

Indian Maoists declare support for right-wing Trinamool Congress

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India's main Maoist party, the Communist Party of India (Maoist) or CPI (Maoist), has declared its support for the election of the right-wing Trinamool Congress as West Bengal's government in state assembly elections to be held this Spring.

Led by the anti-communist demagogue Mamata Banerjee, the Trinamool Congress (TMC) is the main opposition party in West Bengal and a member of the Congress Party-led coalition that forms India's national government. It is widely expected that in the coming state elections, the TMC will unseat the Stalinist Communist Party of India (Marxist)-led Left Front, which has formed the government in India's fourth most populous state continuously since 1977.

The Maoists, themselves a split-off from the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPM, are advocates of a peasant-based "protracted peoples' war" and an anti-feudal, democratic revolution in alliance with the reputed progressive sections of the national bourgeoisie. They are leading an insurgency that has gained support from sections of India's desperately poor and abused tribal population in the highland and jungle regions of eastern India, including parts of the West Midnapore District of West Bengal.

In a CD released to the media Sunday, February 7 and a written statement last month, CPI (Maoist) leader Bikram declared the Maoists' support for the coming to power of the TMC, which he labeled the "bourgeoisie alternative," in West Bengal.

"Due to our joint efforts," declared Bikram, who is a member of the Maoists' Bengal-Jharkhand-Orissa regional committee, "the demon called CPI-M [CPM] is on the back foot in West Bengal ... people want this ... we also want to maintain and strengthen our relationship with [TMC leader] Banerjee."

The Maoist leader couched parts of his January statement in the form of an appeal to Banerjee. Having declared that "for the sake of peace and development," the Maoists will "not boycott the elections and will participate in the peace process proposed by you," Bikram urged Banerjee to quit her post as Railway Minister in the Union government, withdraw from the Congress Party-led UPA coalition, and oppose Operation Green Hunt, the central government-led anti-Maoist counter-insurgency campaign.

However, the Maoist leader made clear that even if Banerjee does none of this—the TMC is contesting the West Bengal elections in an alliance with the Congress Party—the Maoists intend to deepen their collaboration with her and her right-wing TMC: "Rather than boycotting the elections, we will support her and follow the roadmap for development drawn up by her if she comes to power."

The CPM and its Left Front have long served as vital props of bourgeois rule in India, suppressing the class struggle and shackling the working class to the Congress Party and various casteist and

regionalist parties of the capitalist elite. For four years, from May 2004 through June 2008, the Left Front provided the Congress Party-led UPA with the parliamentary votes needed to remain in office, even as the UPA government pressed forward with pro-market policies and a strategic partnership with US imperialism. In those states like West Bengal where the CPM has led the government, it has ruthlessly implemented the bourgeoisie's program of transforming India into a cheap-labor producer for world capitalism, banning strikes in IT and IT-enabled industries, slashing social spending, eliminating public sector jobs, and establishing business-friendly Special Economic Zones.

All that being said, there is no doubt that the Indian bourgeoisie views the unseating of the CPM in its West Bengal bastion as an opportunity to dramatically shift the country's politics to the right.

No one should have any doubt as to what is being prepared. In the name of fighting CPM corruption and disarming CPM-aligned militias, Banerjee and her TMC will slash public services and eliminate jobs, step up privatization of Public Sector Units, and unleash police-state repression against the working class and rural toilers. West Bengal, as Banerjee has frequently observed, is among India's most indebted states.

The Maoists are playing a pivotal role in assisting the bourgeoisie in preparing this offensive, by boosting Banerjee as an ally of the oppressed masses.

In doing so, they employ Stalinist stock phrases associated with the greatest betrayals of the working class. They denounce the CPM as "social fascist" and champion a "people's front" with the "progressive" bourgeois Banerjee and her TMC.

The TMC is, and has always been, a right-wing bourgeois party. It was founded by Banerjee in 1997 as an avowedly right-wing Bengali regionalist split-off from the Congress Party, which it attacked for failing to fight to unseat the Left Front in West Bengal because the Congress was seeking the Stalinists' support in national politics.

The TMC soon entered into an alliance with the Hindu supremacist Bharaitya Janata Party (BJP), with Banerjee being rewarded with a cabinet post in the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance government. Over the last 13 years Banerjee has repeatedly served as a minister in BJP- and Congress Party-led Union governments that have implemented the neo-liberal restructuring of India.

Banerjee's association with reaction and repression goes back to the beginning of her political career. She emerged as a Congress Party student leader in the 1970s when the Congress was associated at the all-India level with the imposition of the Emergency and in West Bengal with state-landlord violence against the working class and peasantry.

