

Edited text of 12,262-word response by Azad, Spokesperson, Central Committee, CPI (Maoist)

In an exclusive interview to The Hindu, Azad, spokesperson of the Communist Party of India (Maoist), answers in writing questions on his party's attitude to dialogue with the Union Government. The following is the edited text of the full interview:

- 1. In recent weeks one has seen statements by the Government of India and leaders of the Communist Party of India (Maoist) saying they are in favor of dialogue and talks but each side seems to lack seriousness. There has also been an element of drama or more precisely, theatre, with Kishenji and P. Chidambaram exchanging statements through the media. Our first question is whether Kishenji's statements can be treated as authoritative pronouncements of the CPI (Maoist) central leadership in pursuance of a national strategy? Or are these tactical announcements by him keeping only the specifics of the Bengal situation in mind.*

Azad: It is true our Party leadership has been issuing statements from time to time in response to the government's dubious offer of talks. But to generalize that there is lack of seriousness on both sides does not correspond to reality. To an observer, exchanging statements through the media does sound a bit theatrical. And it is precisely such theatrical and sensational things the media relishes while more serious things are swept aside. Now the stark fact is lack of seriousness has been the hallmark of the government, particularly of the Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram. It is Mr. Chidambaram who has been enacting a drama in the past four months, particularly ever since his amusing 72-hour-abjure-violence diktat to the CPI (Maoist) in the course of his interview with *Tehelka Magazine* some time last November. As regards Kishenji's statements, they should be seen with a positive attitude, not with cynicism. Though our central committee has not discussed our specific strategy with regard to talks with the government at the current juncture, as a Polit Bureau member, comrade Kishenji had taken initiative and made a concrete proposal for a ceasefire. Whether comrade Kishenji's statements are the official pronouncements of our Central Committee is not the point of debate here. What is important is the attitude of the government to such an offer in the first place. Our central committee has no objection to his proposal for a ceasefire. But as far as the issue of talks is concerned, our Party will pursue the guidelines given by our Unity Congress-9th Congress held in early 2007.

- 2. Both the Government and the Maoists are also laying down preconditions. Chidambaram says the Maoists should "abjure violence and say they are prepared for talks... I would like no ifs, no buts and no conditions". Now 'to abjure' can mean to renounce or forswear violence, or even to avoid violence, i.e. a ceasefire. What is your understanding of Mr. Chidambaram's formulation? What do you think is the implication of what he wants the Maoists to accept?*

Azad: It is a very pertinent question as no one knows exactly what Mr. Chidambaram wants to convey by his oft-repeated, yet incomprehensible, abjure-violence statement. Hence I can understand your confusion in interpreting Mr. Chidambaram's "abjure violence" statement. It is not just you alone but the entire media is left in a state of confusion. His own Party leaders are a confused lot. Some interpret Mr. Chidambaram's statement to mean that Maoists should lay down arms. Some say it means unilateral renunciation of violence by Maoists. Yet others say what this could mean is a cessation of hostilities by both sides without any conditions attached.

It is indeed very difficult to understand what Mr. Chidambaram wants to convey. This seems to be a characteristic trait of Mr. Chidambaram whether it be his pronouncements on Telangana, which are mildly described by the media as "flip-flop" behaviour and interpreted by both pro and anti-Telanganites according to their own convenience; or on Operation Green Hunt which he describes as a "myth invented by the media" even as the entire political and police establishment, and the entire media, give out graphic descriptions of the huge mobilization of the security forces, and the successes achieved by Operation Green Hunt; or on MOUs signed by various MNCs and Indian Corporate houses with the governments of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, West Bengal and others.

The Home Minister himself had displayed his split personality, not knowing what exactly he wants when he says Maoists should "abjure violence." To a layman what this proposal obviously implies is that the state too would automatically put a stop to its inhuman atrocities on the adivasis, Maoist revolutionaries and their sympathizers. But not so to our Home Minister!

When you ask us what our understanding of Mr. Chidambaram's formulation is, our answer is: we are very clear that the real intent behind his rhetoric is not a ceasefire between the government and the Maoists, like that with the NSCN, but an absurd demand for a unilateral renunciation of violence by the Maoists. Anyone with a bit of common sense would understand the unreasonableness of the Home Minister's demand.

It is not that our so-called political analysts and others who appear on TV channels or write articles in the print media lack this common sense. It is their vested interests that come in the way of questioning the Home Minister in a straightforward manner. Can they not put a simple question why the government cannot stop its brutalities on the people, adhere strictly to the Indian Constitution by putting an end to the police culture of fake encounters, abductions, rapes, tortures, destruction of property, foisting of false cases and such indescribable atrocities on the people and the Maoists? Chidambaram is cosy in studios and press conferences before English-speaking TV anchors and correspondents but can never answer the questions put by illiterate adivasis. That is the secret behind

his skipping the *Jan Sunwaayi* in Dantewada last December. For, drama and real life are entirely different.

The implication of what Mr. Chidambaram wants the Maoists to accept is crystal-clear. He wants the Maoists to surrender. Or else [the state's] para-military juggernaut would crush the people and the Maoists under its wheels. It is total surrender, pure and simple. While repeating that he never wanted the Maoists to lay down arms – as if he had generously given a big concession – he comes up with an even more atrocious proposal: Maoists should abjure violence while his lawless forces continue their rampage creating more Gachampallis, Gompads, Singanamadugus, Palachelimas, Dogpadus, Palods, Tetemadugus, Takilodus, Ongaras, and so on. Not a word does he utter even as scores of inhuman atrocities by his forces are brought to light by magazines like *Tehelka*, *Outlook*, a host of websites, and, to an extent, some papers like yours. What is it if not sheer hypocrisy on the part of the Home Minister to ask Maoists to abjure violence while his paramilitary forces indulge in crimes every day, every hour, in gross violation of the very Constitution by which he swears?

3. *The Maoists also have their preconditions for talks. In his recent interview to Jan Myrdal and Gautam Navlakha, Ganapathy made the following formulation on the issue of talks: "To put concisely the main demands that the party has placed in front of the government [of India] for any kind of talks are 1. All-out war has to be withdrawn; 2. For any kind of democratic work, the ban on the Party and Mass Organizations have to be lifted; 3. Illegal detention and torture of comrades had to be stopped and they be immediately released. If these demands are met, then the same leaders who are released from jails would lead and represent the Party in the talks."*

My question is whether these are realistic preconditions. For example, the "all out war" can be suspended first before it is "withdrawn," i.e. a ceasefire, so why insist on its withdrawal at the outset? Are you asking for a ceasefire or something more than that?

