

People's War as Strategy and Peace Talk as Tactics

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It appears as though a movement which hit the headlines with an abortive attempt on the life of the former Chief Minister of West Bengal, Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, on 2nd November 2008 met its Waterloo with the custodial killing of Kishanji, the politbureau member of the CPI(Maoist) and in-charge of the Eastern Regional Bureau of the Party, on November 24, 2011. But that would be glib talk for the simple reason that the movement neither began in 2008 nor has ended with the setback suffered by the Party in recent times. However, in order to understand the current disarray one has to explore where they went wrong in order for them to move ahead. Because despite killings, arrests and enforced surrender of Maoist cadres the fact remains that a new generation of cadres from the oppressed classes had emerged in Jangalmahal and still exists despite depletion in their ranks.

People's War (PW) being waged by CPI(Maoist) provides the critical cutting edge without which it is well nigh impossible to imagine a revolutionary transformation in India. Without their revolutionary warfare one cannot meet the propensity of the Indian State to carry out military suppression nor be able to focus on seizure of power. But revolution in contemporary India cannot be brought about through a single party hegemony. Not in contemporary India with its social diversity and political plurality. Therefore, while the carping critics of CPI(Maoist) ought to know that their resistance using constitutional means acquires its political edge from the PW and indeed their proclivity to lapse into legalism and reform is kept in check by their presence. Maoists too have to realize, in view of actual restrictions and impediments in their path and the social reality, that the over-ground resistance being offered by a wide spectrum of revolutionary and reformist formations, acts as a force multiplier for their PW. It is this complementarity needs to be worked at.(1)

A spate of crackdowns and arrests made by the security agencies in last two years (2009-2010) in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Orissa, West Bengal.... does suggest that Maoists have suffered setback. But it also shows how rapidly Maoists had spread in different parts of India! Their critics were proved wrong in claiming that Maoist strategy was leading nowhere. In Jangalmahal region of West Bengal they had managed to break the shackles and managed to emerge as a strong fighting force of the people just as they did in Dumka (Jharkhand). In purely politico-military terms the meticulously planned looting of armouries as well as jail raids showed that they were capable of moving a force of 200-500 across a large territory, something not possible without a social base in those territories, to carry out operations. No longer were they a rag-tag guerilla band, the irregular or partisan of the yore, but an Army in the making. In all these areas they have been actively engaged in building public assets such as ponds, roads, work teams to develop agriculture, provide elementary health and education to people. And this did help place likelihood of revolutionary transformation back on the agenda. But the setback suffered by them needs to be explained.

It is this writer's conviction that more than the conduct of 'peace' talks what matters is how Maoists wage their PW. Because, 'peace' talks are a matter of tactics, while waging PW is the strategy for successful consummation of revolution. It is their PW, which informs their tactics of talks.

Maoists had been working among the tribals in Jangalmahal since 1994. The area in fact was also a scene of celebrated peasant uprising in early 1970s. A number of revolutionary parties were active there. The struggle for a separate Jharkhand State picked up by 1980s and found some resonance there, giving a boost to identity politics. Some revolutionary formation, working there for several decades spearheaded demand for an autonomous council for Jangalmahal, following the emergence of Jharkhand state in 2000. MCC had been present in Purulia since mid- 1960's or rather the group within Communist Party of India (Marxist) which then spun off into MCC. By 1990s activities of the CPI(ML) PW also picked up. The administration began to take notice of this and in 2002 raids were conducted to "nip the People's War-Maoist Coordination Centre in the bud". Arrest and sexual exploitation of Adivasis was common in the name of hunting PW-MCC. (*Times of India*, 10 October, 2002) It was reported that people were told to either join the ruling CPI (Marxist) or the Jharkhand Party or else they would be regarded as belonging to PW-MCC. The same newspaper a day before that quoted an old man as complaining "we are being punished for demanding development. If one had to do Janayuddha (People's War) for a health centre, one might as well as do it". The use of keyword 'janayudha' or People's War is a sure sign that Maoists have been working here and this keyword had become part of the common language. By 2003 it was also being reported in Kolkata newspaper that Maoists were running schools for children of Adivasis. With Nandigram and Singur struggle while Maoists had emerged as a key player it was the movement in Jangalmahal that catapulted them into prominence. The IED attack on 2nd November 2008 against the former CM of the state was meant to do that, which saw police crackdown on Adivasi villagers which caused the emergence of People's Committee Against Police Atrocities in which a number of radical and pro-people forces were represented. When the Jakat Majhi Marwa (All India Association of Majhis or traditional chiefs) negotiated, unilaterally, an agreement with local administration in November 2008 where principal demands of the people were rejected, the younger sections of the tribals refused to accept the terms and refused to withdraw the blockade. The demand for police personnel to come before tribal assembly and beg forgiveness for crimes committed by them against the people acquired life of its own with expulsion of police and administration from Lalgah area and with PCAPA running the administration. Also the CPI (Maoist), it appears, were clear that the struggle in Jangalmahal was for a struggle of the general people, initiated by the tribals and not a tribal identity struggle, as some revolutionary groups insisted. The combined SC+ST population in Lalgah and Belpahari blocks, the area of struggle, is 55% and 58% of the whole respectively. This meant that more than 40% of the people do not think of themselves as tribals and it was necessary to unite these people.

