits of his policies—like the annihilation line—are unproductive. Thus the struggle has developed and grown.

In 1980 when I discussed with Chandrapulla Reddy in Mumbai and he then sent me to Andhra Pradesh the armed squads there were rather weak—even if full of spirit—and his group like other Naxals of that time were, as he told me, parts of a split movement without any leader of an all-India stature.

This time my old friend, the civil rights activist Gautam Navlakha and I were invited to Dandakaranya for discussions with the General Secretary, the Politburo of the Communist Party of India (Maoist) and the leading cadres of the armed forces. The situation was much different from that of 1980. The splits among the Naxals are being overcome. The party is an All-India party and a revolutionary and democratic state organization, the Janata Sarkar—the people's power—is step by step supplanting the state organization of the ruling class. The armed force—the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army—is already strong enough to inflict very heavy military losses on the government forces. It is important to let readers the world over know about this mounting war for a decent life by the oppressed of the earth.

But of course it is their country and their war. I always try to keep in mind what Rewi Alley told me in Beijing during the turbulent years of the Cultural Revolution in China :

—Remember it is their country!

That the oppressed always are right against their rulers is as true in India 2010 as it has been through history. But my role as a writer is to try to explain the struggle and make readers outside India—and maybe also in India—better understand why and how the people struggle. I am not to tell them in India what to do and how to do it.

As I am writing this I read *the Times of India* 12 April. It seems that I also have other readers; official ones:

'With Maoists threatening more Dantewada-type attacks, the Centre has asked states and CRPF to be on their toes and is also studying Maoist chief Ganapathi alias Mupalla Laxman Rao's recent comments about new 'war tactics'. Fresh alerts were sounded late on Saturday and repeated on Sunday in view of the Naxals' warning.

Although the forces have been on full alert since the massacre of 76 security personnel on April 6, the Centre asked commanders in war zones to take

adequate precautions sensing that the ultras' warning may not just be plain rhetoric.

Taking cue from what Ganapathi recently said in an interview to Swedish author and columnist Jan Myrdal, CRPF's operational strategists, meanwhile, are 'revisiting' the Maoist chief's rare utterances on crucial issues including how the Naxals have been positioning themselves to gain ground.'

A senior official said, 'We are not in a position to take any threat lightly while waiting for its authenticity. After all, such threats are in tune with Ganapathi's line as broadly revealed in his recent interview.'

The forces are now trying to figure out what Ganapathi meant when he told Myrdal that Maoist guerrillas would chase the security forces' base camps like 'honey bees'.

Referring to the 22-page interview given somewhere in the jungles of eastern ghats in January, the official said, 'It is important to know them if we want to counter them'.

Also now I see on the net that the present Indian rulers "beareth not the sword in vain" (Romans 13.4). The Home minister P. Chidabaram on Thursday May 6th 2010 goes out of his way to warn what he calls "the intellectuals". He warns writers like me and Gautam Navlakha and Arundhati Roy that have gone to Dandakaranya with the aim to report truthfully on the situation :

"Government Asks People to Be Vigilant of CPI (Maoist) Propaganda.

It has come to the notice of the Government that some Maoist leaders have been directly contacting certain NGOs/intellectuals to propagate their ideology and persuade them to take steps as would provide support to the CPI (Maoist) ideology. It is brought to the notice of the general public that under Section 39 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, any person who commits the offence of supporting such a terrorist organisation with inter alia intention to further the activities of such terrorist organisations would be liable to be punished with imprisonment for a term not exceeding ten years or with fine or with both. General public are informed to be extremely vigilant of the propaganda of CPI (Maoist) and not unwittingly become a victim of such propaganda.

This is being issued in public interest so that the general public are aware that the Communist Party of India (Maoist) and all its formations and front organisations are terrorist organisations whose sole aim is armed overthrow of the Indian State and that they have no place in India's parliamentary democracy. CPI (Maoist) continues to kill innocent civilians including tribals in cold blood and destroy crucial infrastructure like roads, culverts, school buildings, gram panchayat buildings, etc. so as to prevent development from reaching these under-developed areas."

I am not sure that the readers outside India—or even in India—know how extraordinary this “section 39” is. Thus I will quote it. Not even openly fascist governments use to formulate India-rubber laws like this!

“39. Offence relating to support given to a terrorist organisation. (1) A person commits the offence relating to support given to a terrorist organisation, (a) who, with intention to further the activity of a terrorist organisation, (i) invites support for the terrorist organisation, and (ii) the support is not or is not restricted to provide money or other property within the meaning of section 40; or (b) who, with intention to further the activity of a terrorist organisation, arranges, manages or assists in arranging or managing a meeting which he knows is (i) to support the terrorist organisation, or (ii) to further the activity of the terrorist organisation, or (iii) to be addressed by a person who associates or professes to be associated with the terrorist organisation; or (c) who, with intention to further the activity of a terrorist organisation, addresses a meeting for the purpose of encouraging support for the terrorist organisation or to further its activity. (2) A person, who commits the offence relating to support given to a terrorist organisation under sub-section (1) shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term not exceeding ten years, or with fine, or with both.”

But whatever laws the ruling class of India have passed through their parliament I am now writing “Red Star over India. The Wretched of the Earth are Rising.” It will be interesting to see what the Home minister P Chidabaram will do about it. □□□