Secondly, you want the ban on the Party and its mass organizations lifted and prisoners released. Usually in negotiations of this kind around the world between governments and insurgent groups, the lifting of a ban is one of the objects of talks rather than a precondition and the release of political prisoners an intermediate step. Is the Maoist party not putting the cart before the horse, making demands that the government may be unlikely to accept as a starting point, rather than positing the same as one of the end points of the proposed dialogue?

Azad: I concur with the logic of your arguments. It is logically a valid argument that such demands could be resolved in the course of actual talks and not as a precondition for talks. But you must also understand the spirit of what comrade Ganapathi has said in his interview given to Mr. Jan Myrdal and Gautam

Navlakha. Some clarification is required here. I will try to clarify what comrade Ganapathi has said.

Firstly what he meant when he said the government should withdraw its all-out war is nothing but a suspension of its war, or in other words, mutual ceasefire. Let there be no confusion in this regard. What Chidambaram wants is unilateral ceasefire by Maoists while the state continues its brutal campaign of terror. On the contrary, what the CPI (Maoist) wants is a cessation of hostilities by both sides simultaneously. This is the meaning of the first point. A ceasefire by both sides cannot be called a precondition. It is but an expression of the willingness on the part of both sides engaged in war to create a conducive atmosphere for going to the next step of talks.

Secondly, if peaceful legal work has to be done by Maoists as desired by several organizations and members of civil society, then lifting of ban becomes a prerequisite. Without lifting the ban on the party and mass organizations how can we organize legal struggles, meetings etc in our name? If we do so, will these not be dubbed as illegal as they are led by a banned Party? According to us, the ban itself is an authoritarian, undemocratic, and fascist act. Hence the demand for the lifting of the ban is a legitimate demand, and, if fulfilled, will go a long way in promoting open democratic forms of struggles and creating a conducive atmosphere for a dialogue.

Thirdly, what comrade Ganapathi had asked for is that the government should adhere to the Indian Constitution and put an end to the illegal murders in the name of encounters, tortures and arrests. We must include the term 'murders' which is missing in the third point. There is nothing wrong or unreasonable in asking the government to stick to its own constitution. As regards the release of political prisoners this could be an intermediate step as far as the nature of the demand is concerned. However, to hold talks it is necessary for the government to release some leaders. Or else, there would be none to talk to since the entire Party is illegal. We cannot bring any of our leaders overground for the purpose of talks.

4. *Would the Maoists be prepared to establish their bona fides on the question of talks by announcing a unilateral ceasefire or, perhaps the non-initiation of combat operations (NICO) after a particular date so as to facilitate the process of dialogue?*

Azad: It is quite strange to see intellectuals like you asking the Maoists to declare a unilateral ceasefire when the heavily armed Indian state is carrying out its brutal armed offensive and counter-revolutionary war. How would unilateral announcement of ceasefire or NICO after a particular date establish the bona-fides of our Party on the question of talks? What purpose would such an act serve? It is incomprehensible to me why we are asked to "display this generosity" towards an enemy who has the least concern for the welfare of the people and derives vicarious pleasure in cold-blooded murders, rapes, abductions, tortures and every

kind of atrocity one could ever imagine. And how would this "generous Gandhian act" on our part facilitate the process of dialogue with the megalomaniacs in the Home Ministry who do not spare even non-violent Gandhian social activists working in Dantewada and other places?

5. *What do the Maoists hope to achieve with talks? Are you only looking to buy time and regroup yourselves – which is what the government said the CPI (Maoist) did during the aborted dialogue in Andhra Pradesh? Or is it part of a more general re-evaluation of the political strategy of the party, one which may see it emerge as an overground political formation, engaged in open, legal activities and struggles, and perhaps even entering the electoral fray directly or indirectly at various levels in the kind of ‘multiparty competition’ that Prachanda says is necessary for the communist movement? When you say you want the government to lift its ban on the party, are you also undertaking not to indulge in methods of struggle (eg. armed struggle) which led to the imposition of the ban in the first place? There are other Maoist and revolutionary communist parties across India that is mobilizing workers and peasants through mass politics. They have not been banned. Why does the CPI (Maoist) not believe those are legitimate forms of struggle? In Kashmir, the Hurriyat conference stands for the self-determination of J&K and seeks to mobilize people for this but the Indian state, which may use violence and repression and excessive force against people who peacefully protest, has not banned the Hurriyat. Does this not indicate that there is some space in the system for the Maoists to press their demands through peaceful political means?*

Azad: Your question, or rather, a whole set of questions, requires a detailed answer. I am afraid it will take much space but I will try to be as brief as possible. Before I proceed, let me clarify at the very outset that the proposal of talks is neither a ploy to buy time or regroup ourselves, nor is it a part of the general re-evaluation of the political strategy of the party that could lead to its coming overground, entering the electoral fray, and multi-party competition as in Nepal. Our CC had already dealt in detail with the question of multi-party competition in our Open Letter to the UCPN (M) and various articles and interviews by our Party leaders. So I will not go into it again here.

Now let me take up each of the points that you had raised.

First, you asked me what we want to achieve with talks. My one sentence answer is: we want to achieve whatever is possible for the betterment of people's lives without compromising on our political programme of new democratic revolution and strategy of protracted people's war. People have a right to enjoy whatever is guaranteed under the Indian Constitution, however nominal and limited these provisions are. And the government is duty-bound to implement the provisions of the Constitution. We hope the talks would raise the overall consciousness of the oppressed people about their fundamental rights and rally them to fight for their rights. Talks will also expose government's hypocrisy, duplicity, and its

authoritarian and extra-constitutional rule that violates whatever is guaranteed by the Constitution. So talks would help in exposing the government's callous attitude to the people and may help in bringing about reforms, however limited they may be.

Another important reason is: talks will give some respite to the people who are oppressed and suppressed under the fascist jack-boots of the Indian state and state-sponsored terrorist organizations like the Salwa Judum, Maa Danteswari Swabhiman Manch, Sendra, Nagarik Suraksha Samiti, Shanti Sena, Harmad Bahini, and so on. Those who sit in studios and insulated rooms, and make their expert analyses about how Maoists want to buy time or utilize the respite to regroup themselves, can never understand the ABC of revolution or the ground situation. This is actually not an argument at all. If the Maoists try to utilize the situation, so would the police and the government. Wouldn't they? They created an extensive network of police informers during the six-month period of ceasefire in Andhra Pradesh in 2004. The intelligence hawks attended every open meeting and activity of the Maoists, took videos of people, and could easily target them after the clamp-down. Maoists had definitely increased their recruitment but so did the enemy. It doesn't need much of a common sense to understand that both sides will utilize a situation of ceasefire to strengthen their respective sides. Then could this be called an argument at all? These cynics, or, I would rather call them, war-hungry hawks, itch for a brutal suppression of the Maoists and the people they directly lead, even if it means genocide. They do not care if in the process thousands of police and paramilitary personnel too perish for they are nothing but cannon-fodder in the eyes of these gentlemen.