It is worth noting that the Maoists' criticism of Santosh Rana led CPI(ML) [Letter of CPI(Maoist) to Santosh Rana and Reply from the CPI(ML), 29 October, 2009] for pushing ahead with demand for an autonomous council for Jangalmahal within the state of West Bengal and characterizing it as promoting tribal identity politics or playing into the hands of Left Front Government, did not mean that the Maoists opposed identity struggles such as Kamatapuri and Gorkha identity struggles. Moreover, 'Tactics and Strategy of Indian Revolution' of the CPI(Maoist) states that the Party should organise Adivasis with the slogans, 'Right over the forest belongs to people and Adivasis', 'Political Autonomy to the Adivasi territories' and transform the territory as exploitation-free territory i.e. 'red land', 'don't be divided, be united', 'unite the real friends against the real enemies', right over all the resources including water, forest etc 'right for protecting their own culture and development', and draw up a specific plan for work among them to mobilise them against economic, political, social and cultural oppression...'. Yet, Maoists were right in emphasizing that the "divisions" in the Adivasi or tribal society could neither be lost sight of nor is it correct to essentialise tribal identity and underplay class divisions and struggle. The lessons of DK tend to confirm the correctness of this approach. After all revolutionary movements are not wedded just to the issue of forests rights and opposed to land grab by corporations and displacement of people and loss of livelihood. They go beyond, by bringing the focus onto the issue of political power and work for a socialist planned economy.

Now unlike in Dandakaranya, where the earliest struggles were based on mobilisation of the masses to increase tendu leaf collection rates, enforcing forest rights by chasing away the corrupt foresters, and occupying cultivable lands from the forests and the landlords, in the Jangalmahal, the rate was increased by a fiat of the armed squads and not by people's struggle. The fight against police atrocity attracted large gatherings of the people, but there is little information about the mode of occupation of large plots of land. Apart from sporadic redistribution of the land under occupation of corrupt Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPM] leaders, a political programme based on primary demands like land, water, forest rights, and employment, and mass struggles to implement them, which might have been more effective in exposing and isolating the CPM, was also missing and in its absence killings of CPM or cadres of other parties proved to be deeply flawed.

The mass front in shape of PCAPA had created a favorable ground for further expansion and consolidation of Maoists. In Maoist parlance Jangalmahal was a guerilla zone, meaning that it was an area of contention between the forces of the State and the revolutionaries. But there were confusing back and forth about their role in PCAPA. On 15th June 2009 a Maoist leader, Bikash, claimed at a press conference that they had built this movement, were directing it, and thereby denied direct political space to the people and other political groups. Whereas in an interview Kishanji gave to *Frontline* (October 24–November 6, 2009) he had insisted that not only were the PCAPA and the Maoist Movement "not the same" but also went on to say that "it would be incorrect to say that the people of the region have been influenced only by the Maoists; they have been very much influenced by the PCAPA also". However, it does appear that after the initial period when the PCAPA got formed and replaced the traditional Adivasi

chiefs the control passed into the hands of the Maoists. This coincided with the June 9, 2009 onwards start of joint forces operation. Taking credit for the movement in Jangalmahal and declaring that they control in the midst of war made sense only if PCAPA indeed was controlled by them. And the way news spread it became a political miscalculation and undercut PCAPA's emergence as a mass movement, one with people's own creative endeavors and representing a different political forces, even when Maoists were the dominant force in this coalition. What it also did was pushed the CPI(Maoist) to the forefront.