If Banerjee has been able to recast herself in recent years as an ostensible spokeswoman for the oppressed toilers of West Bengal it is because of the betrayals of the rival wings of the Stalinists, the parliamentary CPM and its Left Front, on the one hand, and the Maoists on the other.

With the Left Front government pursuing an avowed “pro-investor” program, Banerjee has made a demagogic appeal to mounting discontent in the working class and especially the peasantry. The Maoists have given this maneuver their blessing, stepping forward to provide the TNC supremo with desperately needed “left” credentials.

The Maoists worked closely with Banerjee in politically harnessing popular opposition in Nandigram and Singur to the Left Front government’s expropriation of peasants’ lands for big business development projects—in the first instance a special economic zone for an Indonesian-based transnational and the second a Tata car plant.

In his January statement the Maoist leader Bikram boasted about this collaboration, declaring, “We fought together during the struggles in Singur, Nandigram ... In Nandigram and Lalgurh [where the local tribal population protested against police repression and the lack of development] we even jointly resisted the CPM’s armed cadres and the Centre-state combined forces.”

The West Bengal Left Front government and CPM have responded to the burgeoning alliance between the TMC and the Maoists by turning still further right. They have given enthusiastic support to Operation Green Hunt, which, as Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh frankly conceded, is aimed at opening up India’s “tribal belt” to big business resource development projects. When Mamata Banerjee suggested that the killing of a Maoist peace envoy might have been a staged-encounter killing, that is a summary execution, the CPM leaped to the defence of India’s security forces, who are notorious for their human rights abuses. (See: “Indian state murdered Maoist peace envoy”.)

The CPM has repeatedly urged the Congress Party to live by Prime Minister Singh’s claim that the Maoist insurgency constitutes the country’s “greatest internal security threat” and kick Banerjee and her TMC out of the government. They have supplemented this plea, with a call for renewed Left-Congress cooperation, on the grounds that the Left has proven itself a more reliable partner than the TMC in opposing the Maoist insurgency and otherwise implementing the program of the bourgeoisie.

The TMC was quick to distance itself from the electoral endorsement of the CPI (Maoist), which is a legally banned “terrorist” organization. “Who knows whether this is a statement by the Maoists or whether the CPM has planted it to malign our image?”, declared TMC general secretary Mukul Roy following the issuing of Bikram’s January statement.

Banerjee, for her part, has combined statements critical of the West Bengal government’s role in the counter-insurgency campaign against the Maoists—at one point she accused the CPM of derailing a train and causing more than a hundred deaths to discredit the Maoists—with occasional emphatic assertions that the CPM and Maoists are “brothers” and indistinguishable from one another.

On the surface the latter statement makes no sense. The rival Stalinist parties are pitted against each other in a low-intensity civil war. But Banerjee’s occasional crude anti-Communist amalgams have a definite significance. They are meant to reassure Indian big business and her allies in the Congress Party and the UPA government that once she has wrested the West Bengal government from the CPM-led Left Front, using the Maoists to provide her with “left” camouflage,

she can be counted on to deal bloodily with her erstwhile allies.

Developments in West Bengal underscore the blind alley in which Indian Stalinism, whether of parliamentary or Maoist strand, have led the working class.

The CPI (Maoists) have long contrasted “armed struggle” to participation in parliamentary politics. However, the Maoists “opposition” to elections has had nothing to do with the struggle for socialist consciousness in the working class so as to forge it into an independent political force in opposition to the bourgeoisie. The Maoists, despite occasional references to the proletariat, have abandoned the working class to the political domination of the Stalinist parliamentary parties, while focusing their energies on conducting a peasant-based insurgency in the most remote corners of India. Both their protracted “people’s war” and their electoral support for TMC flow from the reactionary Stalinist-Menshevik two-stage theory of revolution, which maintains that in countries of belated capitalist development socialism is off the historical agenda until a national democratic—that is, capitalist—revolution is completed in alliance with the purported progressive wing of the bourgeoisie.

The historical experience of South Asia in the 20th century, which saw the Indian bourgeoisie connive with imperialism to impose partition and suppress the democratic revolution, conclusively demonstrated the opposite. The democratic and social aspirations of the toilers can only be fulfilled through a working class-led socialist revolution.

This revolutionary perspective—first elaborated by Leon Trotsky in his program of Permanent Revolution—is today fought for by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and its publication the *World Socialist Web Site*. new party of the Indian working class must be built in implacable opposition to Stalinism and as a section of the ICFI.

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