

**AN OPEN LETTER
TO REVOLUTIONARIES****Speak the truth, Stop the Killing**

Dilip Simeon

THIS APPEAL WAS DRAFTED IN 2008, but never published. In view of the recent judgement of the Supreme Court on *Salwa Judum*, it appeared that the appeal may be made again. Before coming to the 'open letter', a few words regarding the judgment is added.

There are moments when sane public opinion can make itself more effective, than 'normally' so, and the aftermath of the Salwa Judum judgement is one such. This is the time to ask the Maoists to acknowledge the immense pain and suffering that their activities are inflicting upon the public, and ask them to give up not their politics, but the violence.

The corporate opinion-makers as well as sympathisers of the RSS/BJP are furious with the judgement, which says: "This case represents a yawning gap between the promise of principled exercise of power in a constitutional democracy, and the reality of the situation in Chattisgarh, where the Respondent, the State of Chattisgarh, claims that it has a constitutional sanction to perpetrate, indefinitely, a regime of gross violation of human rights in a manner, and by adopting the same modes, as done by Maoist/Naxalite extremists. The State also claims that it has the powers to arm, with guns, thousands of mostly illiterate or barely literate young men of the tribal tracts, who are appointed as temporary police officers, with little or no training, and even lesser clarity about the chain of command to control the activities of such a force, to fight the battles against alleged Maoist extremists."

The judges have gone so far as to say that "the respondents were envisioning modes of state action that would seriously undermine constitutional values. This may cause grievous harm to national interests, particularly its goals of assuring human dignity, with fraternity amongst groups, and the nation's unity and integrity." In short, the judgement accuses the Chhattisgarh government of undermining the Indian Union. The effect of the judgement is to strengthen the legitimacy of the State in the eyes of those Indians who have lost faith in constitutional governance. Public-spirited citizens should welcome it as a means of resolving conflict.

As regards those who believe that untrammeled capitalism is the panacea for all humanity's problems, concerned citizens could impress upon them that the Constitution is the only consensual foundation for the polity. Corporates and politicians must learn to proceed in a legitimate manner - not by throwing all norms to the winds - as evident in the SC judgement on land acquisition in Uttar Pradesh.

At the same time the pressure of democratic public opinion should be brought upon the Maoists to stop their armed attacks and struggle for popular demands in a manner that does not entail cruelty and murder.

This is in reality an attempt to communicate through the only way possible for those like this writer. Even halting and mediated communication is better than silence. The political situation in the country is grim, and the plight of the exploited classes is worsening. There is no doubt that a powerful mass movement is needed to obtain even the mildest of popular demands, such as adherence to minimum wage regulations, and the protection of trade union rights.

It is quite logical to consider what might have happened in 1990 if all groups and parties in the communist movement had set aside their differences in order to defend the Babri Masjid. Had they unitedly resisted the tide of communal mobilisation, they might have prevented the terrible atrocities unleashed by the right extremists. Society is desperate for relief from constant fear, insecurity and intimidation. One of the roots of this is the violent regime imposed upon agrarian and informal workers whose poverty is the basis for the cheap labour that the Indian bourgeoisie boasts about, but should be ashamed of.

Democracy is a necessity for the workers movement, if there were no democracy people would have to fight for it. It is the ruling class for whom democratic institutions are a nuisance. The proper functioning of these institutions requires that people be able to exercise their basic rights without fear, and hence relief from violence would be a major gain for the most oppressed sections of society. Forcing the Indian rulers to implement the Constitution is a major task that will require mass movements on an unprecedented scale. This can only result from statesmanship of a high order among all those who claim to work for the exploited classes in Indian society. No doubt Maoists are in a position to initiate such a historic process.

Also, it is not out of place to consider the impact if Maoists were to give up the armed struggle and challenge the ruling class to adhere to the Constitution, reform the monstrous flaws in the criminal justice system, root out corruption in the police and judiciary, punish the instigators of communal and caste killings and the murderers of Shankar Guha Niyogi, disband militias such as the Ranvir Sena and Salwa Judum, implement the NREGA, repeal the SEZ Act, pass the Women's Reservation Bill and develop the forest and tribal areas for the benefit of the people rather than corporate interests. A step such as this, accompanied by an unconditional declaration that maoists will lay down arms and cease the violence will electrify the situation. It will also place Maoists in a central political position, for they will be challenging the entire Indian establishment.

And the precious lives of thousands of ordinary people, including women, children and the elderly; quite apart from those committed cadres shall be saved. There has been too much bloodshed. Violence is predictable. It is better to do something different and unpredictable. It will bring a smile to millions of faces.
□□□