The emergence of PCAPA was no doubt a great achievement. Influenced as it was by the Maoist Movement the work carried out by them in the field of health, education, small irrigation projects to benefit peasants, help provided to small and marginal farmers, participation of women etc were remarkable contribution in a short span of time and in face of the all out efforts by the Left Front led state administration and military forces to physically close health centres and schools or simply interdict doctors and teachers from entering these areas. But all the work being done held out the promise of providing the Maoists with a mass organisation for a mass front and effectively getting around the proscription imposed on them, which banned them from mass political work. So the urge to take credit and claim leadership of the movement and control it, widened the rift in the united effort comprising diverse political persuasion in Jangalmahal and made Maoist control of the PCAPA a divisive issue.

A comparison between with write-ups on Jangalmahal between November 2008-June 2009 and thereafter, shows that. This also lent weight to the propaganda of CPM-led Left Front government in West Bengal and the UPA government at the Centre, about PCAPA being nothing but a Maoist Front. With the PCAPA becoming a divisive issue helped the way for joint forces operation, when precisely for this reason and knowing fully well that such an offensive was imminent no sooner elections to 15th Parliament in India (May 2009) were over, the Maoist Movement ought not to have sent conflicting signals about the nature of its relationship with PCAPA and to have ensured that the united front remained intact. By the time 2011 elections to the state assembly dawned, the situation had altered and this revealed itself during the elections with differences emerging in Maoist Movement over elections. But before that, there was another tactical blunder.

In response to Sujato Bhadra's criticism of the Party for recourse to violence, Kishanji justified the spurt in killings by the Maoists claiming that these are not normal conditions but conditions of war where rules are different. He also said that "In order to tire out informers, the people are adopting a number of methods. On the other side, the state is also trying everything in its power to whet their greed. Thus the number of informers being killed is also mounting. Had there been some proper system in Jangalmahal today, the number of informers getting killed would have been far less. In different parts of Dandakaranya, informers are being detained in people's prisons." [<http://sanhati.com/excerpted/1873>].

It is true that in conditions of war the difference between combatants and non-combatants become decisive and informer or couriers are counted as combatants. When one condemns the

Maoists for killings it is not as though they alone are responsible for this. The large scale killings by members or goon squads of CPM, Congress, BJP, Trinamool Congress etc as well as killings undertaken by the military forces at the behest of these parties and other smaller anti-Maoist formations should not be ignored. Nevertheless, war fought by revolutionaries cannot adopt the same approach as counter-revolutionaries do. Indeed the rules of war adopted by revolutionaries are also meant to enhance their political appeal and rally those sections of people who are considered friends or allies. Besides, absence of jails is not as important a factor as the fact that their control of the area was far less effective than in DK. And the increase in the killing of 'informers' was linked to the increase in the number of 'informers' which not in small measure was the result of the diktat issued to CPM members or their supporters in Jangalmahal to leave the party or face social boycott or even death. Both the CPM, then the ruling party in West Bepgal and the military forces found in this a useful way of infiltrating PCAPA. This, possibly by pushing up the number of informers.