So let me make it crystal-clear: the proposal of talks is meant neither to buy time nor to regroup ourselves but to give some respite for the people at large who are living under constant state terror and immense suffering. How many of our countrymen know that three lakh adivasis were driven away from their homes, that half the adivasi population in our country is already living under conditions of chronic famine and even the rest of the population is now pushed into famine condition? And why? Because of the insatiable greed of the corporate sharks that is fuelling Chidambaram-Raman Singh's war in Chhattisgarh, Chidambaram-Naveen Patnaik's war in Orissa, Chidambaram-Buddhadeb's war in West Bengal, Chidambaram-Shibu Soren's war in Jharkhand, and so on. Whoever has the minimum concern for the well-being of the masses, no matter what his/her ideology is, would naturally think of how to save them from being decimated. But those who have nothing but sheer contempt for the poor and helpless people and only think of how to maximize the profits of a tiny parasitic class, put forth weird and cynical arguments deliberately to confuse the people. They depict the Maoists as terrorists, create a fear psychosis in the middle and upper classes that the Maoists would soon come to your cities and disturb your supposedly secure lives; that they would seize power by the middle of this century, and what not. By such hysteria whipped up by the rulers through the various means at their disposal, they justify the brutal war on the people and make the massive displacement, mayhem,

massacres, rapes and atrocities appear like collateral damage in the larger noble objective of achieving peace, progress and prosperity for all.

Question of re-evaluation of political strategy of CPI (Maoist), demand for lifting of ban, and the issue of legitimacy of open, legal forms of struggle

There are a lot of questions related to the above and I feel this needs some detailed explanation keeping in mind several misconceptions doing the rounds. Firstly you are wrong in assuming that it is the forms of struggle (armed struggle) pursued by the CPI (Maoist) that had "led to the imposition of the ban in the first place." On the contrary, it is the other way round. It is the imposition of the ban that had led the Party and mass organisations to take up arms in the first place. People are easily misled to believe that it is the violence of the Maoists that had compelled the government to impose the ban. This is a classic example of how a white lie can be dressed up and presented as the truth by endless repetition. If you have even a cursory glance at the history of the revolutionary movement in our country you will find that the forms of struggle adopted by the Maoist revolutionaries from time to time basically corresponded to the forms of suppression pursued by the rulers.

A stark example of the transformation of a peaceful mass movement into a violent armed struggle is right in front of our eyes. Lalgah's peaceful mass movement with simple demands for an apology from the police officials and an end to brutal police repression had transformed into a revolutionary armed struggle due to the brutal suppression campaign unleashed by the state and state-sponsored terrorists like the Harnad Bahini. So was the case of the movement in Kashmir and various states of North East. Even in Naxalbari in 1967, the first shots were fired on unarmed women and children by the police. The people retaliated in their own manner and the party took birth and evolved a correct political line for the Indian revolution. In Srikakulam, Koranna, and Manganna were the first martyrs and these murders transformed the movement into an armed struggle. Even during the first great armed mass uprising of Telangana during the late 1940s, the spark was first lit when the cruel feudal lords murdered Doddi Komaraiah.

If you take the case of the transformation of the movement led by the erstwhile CPI (ML)[PW] or MCCI or the present CPI (Maoist), you will find the same pattern. The revolutionaries go to the oppressed, make them conscious of their inherent strength and the reasons for their misery, make them aware of their fundamental rights, organize and unite them, mobilise them into peaceful forms of protest and struggle. Then the state enters with its baton in defence of the class of big landlords, contractors, industrialists, land mafia and other powerful forces that control the state and economy. Everywhere, the peaceful struggles are crushed brutally, entire areas are declared disturbed, fake encounters, abductions, disappearances, rapes, burning down villages, and untold atrocities become the order of the day.

The Indian Constitution is consigned to the dustbin by the rulers and is not even worth the paper it is written on. At that point of time any revolutionary party has to quickly switch to non-peaceful and armed forms of struggle if it is really serious about transforming the lives of the people and the oppressive conditions in the country. The alternative is to surrender the revolutionary aims, make adjustments with the system and sail with other parliamentary parties albeit with some revolutionary rhetoric for a while. This, however, will not work for long as people cannot distinguish between the bourgeois-feudal parties and the ML party that had turned into a new parliamentary party. When people are fighting a do-or-die battle you cannot turn your tail but will have to provide them with new appropriate forms of struggle and forms of organization. And this is what our Party had done right from the days of Jagtyal Jaitra Yatra.

What shook the rulers at that time and compelled them to declare Jagtyala and Sircilla tauks in Karimnagar district of North Telangana as disturbed areas in 1978 was not the armed struggle of the Maoists (which had suffered a complete setback after the setback in Naxalbari, Srikakulam and elsewhere by 1972 itself) but the powerful anti-feudal militant mass struggle that upset the hitherto established feudal order in the countryside. And one of the main forms of struggle at that time was social boycott of the feudal lords and their henchmen, which witnessed the unity of over 95 per cent of the people in most villages. Social boycott had disturbed the peace and tranquility of the feudal barons who functioned like a state within a state. From then on, undeclared ban has been in vogue in parts of North Telangana until 1985 when it encompassed the entire state. CRPF was deployed for the first time to suppress the peaceful mass struggles that broke out against liquor. I remember how the mainstream media like the *Indian Express* published stories of policemen selling arrack at the police stations and forcing people to consume liquor in order to foil the anti-liquor agitation of the revolutionaries.

We find the same story in the urban areas too. The Singareni colliery workers organised themselves into a trade union called Singareni Workers' Federation (SIKASA) in 1981 but it was unofficially banned within three years. An undeclared ban was imposed on the students and youth organisations, women's organizations, workers' organizations, cultural organizations and every form of peaceful, democratic protest was brutally suppressed. One must see the development of armed struggle in the background of the strangulation of even the limited democratic space available in the present semi-colonial semi-feudal set up, and the brutal suppression of the movement by unleashing the lethal instruments of the state.

To cut a long story short, it is not the forms of struggle and forms of organization adopted by a party that had led to imposition of ban but the very ban (whether declared or undeclared) on every type of open, legal activity including peaceful public meetings that had compelled the revolutionaries to adopt non-peaceful and armed forms of struggle and underground forms of organization. Our Party

appeals to all independent observers and unbiased media personnel to look at this phenomenon historically and analyse this with an open mind. You will realize that what I have said is hundred per cent correct. We are prepared to enter into a debate with anyone on the course of development of the revolutionary movement led by our Party in our country and how, why, and when, armed form of struggle had to be adopted by the party.

