

# Indian Stalinists provide “left” cover for government’s anti-Maoist counterinsurgency war

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8 December 2009

The Communist Party of India (Marxist)-led Left Front and the Left Front government of the east Indian state of West Bengal are fully supporting the Indian government’s long-planned anti-Maoist counterinsurgency campaign.

India’s Congress Party-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government has let it be known that it is only weeks, possibly days, away from launching a multi-state anti-Maoist offensive involving close to 100,000 paramilitary forces and with air and logistical support from the Indian armed forces.

The UPA government has explicitly tied the offensive to the need to press forward with capitalist development, that is, with massive resource extraction projects, in the tribal areas where the Maoist insurgency is based.

While sections of the press and political elite have expressed reservations over the coming counterinsurgency campaign, warning that a bloodbath could feed the insurgency, the parliamentary Stalinist parties—the Communist Party of India (Marxist), or CPM, and the Communist Party of India, or CPI—are lending it crucial political support.

Since last June, the West Bengal Left government has been cooperating closely with the central government in the mounting of a counterinsurgency operation aimed at wresting back control of the Lalgarh sub-district from Maoist insurgents who have gained a popular following by championing the demands of the area’s tribal population for development assistance and against state repression.

Responding to recent criticism from the corporate media over his government’s readiness to exchange some detained tribals for a kidnapped police officer, West Bengal Chief Minister and CPM Politburo member Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee said the deal was an “exception” and did not represent any “softening” in his government’s attitude toward the insurgency. He vowed the Left Front government would soon “teach the Maoists a lesson.”

An editorial in the October 18 issue of *People’s Democracy*, the CPM’s English weekly, underscores the extent to which the Stalinists are abetting reaction.

Using language that would not be out place in a publication of the Hindu right, the editorial argues that the growth of the Maoist insurgency is not rooted in the socio-economic deprivation of the tribal people and the Indian elite’s attempt to dispossess them of their lands. Rather its growth is almost entirely a product of terror. Argues *People’s Democracy*, Maoists’ “domination in any area is,

thus, mainly out of terror rather than the support and sympathy of the exploited and the marginalized people.”

The unstated conclusion is that the appropriate answer is the application of massive state violence.

The editorial endorses, as CPM leaders have repeatedly done in recent weeks, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s claim that the Maoist insurgency constitutes the greatest “internal threat” to India. This only underscores the extent to which the Stalinists have adopted the standpoint of the Indian bourgeoisie, identifying challenges to the authority of the Indian bourgeois state—challenges which derive their potency from the failure of India’s ruling elite to meet even the most rudimentary needs of ordinary Indians—with threats to the Indian people.

Previously, the Stalinists justified their subordination of the working class to the bourgeoisie through opportunist alliances with various caste-based and regional parties and with the Indian bourgeoisie’s traditional party of government, the Congress Party, on the grounds that it was the only way to defend India’s “democratic, secular” state in the face of the rise of the Hindu supremacist right—the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Shiv Sena, and the shadowy “non-political” RSS.

Now the Stalinists conveniently forget the Hindu right’s long and bloody record of inciting violence and outright pogroms against Muslims and other minorities and join with Singh, whose government is pressing forward with the implementation of socially incendiary neo-liberal policies, in proclaiming the Maoist insurgency the greatest “internal threat.”

The *World Socialist Web Site* has repeatedly made clear our irreconcilable political opposition to the Maoists or Naxalites.

A nationalist-Stalinist trend that traces its political lineage back to the CPI, the Naxalites refuse to challenge the mainline Stalinist parties’ subordination of the working class to the bourgeoisie. Instead, for decades they have focused virtually all of their activity on developing isolated insurgencies among various tribal groups. They advocate a “protracted people’s war,” waged from strategic bases carved from the most economically backward regions of India, with a view to an ultimate peasant-based “national-democratic” revolution made in alliance with “progressive sections” of the bourgeoisie. Revenge attacks against individual petty exploiters and government officials go hand in hand with all manner of opportunist maneuvers with bourgeois parties and

fronts.

In West Bengal the Naxalites have formed a reactionary alliance with the Trinamool [Grassroots] Congress (TMC), a right-wing Bengali split-off from the Congress that is now a partner in the UPA coalition government, but previously was aligned with the BJP.