Furthermore, without politically isolating the CPM through a popular political campaign these increased killings actually eroded the Maoist appeal and point to political consequences of such killings. Equally wrong were killings of people who belonged to another political formation such as that of Sudhir Mandi, chairman of Binpur II Panchayat Samiti from 2003-08 and who owned no more than one acre of land and lived in a thatched house, for being a member of what was an anti-Maoist vigilante group. Be that as it may, Kishanji in his interview to *Frontline* (October 26-November 6, 2009) refers to the fact that "in the last seven months 52 CPM members were killed by them". The total figure of killings varies from 75 to 400 persons for 2009-2011. While not all killings can be attributed to the Maoists, large number took place at their hands. Reportedly, the Eastern Regional Bureau of the Maoists was, criticized by the Central Committee of the CPI (Maoist) for "un-necessary killings". [*Indian Express*. 14, November 2011]

But by far the major political blunder was the tacit support for Trinamool Congress in 2011 elections. This was reflected in confusion within the PCAPA and the Party over whether to participate in the election, to support the Trinamool Congress or stay out of the election by effectively boycotting polls. These divisions and confusion helped the Trinamool Congress, which won four of the five seats from Jangalmahal. Thus whereas in 2009 parliamentary elections voting percentage was less than 10%, in 2011 May assembly elections the voting crossed 60%. What does it imply? That there was no poll boycott campaign in 2011 polls by the Maoists unlike in 2009 Parliamentary elections when Maoists boycott call was effective and voting fell to below 10%? Or that they encouraged people to vote for TC? Or that the difference in voting turnout in 2009 and 2011 shows that they had lost ground since the heydays of 2009-10? The lack of clarity in 2011 about the elections was also the result of a tactical decision taken in 2009-10 when repression was severe and PCAPA members were told to join Trinamool Congress in order to protect themselves.

Through this period leading up to the Assembly elections in 2011, calculated ambiguity seemed to have been the buzz word in so far as Maoist support for Trinamool Congress was

concerned. Thus when 'Anand Bazar Patrika' (largest circulating Bangla newspaper), in February 2011 claimed that Kishanji had opined that his party would like to see Mamata Banerjee as the Chief Minister of West Bengal it was widely reported. Now it is known that this was an invention of the newspaper and not the exact words of Kishanji but what was intriguing was the fact that despite the deliberate distortion and misrepresentation the Party did not immediately issue a denial. Why did the Maoist Party not issue a denial and set the record straight? Without this denial it gave life to the claim that Maoists favoured TMC which confused their own rank and file and ordinary voters. Such was the level of confusion within the Party that when the jailed President of PCAPA Chatrahar Mahato decided to stand for elections in April 2011, while one section of the Party supported him the other opposed his candidature. Many of his own followers demanded to know why they were asked to gravitate towards TMC when they faced attacks from Harnad Vahini (a private army of ruling CPI [Marxist] government). If the Maoist strategy was to use the contradiction within the ruling classes to their advantage, in reality they were the ones who got used and also disadvantaged. If talks are a tactical issue then tactical ambiguity over elections can be a dangerous game and as happened later even impact their PW.

Significantly, no sooner Trinamool Congress led state Government came to power in West Bengal they began propagating that Maoists and CPM were allies! Trinamool Congress replaced CPM's 'Harnad Bahini' with their own "Bhairav Bahini". And unlike the CPM led government which in 1977 on coming to power unconditionally released all political prisoners, the new coalition government decided to delay the process and introduced conditions to the release of political prisoners. Prospects of peace talk, already floundering, were dashed with the custodial killing of Kishanji on November 24, 2011.

Thus, when the talks with interlocutors began, the Party was already on the back foot. Its presence in the area was coming under attack from the joint forces as well as the private army of the TMC. Indeed post-elections TMC moved in quickly to fill the vacuum left by the defeated CPM.

The explanation offered above is sketchy because few are privy to Party's assessment of what went wrong here. But recalling what happened in Andhra Pradesh in 2004, if one tries to search for possible parallel one comes across the same problem that Maoists do not become wiser. For instance, the Political Report of the Unity Congress in 2007, records that those who were in favour of talks in AP in 2004 had argued that "(t)he question of going for talks is an issue related to political tactics and utilization of the contradictions within the ruling classes. Ever since the declaration of Naxalism as the principal agenda in its election manifesto by the TDP (Telugu Desam Party) the political situation in the state had taken a significant turn and issue of talks came prominently to the forefront....It was thus an outcome of public pressure....and in such a situation our party would only have been isolated if it did not go for talks...." They argued that "we were clear in our assessment that the period of ceasefire would not last for more than six months and that there will not be any substantial outcome from the talks, the short period of relaxation would also be used to some extent for conducting revolutionary

propaganda....The current losses in AP are not related to talks but are a result of our overall weak subjective strength as well as some long term weaknesses....”