Revolutionaries never mince words. There is no need to. We believe that ultimately people have to take up armed struggle to seize power. But this does not mean we take up armed struggle at the cost of all other forms of struggle and thereby invite the state to unleash its brute force on the people. On the contrary, it is only when all other forms of struggle fail to achieve the objective, when these are crushed under the iron heels of the state that we resort to non-peaceful and armed forms of struggle. It is very important to understand this as it has become a common practice for some so-called political analysts and representatives of the ruling classes to charge the Maoists as responsible for all the violence since their very ideology talks of armed struggle. Hence, they conclude, there is no use of talks with the Maoists. These simpletons resort to the method of simple reductionism: Maoists believe in violence and armed struggle to overthrow the state; hence they indulge in endless violence; there is no use of talking to people whose very ideology is rooted in violence; and hence there is no other way than to crush the Maoists with all the means at the disposal of the state. Such goes their argument. I will deal with this later on.

I didn't quite understand what you meant when you said referring to other open Maoist and revolutionary communist parties across India that are mobilizing workers and peasants through mass politics: "Why does the CPI (Maoist) not believe those are legitimate forms of struggle?", you ask. Who has said we do not believe these are legitimate forms of struggle? We consider all forms of struggle as legitimate, right from social boycott as we had practiced in Jagtyala, hunger-strikes as our comrades in various prisons are frequently taking up besides other places, and various militant demonstrations. Armed struggle is also a form of struggle and assumes importance depending on the tactical moves by the enemy. While all forms of struggle are legitimate in our eyes, some so-called revolutionaries, veterans of yesteryears, surprisingly exclude armed struggle from the forms of struggle and lay one-sided emphasis on peaceful forms of struggle. They can well join the Gandhian organisations and fight for some reforms instead of calling themselves as part of the ML stream or as Maoists aiming for the revolutionary transformation of society. For some of them, ML ideology or label is only a fashion. They do not wish to bring about the revolutionary transformation of the society and state but only a few cosmetic reforms.

The question of imposing or not imposing a ban on a certain party or organization depends on several factors. It would be too simplistic to conclude that just because a Party believes in armed struggle and indulges in acts of violence it is being banned while those who pursue open, legal forms of struggle are allowed to

function freely. During the Emergency, as we all know, both the revolutionary Left as well as the reactionary Right parties were banned. Even at the height of sectarian violence indulged in by the Hindu fascist gangs, they are allowed a field day. They carry arms, display them openly, threaten the religious minorities with genocide, indulge in violence against the Muslims and Christians, and yet are deemed as legitimate organizations since they are part of the ruling classes and their integral culture of violence.

The acts of destruction in the violence that was organized in a planned manner [in Andhra Pradesh] by a faction of the Congress in one day far surpassed the so-called violent acts carried out by Maoists in an entire year! Yet our Union Home Ministry issues advertisements against Maoist violence while keeping mum about the mayhem and arson by his own Congress party hooligans. Thus the question of how you look at violence is coloured with a class bias. The violence by the ruling class parties is considered legitimate while those by the oppressed masses and their organizations are dangerous and a threat to the security of the rulers. This has been true right from the time of Charvakas.

6. *If the government believes the Maoists “misused” the Andhra talks, your party believes the dialogue there was abused by the authorities to identify and then target your leaders. How, then, do you hope to deal with the risks of once again entering into a dialogue with the Indian state?*

Azad: The talks we held with the Congress regime in AP provided us with important lessons. And these lessons would guide us in any future talks with the governments of the exploiting classes. It would be too simplistic to conclude that the police could identify and target the leaders by utilizing the talks interregnum. They used it to some extent just as we used it to take our politics widely among the people in the State and outside. The setback we had suffered in most parts of AP is not a fall-out of talks but due to several inherent weaknesses of our Party in AP and our failure to adopt appropriate tactics to confront enemy's tactics. This is an entirely different subject and can be dealt at some other time.

What is of relevance here is that the talks in AP have given us a rich experience and important lessons. If at all a situation for talks arises once again—which we do not foresee in the near future given the inexorable compulsions on the government from the corporate sharks for total control of the mineral-rich region—we can instruct our leadership in various prisons to take the responsibility. Our General Secretary had explained this in the course of his interview with Mr. Jan Myrdal and Mr. Gautam Navlakha. The mistakes committed in AP during talks with the government will not be repeated.

7. *There is a contradiction between the recent offer for talks made by Kishenji and the spate of violence and killing by the Maoists which has followed that. The Home Ministry has compiled a list of such incidents and circulated it to the media (see Annex). No doubt there has been no letup in the government offensive during*

this period and you could produce your own counter-list but many of these attacks by the Maoists do not appear to be 'defensive' but 'offensive'. Can the offer of talks go hand in hand with the intensification of offensive Maoist military activities?

Azad: This is not as complicated as it is made out to be. The crux of the matter is: no ceasefire has been declared either by the Maoists or by the government. The Maoists had made an offer of talks which was immediately dismissed by the government as a joke and spurned by Chidambaram himself who wants nothing short of total surrender, whatever be the language he uses. When the government is not serious about a ceasefire and dialogue, and is placing a condition that Maoists should abjure violence without spelling out whether it will reciprocate with a simultaneous declaration of ceasefire, then what is the use of grumbling about acts of violence by Maoists? The acts of violence by both sides will cease from the day a ceasefire is declared.

Now I am not going into the innumerable atrocities by the police forces and the paramilitary gangs sent by [the state]. There has been a wide coverage in magazines like *Tehelka*, *Outlook* and our own *Maoist Information Bulletins*. The statements and fact-finding committee reports by various organizations and Gandhians like Himanshu Kumar clearly show how savage the state has become.

Equally atrocious is the list compiled by the Union Home Ministry regarding the violent acts by Maoists to justify its rejection of the Maoist offer. The annexure appended to your questionnaire speaks volumes about the duplicity and lies spread by the war-mongering hawks in the Home Ministry as part of their psy-war. This is meant to lend an element of legitimacy to their rejection of the ceasefire offer by Maoists and also to their war waged for nipping in the bud the alternative organs of people's power, the alternative development models, and for grabbing the resources in the mineral-rich region for the benefit of the class of tiny parasitic corporate elite they represent. I will not go into all the incidents listed therein.

The very first "heinous act of violence" cited by the Union Home Ministry in its annexure circulated to the media to manufacture consent for its dirty war, goes like this: "In West Bengal (February 22, 2010) –attack on a State Police-CRPF Joint patrol party in PS Lalgah, district West Midnapore. In the ensuing gun battle Lalmoham Tudu, President of the Police-e-Sangharsh Birodhi Janaganer Committee (PSBJC) was killed."