When mass resistance developed in Nandigram in 2007 to the West Bengal Left Front government's program of expropriating peasants so that large tracts of land could be given over to large Indian and transnational corporations, the Maoists chose to make common cause with the TMC, rather than expose the pretensions of this regional capitalist party to represent the state's impoverished peasants.

The Maoists' extension of their presence in Lalgarh in May-June of this year, which included a wave of killings directed at local CPM cadres, coincided with a campaign of TMC-incited political violence in the wake of its rout of the Left Front in the May Lok Sabha (national parliamentary) elections. No sooner did TMC leader Mamata Banerjee become the UPA's railway minister than she began citing the violence in her home state as an argument for the UPA to sack West Bengal's Left Front government and place it under "president's," i.e., central government, rule.

If there was any doubt as to the Maoists' support for Banerjee and the TMC, it was dispelled by an interview given by one of the principal leaders of the CPI (Maoist), Kishanji, to the Bengali daily Ananda Bazar Patrika in early October. Kishanji said the Maoists want to see Banerjee become the next chief minister (CM) of West Bengal because she is fighting against the CPM for the masses. "She is the right person," declared Kishanji, "to be next CM. After she comes to power, we shall continue our job and will watch the every movement of her government."

The Maoists' "theoretical justification" for their alliance with the TMC is a mishmash of Stalinist catchphrases and subterfuges—references to the need for people fronts embracing parties of the bourgeoisie, but also the designation of the Stalinist CPM as "social fascist."

The reality is, if and when a TMC-Congress coalition government comes to power in West Bengal, it will quickly jettison its opposition to the pro-big business "industrialization program" of the Left Front government and, in the name of fighting CPM "corruption," unleash an assault on public and social services.

The CPM and the CPM-led Left Front have responded to the reactionary Maoist-TMC alliance by giving their full support to the UPA government's preparations for a counterinsurgency war that will invariably be directed against much of the tribal population and by offering closer collaboration to the Congress Party, if only it severs its ties with the Trinamool Congress.

On November 1, Jyoti Basu, the CPM's 95-year-old elder "statesman" and a former West Bengal chief minister, made a special appeal to the Congress Party to support the Left Front government against the TMC-Maoist "nexus." In his appeal he noted that for four years, from May 2004 through June 2008, the Left Front provided the UPA with its parliamentary majority and urged the Congress to now respond in kind: "We provided unconditional support to the Congress in the interest of the country

and to fight communalism."

Over the past month this has become a veritable clarion call, with CPM leaders urging Prime Minister Singh to live up to his claim that the Maoists are the country's greatest "internal threat," by repudiating the Maoist-aligned TMC.

To date the Congress has been content to use the rivalry between the TMC and the West Bengal Left Front government to prod the Stalinists further right.

Apparently ceding to pressure from the TMC, Home Minister and Congress leader P. Chidambaram sent a four-member Home Ministry team to West Bengal for two days last week to investigate the mounting political violence in the state.

The Left Front and several other parties, including the BJP, denounced the inquiry as a first step in placing the state under president's rule. Chidambaram denied that was the government's intention. But such inquiries are rare and claims that a state government has failed to uphold law and order have frequently served as a pretext for imposing "president's rule."

Having served notice to the Left Front government that it could use the TMC to move against it, the Congress-led UPA drew back. To Banerjee's chagrin, the Home Ministry team did not venture beyond Kolkata, refusing to visit districts where she claims her supporters have been the targets of CPM goon attacks.

On Friday, Manmohan Singh met with rival West Bengal delegations, one a TMC-delegation led by Mamata Banerjee that wanted to make charges of CPM violence and the other a delegation of Left Front parliamentarians led by Sitaram Yechury that brought evidence of TMC violence and TMC-Maoist collusion. Both sides appeared to leave, the prime minister in the politically enviable position of being able to rule on the benefits of the various charges and countercharges.

Following his meeting with the prime minister, CPM Politburo member Yechury was pleased to report, "The Prime Minister said he would have the evidence examined by the Home Ministry. He repeated the government's commitment to eliminating the scourge of Maoist violence and said he stood by his statement that it was the gravest threat to India's internal security."

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