However, those who were critical of this line held that “(t)he demand of the then existing concrete objective condition was to utilize the relaxation in the enemy’s repression in order to complete the preparation for confronting future offensive and for advancing the war and thereby strengthen our subjective forces. The tactics of talks was in no way in accordance with this demand”. They also argued that “(a)t that time our underground Party structure, secret functioning and our armed strength were weak”.

The report then noted that “by a majority vote the Congress expressed the opinion that ‘taking into consideration the concrete objective situation in AP and the concrete subjective condition of our Party at that time it was not correct to go for talks with the AP government’”. Note the difference in emphasis on preparing for the offensive in the making and opposition to across the table talks.

Two questions are to be answered. What were the subjective weaknesses that are alluded to? What were the “long term weaknesses?” If talks had to be pursued and party assessment was that they would not last beyond six months why did they expose their rank and file by organising mass meetings in full glare of intelligence agencies who meticulously video-graphed them and used it to track down underground members later? Knowing their own ‘long term weaknesses’ and erosion of subjective factors what did the Party stand to gain from entering into talks?

Also it is much too laudatory of the TMC to the point that the treacherous role of this party including in the custodial killing of Kishanji is something that finds not a word of condemnation and indeed the dastardly role of TMC is ignored. That TMC was using the military forces to carry out the dirty task of killing, rape and enforced surrenders finds no reference in this account. But more startling are his claim that the Maoists had stopped insisting on withdrawal of joint forces and in fact, contrary to public statements, were privately in agreement with the interlocutors that joint forces activities had receded or that release of political prisoner was not an issue for the Maoists are astounding claims. One has to wait for the Party to respond and clarify its stance.

In war as in politics choosing strategic friends and allies as well as fighting the main enemy is of decisive significance. Carl Schmitt points out that “War finds its meaning in enmity. Because it is continuation of politics, politics too always involves an element of enmity, at least potentially; and if peace contains within itself the possibility of war –something that by the standards of experience has unfortunately proved to be true–peace too contains a moment of potential enmity”. The question, however, is whether the enmity can be contained and regulated, that is, whether it represents relative or absolute enmity.’’(2)

When military offensive is imminent dividing the enemy is a tactical need. But PCAPA was a coalition of class friends and allies. There were others who were earlier part of the struggle but

had parted ways. They were political opponents and certainly part of the broad coalition of pro-revolutionary bent. Not keeping doors open for them and resolving political battles through annihilation, (such as that of Sudhir Mandi, chief of Binpur II panchayat from 2003-08, killed in November 2008) was simply wrong, if not a criminal.

In the interview that the General Secretary of the CPI(Maoist) gave in January 2010 he had made an observation about the importance of "partial" victories or reforms, even when the Party is committed for total revolution. This is part of their practice and evident in areas where they are present where they encourage people to fight for various entitlements and welfare projects. Thus the Party is aware of the need for some relief, some respite for the people. However, what has not been understood is that in order for people to fight for their rights calls for their mobilisation and also an organisation. Since their Party is banned and open activities are prohibited, its overt presence is a difficult proposition. The absence of mass fronts apart there is very little mass work going on outside struggle zones. All this compels re-looking at the pro-people forces that are working overground and for working with and not against each other. Trying to establish Party's hegemony with the help of its guns is negation of revolutionary politics.

In the interview Cherukuri Rajkumar told *The Hindu* (14 April, 2010) that actually "(t)he Party and leadership will grow rapidly in times of war.... War is giving birth to new generals and commanders, which we never anticipated in normal times. While it took several years to produce a leader of caliber in relatively peaceful times, it is taking a fraction of that time in the midst of the war situation". This happened also during the two previous operations launched against them in DK, in 1991 and 1997.

