

Interview by Comrade Azad, Spokesperson, Central Committee, CPI(Maoist), on the current unprecedented military offensive by the Central and various state governments on the CPI(Maoist) and the armed agrarian revolutionary movement

[The following is an Interview of Comrade Azad, Spokesperson of the Central Committee, CPI(Maoist), given to the Maoist Information Bulletin (MIB) on October 19, 2009. In this Interview Comrade Azad answers a whole range of questions dealing with the current centrally-planned massive offensive against the Maoists and the counter plans of the Maoists, the question of state violence and revolutionary counter-violence, the issue of Talks with the government, the real meaning of Chidambaram's campaign for recapturing territory from the Maoists, and several misconceptions regarding: Maoist stand on development, on the charges of extortion, on recruitment of child soldiers, on the beheading of Francis Induvar, and so on. The Interview is due to appear in the forthcoming issue of MIB on 25th October]

Q: There is lot of talk about an unprecedented massive military offensive due to begin anytime now. How will your Party confront it?

Azad: The fact is, the unprecedented massive offensive has already begun. In the Chintagufa area in Dantewada district almost 4000 police and central forces led by around 600 elite commandos of the anti-Naxal CoBRA force had carried out their biggest-ever counter-revolutionary operation called Operation Green Hunt in the third week of September. Some media reporters described it as Operation Red Hunt. Whatever is the name, it was the first major attempt by the central and state forces to wrest a part of the territory from the hands of the oppressed people led by the Maoists. This operation was a sort of a rehearsal for the forthcoming centrally-planned country-wide simultaneous offensive on all our guerrilla zones.

When the enemy attack took place near Singanamadugu village, our forces present there were hardly 50 or 60 in number. But they fought heroically, and successfully repulsed the attack by a superior force, by totally relying on the people. It was the people who gave us the information regarding each and every movement of the enemy force. Hence our guerrillas could deal the first biggest blow to these so-called CoBRAs who were specially trained in jungle warfare and sent to wage an unjust war against the Maoist revolutionaries. Six of their men including two assistant commandants—one from Manipur and another from UP—were wiped out in the real battle. These brave CoBRAs demonstrated their heroism and courage by murdering seven unarmed adivasi villagers, including two aged men and a woman, and burning four villages. Not a single Maoist was killed contrary to the false claims of the police that 22 Maoists were killed. Our forces chased them for about 10 kilometers. The people of the entire area stood with us in this counter-attack on the thugs sent by Manmohan-Chidambaram's khadi gang at the Centre and Raman Singh's saffron gang in Chhattisgarh. **This heroic resistance by a handful of Maoist guerrillas underscores the superiority of the tactics of guerrilla war and the massive mass support enjoyed by the Maoists. It demonstrates the ability of our Maoist guerrillas to confront and defeat a numerically far superior enemy force equipped with all the sophisticated weaponry, aerial support and what not, by relying on the sea of people in which we swim like fish.**

In the second week of October once again Chidambaram's men unleashed another massive offensive by amassing 10,000 men in Gadchiroli district in Maharashtra with MI 17 choppers surveying the area from the skies. It was as if an army from an enemy country was waging war on the Indian people. In the face of it our forces had successfully carried out a massive political

campaign against the farce of the Assembly elections that were held on October 13 in Maharashtra.

Here I shall not go into the concrete details of our precise tactics to confront and defeat the unprecedented, massive, brazen offensive on the most oppressed people being unleashed by the Indian ruling classes on behalf of the imperialists and the comprador big business houses. I can only confidently say one thing for the present: **All our plans, policies, strategy and tactics will be based entirely on the active involvement of the vast masses of people in this war of self-defence. The enemy class cannot decimate us without decimating the entire population in the regions we control. And if it dares to go into an all-out war of extermination of the tribal population the entire socio-political scene in India will undergo a fundamental shift and will witness a radical realignment of class forces.** All peace-loving, democratic, patriotic, secular forces, all the downtrodden sections of the society will polarize into one pole while the most reactionary, anti-people, authoritarian, traitorous, jingoist counter-revolutionary forces will end up at the opposite pole. Such a polarization is bound to take place as the war advances and the enemy's mercenary forces attempt to turn central and eastern India into a graveyard. The war-mongers will be isolated and will face unprecedented social and political crises. However, on behalf of our Party, PLGA, revolutionary mass organisations and organs of people's democratic power, I can assure the people of our country that with their support, direct as well as indirect, we shall deal crushing blows on the enemy's mercenary forces and defeat their plans to hand over these regions to the international and domestic bandicoots.