The above incident was said to have taken place within three hours of the offer of a 72-day ceasefire made by comrade Kishenji. Chidambaram himself had gone on record repeating several times this fabricated "heinous act" in a desperate bid to justify his rejection of the Maoist offer. Earlier too, Chidambaram had deliberately hurled an accusation against the CPI (Maoist) of massacring villagers in Khagaria district.

Coming to the so-called attack by Maoists on the joint patrol party, it is a hundred per cent lie. There was no such attack at all. Ask anyone in Narcha village or Kanatapahari. Every villager, and not just the family members of Sri Tudu, will tell you how a hundred-odd CRPF men lay in waiting at his house on the night of 22nd, how they caught the three, and carried out the cold-blooded murder. That there had been no firing by the Maoists was corroborated even by the CRPF men guarding the camp.

Initially, the SP of Paschim Mednipur asserted that Mr. Tudu died when the CRPF men “bravely” retaliated an attack by the Maoist guerrillas on the fortress-like CRPF camp in Kantapahari. Later, realizing the hollowness of his own story and fearing that it would evaporate like dew drops with the first rays of the sun, they changed the version by [saying] that Tudu and other two were killed when a Maoist guerrilla squad attacked the CRPF’s raiding party. This lie is being propagated consciously, with a clearly worked out strategy of justifying the gruesome offensive by our own brand of George Bushes and Donald Rumsfelds.

Tehelka Magazine, Star Ananda and other media sources have graphically exposed this lie.

As for your question regarding offensive and defensive actions, I wish to clarify to every well-meaning person who desires a reduction of violence on the part of the Maoists that there is nothing like defensive and offensive actions once the war has commenced. However, our revolutionary counter-violence is overall defensive in nature for a considerable period of time. This does not mean we will retaliate only when we are fired at and keep silent the rest of the time when the police, paramilitary and the vigilante gangs unleash terror and engage in all-round preparations for carrying out genocide. To make this clear, let us suppose the men sent by Chidambaram are combing an area. When we come to know of it, we will carry out an offensive, annihilate as many forces as possible in the given circumstances, and seize arms and ammunition. We will also take prisoners of war where that is possible. This will be part of our overall defensive strategy although it is a tactical counter-offensive.

In the war zone, if you do not take the initiative, the enemy will seize the initiative. Likewise, we may have to attack ordnance depots, trucks carrying explosives, guards at installations such as NMDC, RPF personnel, and even outposts and stations far beyond our areas to seize arms, as in Nayagarh, for instance. To fight a well-equipped superior enemy force that has no dearth of arms supplies and logistical support, what other option do we have but to equip ourselves with the arms seized from the enemy?

Some of these men are killed when they offer resistance. We feel sorry for their lives but there is no other way. Chidambaram may yell that innocent CISF jawans

were targeted even though they were in no way related to the state's offensive against Maoists. But that is how things would be in a war zone. The war would get dirtier and dirtier, engulf new areas and affect hitherto unaffected regions and sections of society. But this is precisely what [the ruling] coterie want. We will also destroy the informer network built by the enemy, his supplies, bunkers, communication network and infrastructure. We have to confiscate money from the banks and other sources for funding the revolution. There is no use of yelling about the indiscriminate destruction by Maoists. We have to paralyse the administration, immobilize the enemy troops, cut off his supplies and perhaps even target the policemen engaged in removing the dead bodies of the enemy. There was a hue and cry when our guerrillas placed mines under the dead bodies.

But why such a hue and cry? Where are the rules in this war? Who has defined the rules? If there were rules, then why are the peace-chanting pigeons in the Home Ministry completely silent about the beasts in police uniform who had chopped off the breasts of 70-year-old Dude Muye before killing her, murdered in cold blood over 120 adivasis since August 2009 in Dantewada, Bijapur, Kanker and Narayanpur, and yet roam freely and continue their atrocities without hindrance? Chidambaram, Pillai, Raman Singh and their like should first define the rules of engagement and then, and only then, they have a right to speak of violations of the rules. I am sure they would never dare to discipline their own forces while preaching meaningless sermons about Maoist "atrocities."

We appeal to all peace-loving, democratic-minded organizations and individuals to ponder over this question, pressurize the government to adhere to the Geneva Convention, punish those who are creating Gompads, Gachampallis, Singanamadugus, Palachelimas, Tetemadugus, Takilodus, Dogpadus, Palods, and several other massacres. If it is to be a war, then let it be but the state should clearly state whether it would abide by its own Constitution and the International Conventions on the conduct of war.

8. *The Maoists are engaging in armed struggle but have not hesitated in use violence against non-combatants. The beheading of a policeman, Francis Induvar, while in Maoist captivity, shocked the country and was a blatant violation of civilized norms and of international humanitarian law, which the Maoists, like the Government, are obliged to adhere to. If civil society condemns the security forces for killing civilians in places like Gompad village in Chhattisgarh and elsewhere and demands that justice be done and the guilty punished, it has an equal right to condemn the Maoists whenever they commit such crimes. There have been some reports that the Maoist leadership has apologized for the killing of Induvar but what steps have you taken to punish those who were involved? What steps have you taken to ensure such crimes are not committed by your cadres? If your answer is that the state has also not punished those among its ranks who have committed crimes, are you then*

admitting that the political culture and moral universe the Maoists represent is the same as that of the state which you decry as illegitimate?

Azad: I had already covered part of your question in my answer to your earlier question. Our attempt will always be to target the enemy who is engaged in war against us. Non-combatants are generally avoided. But what about the intelligence officials and police informers who collect information about the movements of Maoists and cause immense damage to the movement? It is true most of them do not carry arms openly or are unarmed. What to do with them? If we just leave them they would continue to cause damage to the Party and movement. If we punish them there is a furore from the media and civil society. Caught between the devil and the deep sea! Our general practice is to conduct a trial in a people's court wherever that is possible and proceed in accordance with the decision of the people. Where it is not possible to hold the people's court due to the intensity of repression we conduct investigation, take the opinion of the people and give appropriate punishment.