How realistic is this assessment? Wars do sharpen people's powers of comprehension, and they also help to spread their political appeal. Not only in areas where they dominate but also amongst those whose imagination is stirred by the Maoist Movement. But it is equally true that civil wars which tend to be 'dirty wars' can alienate sections of people because of needless blood-letting, conflicting loyalties and absence of mass political mobilisations.

The killing of CPM activists too does not escape this requirement. By Kishanji's own account 52 CPM members were killed in just seven months of 2009. What were the charges against each of them? Failure to provide any information on each of these killings means there are only anecdotal explanations that these were all cruel and corrupt, but there is no documented account available in the public domain. So how does one know if the killings of CPM members were annihilation of political opponents or of 'informers' who had committed heinous crimes? This writer is against death penalty as such. But those who do subscribe to it, as the Party does, are obligated to share the evidence if they want to convince people that these were not arbitrary acts or of use of force to settle political scores. For Kishanji to have suggested that one of the factors contributing to killings was the lack of jails in Jangalmahal unlike in Dandkaranya, in the light of above is unfortunate. But it also points towards the fact that while they did expand politically and geographically (an essential feature of area-wise seizure of power) in these new

areas, they made up for absence of their political hegemony in the contentious zone with use of force. Their control was not just contentious but also politically weak.

Also, they did not follow their own constitutional principle and practices of DK here. The actual practice in DK is that death sentence, even in such cases where an informer had brought about physical harm to people or the Party, is not necessarily given. Also in those cases where death sentence has been awarded it has to be approved by the higher instance. This is aimed at discouraging arbitrary acts as well as needless killings. Had they encouraged democratic rights organisations to investigate such cases it would have brought out the facts related to killings and helped mute the revulsion caused among many democratic minded sections of the people, particularly in West Bengal. This was also necessary to keep in mind because there is a vocal opinion in the country which accepts the legitimacy and strategic importance of armed struggle for revolutionary transformation. But it does not condone or accept reckless killings and arbitrary acts or use of force in resolving political battles.

In order for people to be able to distinguish killings requires that the Maoist Movement hold itself accountable, not just to its own rank and file, but also those whom it wants to or is trying to win over. In truths there have been far too many executions which were abhorrent to revolutionary practice.

Carl Schmitt says “That heart of political is not enmity per se but the distinction of friends and enemy.”(2) To treat as enemy an ideological opponent while enhancing the importance of tactical ally in shape of a ruling class formation such as TMC is to devalue the significance of revolutionary politics.

It is certainly true that many more Maoists and PCAPA members were killed too. But revolutionary warfare is not based on principle of reciprocity. Mao’s admonition that “revolution is not a tea party” is not to be taken literally. It was meant to draw attention to the fact that it involves bloody engagement and not a call to commit brutal acts. While war is continuation of politics by other means, Mao also pointed out that War is politics. Meaning thereby that practice of revolutionary warfare is intrinsically political. If this is so then revolutionary warfare sets itself apart by the conduct of its warfare.

While the pent up fury of the oppressed, as Azad too had opined in his interview, is at times difficult to contain.(3) Accepting also that urban middle class perception could vary from that of oppressed and exploited with their suppressed rage at gross injustice to which they are subjected. But the killing points to a more critical lapse. While the footprint of guerilla is large the political presence of the Party does not necessarily match this. Absence of Party units at village level in some areas was observed by the 9th Party Congress. The presence or absence of the Party unit is not a mechanical thing. It is in fact of political significance because the tasks of mobilising people, carrying on work designed to help a “people’s economy”, ensuring participation of people in the goal of improving their economy and inspiring them to join the Party and become a guerilla etc. are not possible without this.

Wars, in particular civil wars, are brutal and cruel. Experience shows that “goodness”, is not reciprocated by the Government forces and agencies. Thus when one pushes the Maoists to accept Geneva Convention, especially its Article 3 and Protocol II, which applies to conduct of wars which are not international in nature, could one be exposing them to the ‘venomous bites’ of the State? Or actually to encourage them into acknowledging the importance of fighting their revolutionary war honourably as behoves a pro-people movement.