Q: But your forces had killed around 20 policemen, most of them C-60 commandos, in Laheri in Gadchiroli district on the eve of the elections in Maharashtra. Is it not due to incidents like this which is provoking the government to deploy huge forces in these areas?

Azad: No, no. It is the other way round. It is because of the indescribable atrocities perpetrated by the specially-trained anti-Naxal forces that we are compelled to carry out such attacks. If they do not harass the poor, unarmed adivasi population; **if they do not arrest, torture, murder them, and rape their women; if they do not engage in destroying the property, burn villages and crops of the adivasis, if they do not indulge in cold-blooded murders of abducted Maoists and declare them dead in so-called encounters, then why will our forces undertake such attacks?** How can this be a provocation? You know who the C-60 commandos are? They are specifically formed as an elite anti-Naxal force whose one and only task is to kill Naxalites and Naxal sympathisers. If no Naxalite is found they pounce on hapless adivasi villagers, arrest them, torture them, and murder them. And adivasi women have become their objects of rape. You might have heard of the heart-chilling story of a 13-year-old girl from Pavarvel village in Dhanora tehsil who was gang-raped by 5 or 6 commandos led by the notorious Munnasingh Thakur in March this year. Or the case of the gang-rape and murder of 52-year-old Mynabai from Kosimi village by several policemen in Gyarapatti PS in the same Danora tehsil in May last year. For the directors of this war on adivasis—Manmohan Singh, Chidambaram, GK Pillai and others—the gang-rapes of a 13-year-old girl or a 52-year-old woman are only collateral damage in their larger war for capturing the region to plunder its wealth. These rapists are immune from the “rule of law” advocated by Chidambaram & Co. Even after this poor little adivasi girl had identified Munna Singh Thakur by name, you know! Notwithstanding such solid evidence, the loud-speakers of the reactionary rulers—Arnab Goswamys, Chandan Mitras and others—had never bothered to raise a voice against such crimes against humanity perpetrated by these brutes. And what is worse, they even venture to describe these rapists as “brave commandos”! So what these brave commandos are doing in Dhanora tehsil is nothing but reating terror in the hearts of the people. That is why we wiped out around 50 policemen, most of them C-60 commandos, in the past eight months since February.

No right-thinking citizen of this country would condemn these heroic offensives by our PLGA against murderers and rapists in police uniform against whom no criminal case will ever be filed under this system and no “rule of law” applies to them whatever be their inhuman crimes. **We boldly and unequivocally declare to the world, notwithstanding the shrill cries of the reactionary rulers and their henchmen about our blood-thirstiness and our ‘senseless violence’, that we shall punish these mercenaries if they continue to indulge in such crimes against the downtrodden masses. Every act of ours is in defence of the poor adivasis who are oppressed and suppressed by these policemen who have created extreme insecurity for the people residing in large parts of Gadchiroli. Our attack in Laheri should be seen as part of our fight against state terrorism.** The more such forces enter our areas, the more they will become vulnerable to such attacks. We will continue to wipe out the C-60 commandos, the CRPF, the BSF and other forces who are sent to the area to unleash terror.

For your information, I can confidently say that there are hardly any violent incidents in Gadchiroli on the part of the Maoists this year except the attacks on the C-60 commandos and the cruel policemen. Unfortunately some civil rights organizations and well-meaning intellectuals too had fallen into the trap of the reactionary ruling class propaganda that we are killing innocent policemen some of whom are even adivasis. If they really bother about the escalating violence and sincerely wish to put an end to it, they should question the government as to why it was setting up more and more special anti-Naxal commando forces and spreading terror in the adivasi-inhabited regions; why it is recruiting the local adivasis into the anti-Naxal police force and making them into cannon-fodder in the war against their very people; why it is setting up informers from the poor tribals by threatening them or bribing them with huge sums of money. They should ask where is the law & order problem from the Maoists who had actually stopped the illegal felling of forest trees, stopped the exploitation by the forest officials, forest contractors, timber smugglers, government bureaucrats, police officials, money lenders, non-adivasi landlords who had taken over tribal land against the provisions of the Indian constitution. They should ask themselves whether Maoists had done good or bad by securing a massive increase in the rate for plucking tendu leaves, cutting bamboo, laying roads, selling the minor forest produce and so on. And they should expose and oppose the conspiracy of the government in sending massive repressive force armed with the most sophisticated weapons against the Maoists.

