

CONFRONTING THE 'RED' FASCISTS

REALITIES ARE BITTER. AND they are nowhere so bitter as in Nandigram, an obscure part of rural south Bengal that has been in the news for the last one year ever since the poor and marginal peasants began to resist the Left Government's forcible acquisition of fertile agricultural land to woo the captains of big business. People had to pay dearly in March when hoodlums backed by the ruling CPM and policemen unleashed a rein of terror. How many died in that carnage is yet to be ascertained. Fascism in the East is marching with red flag though its colour is saffron in the West. But the end result is the same—displacement and deprivation of the poor. Last month the 'marxists' with their hired goons re-enacted the 14 March scenario, only on a much bigger scale to tell the world that they would go to any length to serve the interests of chambers of commerce. Faced with severe criticism from civic society, the marxists, rather red facists announced some sops in the form of monetary compensation to the victims of 'red bullets', hopefully to pacify the aggrieved and regain their lost territory. To the people of Nandigram 'marxism' stands for murder, rape, loot and burning. What a tragedy!

It was curious that just after the Chief Minister's announced decision to call the Central Reserve Police Force for bringing back peace to Nandigram, there had been a resumption of the battle of guns and bombs between the CPI(M) and the multi-organisational local outfit, Bhoomi Uchhed Pratiradh Committee.

The renewal of this vicious cycle of violence and the reported 'liberation' of a few villages by the CPI(M) are revealing enough. It should be clear to any unbiased observer of the Nandigram crisis that without the punishment of the guilty police officers and their CPI(M) accomplices who had entered the area on 14 March, there was hardly any chance of the return of peace, notwithstanding the Chief Minister's declaration of monetary compensation to the victims of police firing. But the Chief Minister could not afford to punish his own policemen because that would let the cat out of the bag. Nor could the Bhoomi Uchhed Pratirodh Committee afford to ignore the fact that the wrath of the people against those who acted in unision with the police on 14 March was implacable. It was the self-same people who had been acting as the principal instruments of the hegemony of the CPI(M) in the area.

The loss of this hegemony is something that the CPI(M) can ill-afford to take for granted. Hence what the principal ruling party in West Bengal needs is to recapture its hold, or at least a part of it before it was too late for the coming panchayet elections.

Again, they have to achieve this target with their own force, (red cap brigade) because trying to talk democracy and human rights makes no sense for them. The only feasible option left to them then was to launch a fresh and more well-armed and well-organized attack and 'liberate' as many villages as they could. But they did it last month killing and wounding several people. The CPI(M) leaders must have been aware that the internal situation in Nandigram had considerably changed since the events of January and March, and that owing to the heterogeneous composition of the Bhoomi Uchhed Pratirodh Committee many contradictions and conflicts had come to arise, which they could take advantage

of. Besides, the CPI(M) has the support of corporate capital, Indian and foreign. The 'Reds' today are darlings of the notorious Kissinger.

The Trinamul Congress, owing to the class composition of its ranks, never had any grass-roots network among the poorer and toiling sections of the people, is all out to establish some sort of a counter-hegemony to the exclusion of others. On the other hand, this organisation and its leader Mamata Banerjee have not been able to offer any alternative path of development. The CPI(M) needs hegemony in order to act effectively as the representative of imperialist globalisation, for which capture of power at various levels is the sine qua non. The Trinamul Congress, unable to offer any alternative, is also practising the politics of 'area capture'. Unless this is checked the events of Nandigram may go the Keshpur way resulting in the upshot in a 'victory' for the CPI(M). □□□