Finally, it is intriguing why there was divided opinion within the Party over Chatrathar Mahato’s decision to contest Assembly elections. And what does this signify? Some objected and asked people not to vote for him whereas others lent support. Should not the entire Party have supported his candidature?

The charge and counter-charge against the Maoists for having supported TMC to the extent that they campaigned even against the jailed leader of PCAPA Chatrathar Mahato, brings to the fore an old problem which confronts them. What should be the approach towards elections during PW and if they bend their own rules what course of action would be a better option; to support one ruling class formation against another or encourage those who are part of a mass movement to contest? In 2004 elections in Andhra Pradesh, the then CPI(ML) PW was accused of conducting a lukewarm election boycott campaign which ended up helping the Congress Party sweep the elections. Remarkably, neither in Andhra Pradesh in 2004 or West Bengal in 2011, were talks contingent upon Maoists backing the Congress or TMC, respectively, in the elections. It was Party’s own calculations which pushed them, tacitly if not overtly, to support one ruling class party over another. Considering the decimation of the rank and file of Maoists in AP in 2004-05 at the hands of the very same Congress Party whom they tacitly supported, it is intriguing that they adopted a course which helped TMC in areas where Maoists were strong. Indeed in Jangalmahal it is more than likely that the easy arrests and killings of Maoist cadres could be traced to their easy identification by the Trinamool Congress members.

Both situations bring out the need for the Maoists to take another look at their elections policy. In West Bengal, between 2008 & 2011, they could have encouraged PCAPA to put up candidates as a way of enhancing its own political appeal. This is all the more important if talks with government are seen as being a tactical issue. If it is tactical then there was nothing to be gained from backing TMC, rather it should have worked to ensure that TMC did not get to replace the CPM and allowed to consolidate their hold .

Bernard De’Mello has pointed out that “What makes the implementation of mass line even more difficult is Article 59 of the Constitution of the Party that directs the party fraction in the mass organization to dictate terms thereby encouraging ‘commandism’ which can lead to ‘isolationism’, i.e. the Party ultimately failing to gain the support of the non-Party leaders of its mass organizations”.(4)

However, the movement, which leaders like Kishanji built is alive, battered and bruised no doubt. The Maoist Movement did strike roots. This is the great contribution of Kishanji, a Maoist revolutionary. To serve the cause of revolution for the emancipation of people is the mark of

greatness. To live and work among the people, without the comfort of being in one place constantly and yet to retain the focus and not waver, is not a simple thing. It takes courage and conviction.

Notes :

1. Such is the confidence in the role of the revolutionary Party that even the General Secretary of Communist Party of India told the press on October 17, 2011, referring to the large rally held in November 2007 at Jagdalpur in Chattisgarh, and said that "I was amazed to see such huge participation of people in the rally. Neither my party nor I had any influence in Bastar. Hence it was not possible for us to mobilize such large number of people. The rally was a success because it had the backing of Naxals". (*The Times of India*, 17 December, 2010). The local CPI leader in Bastar had earlier pointed out that "Naxalite position at this moment is so strong among the Adivasis that they can, through dialogue bargain...for strong measures that would protect the Adivasis, their culture and their national right over their land and forest..." *Asian Age*, 18 October 2011.
2. "The Theory of Partisans: A Commentary/Remark on the Concept of the Political" : Michigan State University Press 2004]
3. Interview by Siddhartha Vardarajan of CPI(Maoist) Politbureau member Cherukuri Rajkumar @ Azad in *The Hindu*, 14 April, 2010.
4. Bernard D'Mello, "Insurgent Comrades : Maoist Learnings-by doing in India, 1967-2010" (unpublished). The Article- 59 of the CPI(Maoist) Party Constitution says "The party fractions shall be formed in the executive committees of mass organizations. Party fractions will guide the executive committees of the mass organizations adopting suitable method in accordance with the correct concrete situation. Fraction will function secretly. The opinions of party committee/ member guiding the fraction shall be considered as final opinion. If fraction committee members have any difference of opinion, they will send their opinions in writing to the concerned party committee/higher committee. The concerned party committees shall guide fraction committees of different mass organizations at their own level."