We appeal to all peace-loving citizens of the country to objectively see for themselves who has been creating violence and spreading terror in Gadchiroli and other regions of so-called red terror. They should play a responsible role in reducing violence by demanding the withdrawal of the forces of state terror who have made the lives of the people a veritable hell. They should understand the just nature of our war. There need be no doubt at all that peace will certainly prevail once these forces of state terror are withdrawn from these regions.

Q: The general opinion among people outside is that the Maoists are resorting to senseless violence and that many innocent people have become victims in their hands. For instance, the beheading of a Special Branch Inspector recently in Jharkhand. Was it not a cruel act?

Azad: First of all, it is sheer hypocrisy and double-speak on the part of those who are making such a big fuss about the plight of one Francis Induvar. They never speak of the thousands who had died unsung, unwept, unheard in the secret torture chambers maintained by the Indian state flouting every constitutional provision. Not only Maoists and their sympathizers. Every day how many common people are tortured by special branch officers like Induvar in these torture chambers is not recorded. And our honourable Chidambaram calls this sadistic, bestial behaviour of his mercenary force as the “**rule of law**”.

Do you know how many hundreds of adivasis were beheaded by the salwa judum-police-CRPF combine in Bastar region? And these sadistic forces set up by the Centre and state had even cruelly cut off the wombs and threw out the fetuses. If you just glance through the pages of the fact-finding reports of several independent organizations like the PUDR, Human Rights Forum, Human Rights Watch, CAVOW, and several others you will find an unending list of the crimes committed by the security forces and state-sponsored vigilante gangs. Why are the so-called analysts who appear on TV channels and throw mud on the Maoists accusing them of mindless violence, completely silent when more than a thousand unarmed adivasis are murdered in cold blood by the CRPF and salwa judum gangs in Dantewada and Bijapur districts in a matter of just three years? Why does their blood boil when one inspector is decapitated while keeping mum regarding a thousand other beheadings and mutilations that make the case of Induvar a relatively insignificant thing? **I once again assertively say that the case of Francis Induvar is an exception and not the rule. This has to be kept in mind while trying to pass judgements on Maoist violence. As for the act itself we do not encourage such beheadings even if the police carry out such brutalities.**

We will punish the enemy but there is no necessity for using cruel methods. No doubt, the anger of the victims of police violence is too difficult to control. When our guerrillas capture a cruel police officer especially one who has been responsible for the murder of several of our comrades there is bound to be serious reaction due to pent-up anger. However, cruelty is the trait of the policeman who serves the exploiting classes. **For the Maoist revolutionaries who serve the masses of the people and aspire to build a new socialist society free of all class exploitation, cruelty is an anathema. We will educate our cadre so that such beheadings do not occur in future.**

We also appeal to the policemen and intelligence officials not to engage in activities against the Maoists and the people. They should realise how they are being used by the reactionary rulers as cannon-fodder in unleashing a war of terror against their own people, how they have become pawns in the hands of unscrupulous self-seeking politicians who sell the country's interests for a few crumbs thrown by the imperialists and the big business houses, and we assure them if they desist from such activities we have nothing against them. We Maoists are aware that it is the poor and the starving people who are forced to join the police force and we do not wish their families to be left grief-stricken. We too share the grief of Ms Sunita Induvar and her children. But the rulers have compelled us to take up such actions for our own self-defence.

Our violence is revolutionary counter-violence. It is neither indiscriminate nor mindless as alleged by the reactionary ruling class representatives who cite some instances without context in their desperation to prove that Maoists are blood-thirsty monsters. When the enemy knows he is fighting an unjust war against the overwhelming majority of the people, when he knows that Maoists enjoy enormous support of the masses, when it is clear to him that he is fighting a losing battle, particularly during periods when he is losing his men in the war against the Maoists, what would he do except spreading lies and slander to boost up the morale of his own forces?

Q: But there are reports in the media that 6000 people were killed in Maoist-related violence in six years? How do you explain this?

Azad: This is a part of the propaganda war and psychological war unleashed by the reactionary rulers. There is as much truth in this as there is in the propaganda of a George Bush that Saddam Hussein was in possession of weapons of mass destruction. A George Bush destroyed an entire

country with his one big white lie. And our Sonia-Manmohan-Chidambaram gang wants to destroy the entire adivasi community in the mineral-rich areas under Maoist influence by spreading deliberate lies of senseless violence by Maoists. It is really unfortunate that a section of the media has become a vehicle for the proliferation of such lies and distortions.