I agree there is no place for cruelty while giving out punishments. I had clarified this in one of my earlier interviews while referring to the case of Francis Induvar. But it is made into a big issue by the media when a thousand beheadings had taken place in the past five years by the police-paramilitary and Salwa Judum goons. You are saying the beheading of Francis Induvar was a blatant violation of civilized norms and of international humanitarian law which both sides in the war are obliged to adhere to. Do you really think the government is adhering to the law? And has the media ventured to ask Chidambaram why [the state] hasn't been following the international law or at least the Indian Constitution when dealing with the people in the war zone or citizens elsewhere? Just ten days ago, two of our Party leaders—comrades Shakhmuri Appa Rao and Kondal Reddy—were abducted from Chennai and Pune respectively by the APSIB and the Central Intelligence officials and were murdered in cold blood. What cruel tortures these comrades were subjected to by the lawless goons of the Indian state no one will ever know. I can give a thousand such examples of killings of our comrades in cold blood while in police captivity in the past five years. Why is the media silent about these murders but becomes hysteric when one Police Inspector is beheaded? What is the civil society doing when such cold-blooded murders are taking place in police custody? Why single out a rare case of the beheading of one Induvar and play it up whenever you need an excuse to bash the Maoists?

When our comrades hear of these cold-blooded murders committed by the APSIB or other officials of the state, it is natural that their blood would boil and they will not bat an eye-lid to hack any of the perpetrators of these inhuman crimes, say a man from APSIB or Grey Hounds, to pieces if he fell into their hands. In the war zone, the passions run with such intensity which one cannot even imagine in other areas or under normal circumstances. Could someone who has seen women being raped and murdered, children and old men being murdered after hacking them to pieces in the killing fields of Dantewada and Bijapur, ever give a thought to your

so-called non-existent (I say non-existent as none of the combatants know what these are nor would follow these conventions as the history of fake encounters by the Indian state shows) international laws when the perpetrator of such crimes happens to fall into their hands? The pent-up anger of the masses is so intense that even the Party general secretary will perhaps fail to control the fury of the adivasi masses when they lay their hands on their tormentors.

Maoists are not for crude and raw justice as some are trying to make it appear. Maoist guerrillas are not thugs and mercenaries like the men who carry out their brutal heinous acts in the name of democracy and the "rule of law." Maoists have great respect for human life. Democratic values and norms are an integral part of socialist and communist ideology. Yet at the same time we think it is necessary to destroy the few poisonous weeds to save the entire crop.

I once again request you and all others to think by imagining yourselves what would you have done when your mothers, sisters and daughters are raped in front of your eyes, your father, brother and sons are murdered after being hacked to pieces. And worst of all, when there is no guardian of the "rule of law" to receive your complaints and the complainant himself/herself is abducted. When we do not understand the feelings of the affected people, it is better to imagine ourselves in their place. This may help us in getting nearer to the truth.

9. *The Supreme Court has asked the petitioners who filed a PIL against Salwa Judum atrocities to draw up a rehabilitation plan for those displaced by the violence perpetrated in Chhattisgarh by Salwa Judum, the regular security forces and the Maoists. Is the CPI (Maoist) prepared to give an undertaking that it will allow the rebuilding of schools and the establishment of basic government services (primary health care, anganwadi, PDS etc.) as part of a court-backed plan for the welfare of the tribals affected by the conflict? Will you agree not to attack government employees and officials who enter to provide services to the tribal masses?*

Azad: Asking us to give an undertaking that we will allow the rebuilding of schools and establishment of basic government services in the areas we control and that we will not attack government employees and officials is quite bizarre, to say the least. The welfare of the masses is the first priority for the Maoist revolutionaries. You should request Mr. Chidambaram to allow you to visit the areas in Dandakaranya, Jharkhand, Orissa, or the villages of Jangalmahal by controlling his paramilitary forces, the SPOs, the Salwa Judum, Shanti Sena, Nagarik Suraksha Samiti and Harmad from obstructing you. Then you will see with your own eyes a hitherto hidden story of how the adivasis are prevented from pursuing their normal activity by the state and state-sponsored terrorists.

You will find how the forces had occupied school buildings for six months to a year, thereby preventing the children from pursuing their studies. You will find how the adivasis are prevented from buying their daily necessities from the

weekly bazaars most of which were forcibly closed through threats and intimidation by the so-called security forces. Who is blocking the development of the adivasis, who is preventing them from carrying on their normal activity like cultivating the fields, tending the animals, collecting minor forest produce, picking tendu leaves, obtaining their daily necessities, and so on will become as clear as day-light once you visit these remote villages. Hence the government, its "security" forces, and vigilante gangs are hell-bent on preventing independent observers and fact-finding teams from visiting these areas.

It is worthwhile to keep in mind that it is not the lack of development that has become the problem in the rural areas, particularly adivasi-inhabited areas. On the contrary, it is its imperialist-dictated anti-people development model that is driving them to displacement and deprivation, death and destitution, and extreme desperation. There need be hardly any doubt that the poor adivasis have been a happier lot before the civilized [corporate] goons set their foot on their soil. The development model pursued by [the rulers] displaced them and made them aliens in their own land.

The so-called development that you are referring to is the development that India had seen under the British colonialists. The talk of roads in remote areas is not for the benefit of the people, who are without food and drinking water, but only for the speedier movement of the raw materials from the hinterland to the cities, to help the mining sharks to transport the mineral wealth and forest produce. And, of course, for rushing in the state's troops to quell any militant people's struggle against the rapacious plunder by the tiny parasitic class of blood-sucking leaches. The entire world knows that a George Bush invaded Iraq for oil even as the media in the US barked about Saddam's non-existent Weapons of Mass Destruction. Entire India knows that [the rulers] and the vultures they represent are itching to lay their hands on the abundant reserves of iron ore, coal, tin, bauxite, dolomite, limestone and other minerals of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa and other States where their Operation Green Hunt is launched.

Lastly, banding together Maoists with the state and vigilante gangs, and equating their revolutionary counter-violence in defence of the rights of the people with the counter-revolutionary violence of the state and vigilante gangs like the Salwa Judum, is a despicable trick played by the rulers and those so-called democratic forces to obfuscate the stark reality of the brutal violence of the state and state-sponsored terrorists. I can say with full confidence that there was no displacement, whatsoever, of innocent people due to the revolutionary counter-violence by the Maoists. It is only a handful of anti-people exploiters, tribal heads and landed gentry who had fled the villages in the course of the class struggle.

Many, however, had surrendered to the people, mended their behaviour, and continue to live in the villages like others.

The Supreme Court should know that the displacement of the adivasis was done in accordance with a pre-mediated plan to evacuate the villages and settle them in Vietnam-type strategic hamlets. And this policy is being continued by the BJP government in Chhattisgarh with full assistance from the Congress-led government at the Centre. The Supreme Court, if at all it is serious about the displacement of the adivasis, should direct the central and State governments to immediately halt its brutal armed offensive on adivasi villages in the first place, which is resulting in the massive exodus of the people estimated at around three lakhs since the current brutal war began in the name of Operation Green Hunt.