We challenge the TV channel which spoke of 6000 killings by Maoists to come out with a concrete split-up of the figures. You select any period and analyse the violence on both sides, and you will find that the total number of unarmed innocent civilians and Maoist revolutionaries murdered by the police and state-sponsored vigilante gangs has always been far greater than the policemen and people's enemies punished by the Maoists. More than half of the 6000 deaths you are speaking of consists of those killed by the police and gangs like salwa judum. The hypocritical manner in which some papers and tv channels report on violence makes disgusting reading. If a hundred Maoists are murdered by the police and 50 policemen killed by the Maoists, a paper writes that "*150 people killed in Maoist-related violence*". This creates an impression in the public mind that 150 were killed by Maoists.

Some of the distortions and lies appearing in the media about Naxal violence are extremely obnoxious. For instance, Chhattisgarh DGP Vishwa Ranjan spread a lie that eight of a family, including a two-year-old and five women, were burnt alive in the village of Kesikodi in Kanker district in the second week of August. The entire media ran banner headlines condemning the Maoists for their inhuman and sadistic act and calling upon the government to crush the Maoists with an iron hand. Within two days it turned out that such an incident had not occurred at all. **But the media lacked the honesty to admit its mistake and apologise to the Maoists for having run a vicious campaign against them.** What was worse, the police gave the episode an added twist by charging the Maoists with spreading the lie so as to trap the policemen and carry out a massacre! And once again the media faithfully churned out this police story.

Let me take another instance which occurred just over a fortnight ago. On October 2, there was a massacre of 16 people belonging to Kurmis and Koeris by Musahirs over a land dispute in Khagaria district in Bihar. For two days, the entire media spat venom against the Maoists describing us as murderers and blood-thirsty monsters but by 4th the chief minister of Bihar and the police top brass clarified that Maoists have no connection whatsoever with the said incident. **However, none of the newspapers or the electronic media bothered to tender an apology for their irresponsible and vicious attack against the Maoists. Even worse, channels like the Times Now had even continued this vicious propaganda a full week after Nitish Kumar himself ruled out any Maoist link with the incident. But images get implanted in the public mind and the media is mainly responsible for spreading such lies and false propaganda against Maoist violence.**

In this context, I would draw your attention to one such incident that happened five years ago. Howrah-Delhi Rajdhani express was derailed for reasons best known to the railway authorities and several passengers died in the accident. The blame was immediately put on the Maoists. We had explained that we had nothing to do with the mishap but the media continues to repeat this lie against us and a section of well-wishers too fall prey to this vicious propaganda.

As for our revolutionary counter-violence, you should note that it has always been selective and organized. Our targets are proven die-hard class enemies, leaders and activists of armed vigilante gangs, policemen and special police officers who unleash attacks on the people and our revolutionary forces, corrupt officials, anti-people political leaders who are instrumental in policy-making, and proven police informers and covert agents who are sent by the police into the ranks of the revolutionaries. Without verifying the incidents, the media is just parroting the police version in the most irresponsible and casual manner. I agree there have been some mistakes in the

course of our people's war which are an exception. However, each and every mistake committed by our forces has been frankly and promptly admitted publicly, and the comrades responsible for such incidents are warned or punished in accordance with the seriousness of the mistake. We have never hidden our mistakes, lapses, weaknesses and shortcomings. Our review documents reveal this very clearly.

Q: Manmohan Singh and Chidambaram have been repeatedly appealing to the Maoists that they are prepared to sit down for talks if the Maoists lay down arms. How do you respond to this call?

Azad: I can say this is the most absurd proposal which only stupid minds can think of. **It shows that these men are either completely ignorant of the historical and socio-economic factors that had given rise to the Maoist movement or are too intoxicated by the brute force that they possess by which they dream they can stamp out a movement rooted in the socio-economic causes.** With such men at the political helm of India one can only foresee a terrible tragedy for the vast masses of the Indian people who reject this system and opt for a revolutionary alternative.

Manmohan and Chidambaram and all the brains in their think-tank should understand why a significant section of the people led by the Maoists have taken up arms in the first place. Can anyone who has a capacity to think imagine that Maoists have taken up arms only to lay them down without arriving at a solution to the issues confronting the Indian society? **If Manmohan and Chidambaram think they are doing us a favour by offering the proposal for talks without touching upon the actual issues that serve as the basis for our armed struggle they are only living in a fools's paradise.** It is not that these men who occupy the highest pedestals in the government do not know these things. They only want to pretend that they are for peace and that it is the Maoists who are intransigent and reluctant to sit down for talks.

If these representatives of state terrorism really want to sit for talks then they have to fulfill several conditions all of which, of course, fall within the ambit of the very Constitution by which these gentlemen terrorists swear.

Q: What are those conditions?

Azad: I am just coming to the point. They should stop illegal abductions of Maoists and people suspected to be supporting Maoists. They should put an immediate halt to tortures and murders of unarmed people, instruct their so-called security forces to desist from raping women in Maoist-dominated areas, abandon their policy of destroying the property of the people and burning adivasi villages. They should withdraw the police and para-military camps from the school buildings, panchayat community buildings and from the interior areas so as to instill a sense of security among the people. They should disband the state-sponsored armed vigilante gangs like salwa judum, sendra, gram suraksha samiti, nagarik suraksha samiti, shanti sena, and various types of cobras and tigers since all these blood-thirsty gangs are unconstitutionally established by the police top brass and the political leaders. An impartial judicial commission of enquiry should be formed to go into the inhuman atrocities by the police, CRPF, other central forces and the vigilante gangs on Maoists and the people at large and basing on the investigations the culprits should be punished as per the law. All political prisoners i.e., those arrested for being Maoists or on suspicion of aiding the Maoists, should be released unconditionally. They should repeal all draconian laws and Acts such as the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), Chhattisgarh Special Powers Act, etc. They should disband the government-organised concentration camps in the name of rehabilitation of the adivasis displaced from their villages, pay adequate

compensation to over one lakh adivasis who were forcibly displaced by the salwa judum gangs and the CRPF-police combine. Likewise, all those who have become victims of state and state-sponsored terror, i.e., those who were murdered, maimed, raped and pushed into a state of mental trauma should receive adequate compensation. Through all these measures they should create a conducive democratic atmosphere in all these regions before placing their proposal for talks.

As for socio-economic issues, the lands of the tribals should be handed back to them wherever they are snatched whether in Salboni (West Bengal), Kathikund (Jharkhand), Lohandiguda, Pallamad, Bodhghat, (all in Chhattisgarh) Niyamgiri (Orissa) and elsewhere. The mining and other so-called development projects that lead to displacement of the tribals and destruction of their way of life should be immediately disbanded. All the MOUs signed with the imperialist MNCs like Vedanta and the big business houses like the Tatas, Mittals, Essar, Jindal, etc should be scrapped. The lands snatched away from the tribals by unscrupulous landlords, other non-adivasis, and by the government should be restored to their rightful owners. These demands might sound utopian and revolutionary but there is nothing extraordinary in them. Most of these fall within the ambit of the Indian Constitution while others are needed for creating a conducive atmosphere for talks.

If these are fulfilled, then one can think of talks to discuss on the deeper issues that are blocking the real development of our country.

Q: What you say will never be accepted by Manmohan and Chidambaram as it would mean betraying their own class interests. So don't you feel that by laying down arms without such pre-conditions you can save your forces from the brutal offensive by the Centre?

Azad: We know that these die-hard agents of the ruling classes whose real social base comprises of hardly five per cent of India's population can never think in terms of the interests of the remaining 95 per cent of the population. They will not accept even these Constitutional demands unless the people rise up and bring enormous pressure or rebellions break out in their own police and other armed forces.

No people's force in history has preserved itself through meek submission to the enemy. **Maoism teaches us that self-preservation is possible only through war. You cannot defend yourself against a powerful and extremely cruel enemy by submitting to him meekly.** You have to choose the appropriate method to fight a relatively superior and powerful enemy and only by this one can ensure the preservation of one's forces. Whoever had surrendered to the enemy or had laid down arms had gone over to the enemy camp. For instance, the leadership of the communist party had betrayed the people by laying down arms in 1951 in the midst of the glorious Telangana armed agrarian struggle and turned revisionist. So a war of self-defence alone can ensure the preservation of the revolutionary forces.

And once you lay down your arms then of what use is your force to the people who are daily groaning under the oppression and suppression by the feudal forces, land and forest mafia, and the various wings of the Indian state? Without a people's army can the people achieve even a bit of justice? How can you expect an army, however small it may look at the present juncture, to abandon arms when the state's armed forces are engaged in brutal suppression of every people's movement? It is yet another thing if an agreement could be reached by both sides on a cease-fire without pre-conditions. On this thing there could be some discussion and some agreement may also be reached if men like Chidambaram give up their irrational, illogical, impracticable, absurd condition that the Maoists should abjure violence if they have to sit for talks.