10. *Human rights groups have condemned the security forces and the Maoists for not respecting the sanctity of schools. If the security forces take them over and convert them into barracks, the Maoists have also been guilty of destroying school buildings and infrastructure. Even in the absence of a ceasefire or dialogue, don't you think both sides need to come to an understanding that schools and school children should not become targets of this war?*

Azad: It has now become a fashionable thing for some human rights groups and the media personnel to play the role of referees in a sports event. By criticizing both sides equally they imagine they are being impartial or neutral in the war. If someone says that both Indians and the British were responsible for the violence in India during the two centuries of British rule would you accept it? Or that both Iraqis and the American occupiers are responsible for the violence in Iraq? Any freedom-loving person would unequivocally say it was the British colonialists that caused the blood-shed in India and it is the American aggressors that are the cause for the unending violence in Iraq.

By criticizing both the so-called security forces and the Maoists for not respecting the sanctity of schools, these human rights groups imagine they are playing a neutral and impartial role. But they do not even see the cause and effect chain of events. They do not ask themselves the simple question: If the police and paramilitary do not occupy schools, then where is the need for the Maoists to destroy them? Do you know the fact that in many villages it was not the Maoist squads but the people themselves who had demolished school buildings since they did not wish to see the security forces create insecurity in their villages? How can you ask the Maoists and the people to assure you that they will respect the sanctity of schools occupied or likely to be occupied by their tormentors?

My request to media people like you is: please do not be misled by an act, by how it happened, but go deeper into why it happened. Only then you will reach the truth.

However, we also agree with your proposition that even in the absence of a ceasefire or dialogue, both sides should come to an understanding that schools and school children should not become targets of the war. We take this occasion to convey to the GOI that it should immediately withdraw all its forces from school buildings and stop recruiting school children as SPOs and as police informers. If they withdraw their forces and assure they would not reoccupy school buildings, then our Party will desist from targeting schools. And if the government stops recruitment of school children as SPOs and police informers, then the very basis for punishing these people disappears.

But the more important thing and the larger issue is: can schools function even if the buildings are intact when the parents of the school children are murdered, raped, abducted, tortured, and are forced to flee? What do you have to say of the children of the three-lakh people who had fled the villages due to Operation Green Hunt I and II? What use are the school buildings and the talk of sanctity of schools when the villages themselves are deserted? A more rational proposal would be to ensure that the inhabitants of the villages are resettled with the assurance that the police and paramilitary would not continue their atrocities and let them live in peace. This is the most important thing and should assume first and foremost priority in the war theatres all over India, particularly Dandakaranya.

11. Is the Maoist party and leadership under pressure because of recent top-level arrests like that of Kobad Ghandy? Is there also a wider crisis of leadership with fewer activists from the intelligentsia getting attracted to Maoists?

Azad: I did not understand what pressure you are referring to. Is it the pressure for a ceasefire and talks? If so, then I would say you are completely off the mark. One cannot overcome pressure through such tactics. Actually the Party and leadership will grow rapidly in times of war. Several new leaders are emerging out of the struggle. 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 calibre in relatively peaceful times, it is taking a fraction of that time in the midst of the war situation.

Today we find even children acquiring high level of consciousness at an early age. War is transforming the world outlook of the illiterate people, their understanding about the class nature of the state and its various wings, and how they have to get rid of the anti-people state and establish their own organs of power. People have begun to understand from their own lives what comrade Lenin had taught in his *State and Revolution*. This transformation has contributed to the development of leadership at all levels. At the central level, I agree there is some problem, though not very acute, after the losses in the past two years.

Overall, it is not true to say that there is a wider crisis of leadership due to drop in recruitment from the intelligentsia. You will be surprised to know that contrary to

the assessment of various analysts and media personnel, the appeal of the Maoist movement has actually grown stronger in the intelligentsia. And it is precisely this fact which is rattling [the rulers] and [their] trumpeters in the media. The threats and attacks on intellectuals have been increasing in tenor and there are growing attempts at isolating the intellectuals who seem to sympathise with the Maoists. The more the growth in popularity of the Maoists and their politics, the more is the cacophony about the erosion of the mass base of Maoists, especially among the intellectuals.

You must also look at it from another angle, instead of concluding that [a] lack of intelligentsia has created a crisis of leadership. The mass base of the Maoists has actually grown stronger, notwithstanding the attempts of the rulers to destroy it by brute force. The more you try to crush it the more it bounces back. Our leadership is drawn basically from the oppressed class of adivasis, dalits, agricultural labourers and poor peasants. It is precisely because of this circumstance that our movement has become invincible. Intellectuals are a good asset for the party but it is the basic classes that are the life-blood of the Party. And we have plenty from these sections.

12. *In Ganapathi's interview to Jan Myrdal and Navlakha he said: "I reiterate that at present no one party or organization is capable enough to be a rallying center for all revolutionary, democratic, progressive and patriotic forces and people. Hence, at present juncture our Party can play a significant role in rallying all revolutionary, democratic, progressive and patriotic forces and people." This suggests you see the Maoists as one part of a wider force of progressive, patriotic people. Who else do you consider part of these forces? Which organizations or parties do you regard as progressive and patriotic part of these forces? Does this not include the CPI and CPI (M)? Why then have Maoists in Bengal been involved in assassinating cadres of other communist parties like CPI (M)?*

Azad: It is not only now, but all along we have been considering ourselves an indivisible part of the broader force of other revolutionary, democratic and patriotic sections of people. Firstly, we are one of the several revolutionary detachments in the international detachment of the world proletariat and we see ourselves as a part of the broad world-wide anti-imperialist front. Our mass organizations are a part of the International League of People's Struggles (ILPS) and are in the forefront of the struggle against American imperialism.

Within India, our party took birth in the midst of the revolutionary upsurge of the late 1960s, particularly with the glorious Naxalbari uprising, and hence we are an indivisible part of all that is revolutionary in the Indian political stream. We are also an heir to the great Telangana Armed Agrarian Uprising (1946-51), the Tebhaga uprising of 1946, and all the revolutionary struggles led by the Communist Party since its birth in 1921, notwithstanding the betrayals by its central leadership at every critical turning point in the revolutionary political history of our country.

Second, and the one more pertinent to your query, is the fact that the Communist revolutionaries are politically (i.e., in terms of its programme), a part of the wider democratic stream of all anti-feudal and anti-imperialist forces in the country. This is the essence of our programme of new democratic revolution (NDR), which seeks to unite all those opposed to imperialism, feudalism, comprador bureaucratic capitalism into one broad front to overthrow these enemies and establish a government comprised of the four-class alliance of the working class, peasantry, urban petty-bourgeoisie, and the national bourgeoisie. Once you grasp this political basis of our NDR it will not be difficult to understand why we are trying to form numerous tactical united fronts as part of forming a strategic united front in various States and at the all-India level.