Q: When you take into account the serious setbacks suffered by the armed national liberation movements recently in many parts of the world such as in Sri Lanka, how do you think you can confront the mighty Indian state and succeed?

Azad: Every war has its own particular, specific features. The war waged by the LTTE in Sri Lanka received a severe setback due to several mistakes which were explained vividly in a recent interview by our Party Secretary comrade Ganapathi. You cannot compare a people's war waged under the leadership of the proletariat over a vast territory spread out over a few lakh square kilometers of area with a war waged by non-proletarian leadership in a small area roughly the size of a big district in India. Moreover, the people's war we are waging is based on the Maoist principles of guerrilla war. Until the time we reach a decisive stage in our war, we will not fight a positional war in a small area against a superior force that is likely to resort to aerial bombardment if needed. **We can fight the mightiest enemy by properly adhering to the principles of guerrilla warfare. We will hit the enemy when and where it is convenient to us, and not when and where he provokes us.** His aerial surveys cannot locate the guerrillas who mix up with the people or are in constant mobility. His air sorties too would fall on the wrong targets, may be sometimes on his own men (smiles). It has happened several times in Iraq and Afghanistan. We will even change our battle fatigues and move in the dress of civilians. **It will be impossible for the enemy to target us if we adhere to these methods. He will only end up killing civilians and help us in getting more recruits into our guerrilla army. That's what the salwa judum had done. Thanks to salwa judum our guerrilla army has expanded rapidly.**

It is the same story everywhere. A George Bush had created more enemies for the American imperialists. He helped Al Qaeda, Taliban and several other Islamic organizations find recruits and provided them with a justification for waging a jihad.

The unfolding explosive situation makes it impossible for these reactionary rulers to maintain stability or control the mass uprisings and armed resistance even if they continue their mad policy of continuously increasing their repressive forces while the vast majority of the Indian population languishes in extreme poverty and misery. The more these vultures spend people's funds to strengthen the state apparatus and the state's forces in order to ensure their own security and marginalize the vast majority of the Indian people who are left without even food, drinking water and the minimum necessities of life, the more they will become the objects of people's wrath and hatred. By stepping up repression instead of addressing the problems of the oppressed the reactionary rulers of India are digging their own graves by creating hundreds of thousands of Maoist guerrillas.

Guerrillas will learn how to fight and defeat the Indian army, or for that matter, even the US Marines. That's how the guerrilla army was born and developed to this stage. They learnt how to fight and inflict lethal blows on the elite anti-Naxal special forces and various Commando forces, they learnt how to fight the central para-military forces, the Naga, Mizo Battalions, who are projected as an invincible force. They had also dealt the first big blow to the COBRA force. They will teach the Indian Army too a fitting lesson if they ever dare to enter deep into the Maoist guerrilla zones. With tremendous mass support and participation in the people's war, the Maoists are confident of defeating the conspiracies of Chidambaram & Co and grow stronger from an escalation of the war just as it grew into a qualitatively stronger and highly steeled force after the reactionary rulers unleashed the cruel terrorist campaign through salwa judum in Dandakaranya, sendra and NSS in Jharkhand, harmad vahini and the social fascists in West Mednipur.

Repression breeds resistance. And the more Chidambaram's men go about terrorizing people, killing, torturing, raping and creating havoc in the adivasi areas, the more intense and extensive will be the armed resistance of the masses, and the stronger will our army become. This is the logic of historical development. Hence we will utilize the situation created by the enemy's white terror to organize armed resistance on a far wider and extensive scale than ever before. As I said before, we live among the people and if the enemy destroys the entire population, we are willing to die with them rather than submit to the enemy.

It is the people who make history and not a George Bush or a Manmohan Singh or a Chidambaram. These vultures who prey on the corpses of millions of helpless people will be washed away by the unfolding tsunami of people's revolts throughout the country.

Q: Then will you never be ready for talks with the government by laying down arms as a pre-condition?

Azad: Never, not even in our dreams we can think of such a step. We have taken up arms for the defence of people's rights and for achieving their liberation from all types of exploitation and oppression. Laying down arms means a betrayal of the people's interests.

We may lose some forces in this brutal offensive by the enemy. But you must keep in mind that when the people's war began we had only a handful of committed cadre. Today it has grown into a mass Party with an All India character and we have a people's army for the first time in the history of the revolutionary movement in India. Even if we lose some forces we shall rebuild the movement as we are now doing in Andhra Pradesh. You will see the results of our painstaking underground work in the near future.

Q: Chidambaram has been saying that this is not a war against the Maoists but only a police operation. How do you describe the ongoing offensive?

Azad: This is sheer deception and a jugglery of words which the rulers of this country have mastered right from the days of Chanakya. What is it if not a bloody war when 75,000 well-trained para-military forces are mobilized against their own citizens aided by helicopter gunships, mine-proof vehicles, mortars, rockets and heavy artillery? And add to this an equal number of the police forces of the states in the war zones. This is a force which is greater in size than the armies of most countries in the world. And this force is trained and guided by the Indian Army which is playing a key role in the entire operations. The IAF has deployed its Garuda commandos and is ready to fire on the people and other non-combatants under the pretext of self-defence. Only a Goebbels and Chidambaram have the guts to say it isn't a war. **In fact, armed revolutionary war has been confronting armed counter-revolutionary war ever since the Naxalbari armed revolutionary upsurge.**

But there is a hidden reason why Chidambaram has been repeatedly saying his military onslaught is not a war on the Maoists. Chidambaram is a shrewd and cunning man. He is aware of the implications if he officially declares a war. If it is a war then he has to adhere to the provisions of the International Geneva Convention.

But nevertheless, Article 2 of the Fourth Geneva Convention states that signatories are bound by the convention even in situations of armed conflicts where war has not been declared. We hope all civil rights organizations and democratic forces will bring pressure on the Indian government to abide by the Geneva Convention even if it deliberately denies going into war with the Maoists. We hope Chidambaram will instruct his forces waging war against us not to harm non-

combatants or civilians, not to kill those who are wounded or detained during the war, not to indulge in mutilation, cruel treatment and torture; not to indulge in rape of women guerrillas arrested and the adivasi villagers, and to adhere to all judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples. It will be the bounden duty of the civil rights organizations and the media to ensure that Chidambaram who talks of the 'rule of law' ad nauseum will ask his men to adhere to these minimum provisions of the Geneva Convention during the current war.

Q: The government, leaders of mainstream political parties, and even some civil society leaders have been emphatically saying that there is no other option before them but to go for a military solution as the Maoists are blocking development work in the areas they control and are keeping the people in abject poverty. Why don't you allow development work to take place?

Azad: This is another myth circulated by the ruling classes and parroted by the media and some *circari* (pro-establishment) intellectuals who hide behind the façade of civil society. Even supposing the Maoists are blocking the so-called development work by the government, how much percentage of the population is affected by it? If we take the Maoist-controlled areas as such, they embrace hardly 2 % of the Indian population. Even if we consider the areas under our direct influence, it would be no more than five per cent though the geographical area may be more. Then what are these gentlemen, who yell incessantly about lack of development in Maoist-held areas, doing in the rest of the areas that are home to 98 % of the Indian population? Who is keeping 77 % of the Indian population in abject poverty? Why are they living in grinding poverty with just Rs. 20 a day? Who is stopping the government from bringing development in these regions and improvement to their lives? Who has caused the suicides of two lakh farmers in just ten years? Are not Manmohan Singh and Chidambaram responsible for this great human tragedy which is a direct fall-out of their imperialist-dictated neo-liberal policies?

The BJP and the Congress have both turned the lives of the common people into a veritable hell. They brought forth SEZs to fatten the comprador business houses and the real estate mafia who are their blood brothers. How much of the funds sanctioned for development in the areas outside the Maoist influence actually reach the poor and the needy and how much goes into the pockets of these political leaders, bureaucrats and contractors? **Several independent studies had revealed that more than 50 % of the funds allotted for the so-called development are siphoned off by these very bureaucrats, police top brass and political leaders who spit venom against the Maoists.**

If a people's committee consisting of independent eminent personalities and social activists is set up and an enquiry is conducted into the assets of all the bureaucrats, police officials, political leaders, and businessmen, I think we can ferret out several trillions of rupees worth of illegal assets that can be put to good use. It is the imperialists, the feudal forces and the comprador big business houses that are blocking genuine development. It is the local gentry, the land mafia, the hoarders, unscrupulous moneylenders and landlords who are blocking real development in the rural areas. In the name of development, lakhs of adivasis and other sections of peasantry have been displaced from their villages by successive governments whether it is led by the saffron gang of Vajpayee or the khadi gang of Manmohan Singh. **What these rulers are carrying out in these regions is not development but destruction, pure and simple.**