To identify the organizations or parties that can be called progressive (usage of the term 'democratic' would be more appropriate) and patriotic, one has to see not only whether they have any anti-imperialist, anti-feudal and anti-state or anti-authoritarian aspect included in their political programmes, but also their actual practice. We consider most of the ML revolutionary forces as part of this front.

We consider national liberation organizations like the NSCN, ULFA, PLA of Manipur, and the JKLF in Kashmir as part of the wider democratic forces fighting the Indian state. We consider the various non-parliamentary trade union organizations, various progressive organizations belonging to the religious minorities which are persecuted by state-backed Hindu fascist organizations; various organizations of dalits and other oppressed castes, adivasis and women; the non-parliamentary organizations that are fighting for demands like separate Telangana, Gorkhaland, Vidarbha, Bundelkhand and so on; the organizations that are waging struggles against SEZs, mining and other so-called development projects leading to massive displacement of people; organizations fighting against the Liberalisation-Privatisation-Globalisation (LPG) policies of the reactionary rulers; those which boldly confront the growing authoritarianism and unbridled state repression resulting in fake encounters, mass murders, and violation of all fundamental rights of the people; and so on, as part of this broad-based non-parliamentary democratic people's front.

There are also a large number of intellectuals and other democratic individuals who are concerned about the well-being of the people and the sovereignty of our country at large. We consider all these as genuine patriotic forces that are deeply concerned about the future of our country, about the well-being of the overwhelming majority of the Indian people rather than that of a tiny parasitical class that runs the country through the so-called mainstream parliamentary parties.

I am obviously leaving out the names of the organizations and individuals who, in our opinion could play a crucial role in the revolutionary transformation of our country into a self-reliant, genuinely democratic society. Today we are passing

through a phase of Indian McCarthyism that brands every form of dissent and anyone who questions the authoritarianism of the Indian state as Maoist in order to legitimize its witch-hunting and brutal repression.

Today immense possibilities have unfolded for the rapid advance of the revolutionary war in India and the task of the revolutionary Party lies in how effectively and ably it can utilize the present situation, rally all those who have become the victims of the anti-people, imperialist-dictated policies of the comprador-feudal forces ruling our country, and forge a broad-based united front of all these affected sections of our society and all revolutionary, democratic and patriotic forces in the country. This task should be achieved by defeating the brutal all-out countrywide coordinated war unleashed by the reactionary ruling classes of our country with the aid and assistance of the imperialists, particularly American imperialists.

If we fail in achieving broader unity of all these forces, the fall-out would be disastrous for the Indian people at large since the aim of this cruel armed onslaught is not only to suppress the Maoist movement, but also to suppress every form of democratic dissent and struggle of the people against the authoritarian, feudal and autocratic structure of the Indian state and socio-political system. As put forth by our General Secretary, comrade Ganapathi, in the same interview given recently: "This war is principally against Maoist movement but not limited to this movement and aimed enough against all revolutionary, democratic, progressive and patriotic movements and the movements of oppressed communities of our society including oppressed nationalities. At this juncture, all these forces have to think together how to face this mighty enemy and for this how to unite to go ahead."

Now coming to your specific question regarding the CPI and CPI (M). Are they not a part of the wider democratic and patriotic forces? I would say YES and NO. As far as the rank and file cadre of these parties is concerned, there is still some amount of sincerity and zeal among a section of them to work for the well-being of the people. But the leadership has completely capitulated to the exploiting ruling classes and pursues a reformist line that would only help sustain the status quo albeit with a few cosmetic changes. Here too, we have to differentiate the CPI from the CPI (M). We do not place both the CPI and the CPI (M) in the same category. The CPI leadership has been critical of the policies of the CPI (M), has consistently opposed counter-revolutionary vigilante gangs like Salwa Judum propped up by the State and central governments, and is opposing the Operation Green Hunt launched by the Centre.

One can witness the reactionary anti-people nature of the policies of the CPI (M), especially in States where it is in power. Singur, Nandigram, Lalgarh, and a host of other names have stripped the CPI (M) of its guise of anti-imperialism and anti-neoliberalism. The CPI (M) is not even a thoroughgoing democratic force, let alone being Communist. However, we are prepared to join forces with even these

revisionists if they come forth into non-parliamentary struggles on the basic issues of the people, and to the extent they uphold democratic values.

It is wrong to say we are assassinating the cadres of the CPI (M). We are confronting the armed onslaught by the storm-troopers like the Harmad Bahini and other armed [men] maintained by their party leaders by putting up courageous resistance. The struggle against the CPI (M) is part of the class struggle of the people against exploitation and oppression. We challenge them to an open debate on any issue. Despite their diplomatic and opportunistic stand that their fight with the Maoists is mainly political, they are in the forefront in the war waged by the Indian ruling classes against the Maoists. Unable to confront us ideologically and politically, their leaders and spokespersons have unleashed a vicious campaign of outright lies and slander against the Maoists.

We call upon the cadres of the CPI (M) and other so-called left parties to come forward to unite with other forces to fight against the disastrous policies of the central and State governments, to unite with others to oppose the brutal war waged by the reactionary rulers guided by the US imperialists against the Maoist movement and all forms of democratic dissent. We are prepared to unite with all sincere and genuine forces in these parties who take the side of the broad masses of people.

13. *Why has the CPI (Maoist) decided to reach out through the columns of The Hindu? To use a newspaper to clarify its views vis a vis the Government?*

Azad: Among the daily newspapers, *The Hindu* has a reputation for giving out serious news and less of sensational stuff that has become the genre of the media these days. Our party leadership has given interviews to this paper earlier too, such as my interview on the developments in Nepal, which was covered in two parts. On a lighter vein, I think it will reach out to our direct Enemy No. 1 at the present juncture, Mr. Chidambaram, too.

I think the media can play a role in carrying the views of a banned party to the government and the people at large, particularly at a time when facts regarding our Party are distorted, misinterpreted, and obfuscated in a meticulously planned manner. And when there is no scope for a dialogue given the determination of the rulers to carry out their pre-programmed war offensive that was worked out a year ago, we think it appropriate to reach out to the people at large through the media too.

Finally, I thank *The Hindu* for the thought-provoking and incisive questions it has placed before our Party. We look forward to more of such interaction with the media in future. On behalf of our Central Committee and our entire Party, I welcome any questions related to our ideology, political programme, strategy, tactics, and practice. I hope through regular and active interaction between

organizations like ours that are proscribed by the government and the media, an opportunity is provided to the people to arrive at a correct judgment and seek truth from facts. Or else, truth is certain to become a casualty in this world dominated by corporate sharks that control virtually every source of information that is fed to the people.