It is also not a fact that the Maoists are opposing or obstructing all the schemes of the government. No scheme that is really beneficial to the poor is blocked by us whether it is by the government or an NGO. A visit to our areas would prove this beyond any doubt. Can you imagine that Maoists who work for the people will oppose anything that is really beneficial to

them? And if they do, would they not be isolated from those very people? How can you explain the ever-increasing mass support to our Party if we are doing anything against the will and wishes of the people? We are only opposing projects that lead to massive displacement, submerge entire villages, or snatch away fertile lands from the peasantry—projects such as the Netrahat Firing Range that displaces 224 villages in Palamau, Latehar and Gumla districts, dams like Mandal and Auranga, Abhijeet Power Project and Essar steel plant in Latehar, Bhushan and Jindal projects in East Singhbhum and Saraikela-Kharsewan districts, all in Jharkhand, Pallamaad mines, Bodhghat project, and Tata steel plant in Lohandiguda in Chhattisgarh, Jindal steel plant in Salboni, POSCO and Kalinganagar steel plants in Orissa, Jindal’s bauxite mining project in North Andhra, and so on. The sanction for these projects was done without the consent of the local people, and in most cases, the land was forcefully acquired with the help of the police and the goondas of the management. In some cases, a drama of convening the gram sabhas and taking their consent (through intimidation and even at gun-point) was enacted. We shall lead the people against these anti-people projects and the secret deals made by the rulers with the imperialists and the comprador capitalists. Only anti-people die-hards can say this stand of ours is against real development.

Q: Chidambaram has been describing you as bandits, terrorists, murderers, extortionists and so on?

Azad: This belligerent attitude on the part of the Home Minister, who has many resemblances to the hawkish Donald Rumsfeld, is not at all surprising to us. It reflects the fascist mind-set and political bankruptcy of our reactionary rulers who are incapable of waging political battles with the Maoist revolutionaries. It is a sign of their desperation and their extreme ideological-political weakness. Now I wish to make three points on Chidambaram’s refusal to recognize the CPI(Maoist) as a political party.

Firstly, this guy is too enamoured of a military solution to the Naxal issue; he wants to just bomb us out of existence by describing us as terrorists. If he recognizes the CPI(Maoist) as a political party then he would have to logically try the political solution to begin with. But once you describe your enemy as a terrorist and a bandit engaged in ruthless, mindless violence, then you have no hassles in bombing him out of existence. Not a political party, hence no political solution—so runs the perverted logic of this gentleman heading the Union Home Ministry who received his apprenticeship in the thriving “war on terror” industry from the American imperialists. The war cabinet comprising of Manmohan, Chidambaram, GK Pillai remind us of the war cabinet under George Bush.

Secondly, the infamous statement that equates Maoists with bandits betrays the utter ignorance of the man who, to the misfortune of the vast majority of the Indian people, has come to occupy the helm of the Home Ministry. He is ignorant of the ideology, political programme, strategy and tactics of one of the biggest political parties in this country, a Party that is the only real opposition to the so-called mainstream political parties. One cannot but feel sorry for this ostrich that refuses to utter the truth even as he yells that Maoists are the “*single biggest threat to the country*”, that they are spread over 2000 police station areas in around 200 districts in 17 states, and so on. Then what prevents him from calling the CPI(Maoist) a political Party is something he will never be able to explain.

I suppose he imagines that a political party should be something akin to his own Congress party run by coteries and cliques comprised of a handful of leaders and extra-constitutional powers who are answerable to none, obnoxious dynastic culture, or in one word, a non-transparent, autocratic structure without any democratic functioning in the real sense of the term. In fact, none of the

mainstream parliamentary parties can come anywhere near our Party in terms of democratic functioning. Our Party holds plenums at all levels every two years, conferences as frequently as we can, and a central Congress every five years. Every Party committee is elected at these forums. Not only in the Party, in all our mass organizations, organs of people's power and other departments too, the same practice is followed. And you can imagine how extremely difficult it is for an underground party operating in the midst of the severest enemy onslaught, to practice such democratic methods.

Thirdly, I should say that in one sense, the title of bandit by our die-hard enemy is a compliment to us. When we hear such an attacking tone from our enemies we are doubly assured that we are going in the correct direction. In China, the reactionary ruler and traitor Chiang Kai-shek, who was an agent of the Anglo-American imperialists, described the Communist Party of China as a bandit party and the communists as red bandits. Comrade Mao took it as a complement and said that if the communist revolutionaries expected good words from the enemy then there must be something basically wrong with their line and practice. Even supposing we are red bandits who rob the rich to feed the poor, like some sort of robin hoods, as some believe, it is still not too bad a thing. But Chidambaram & Co are white bandits who rob the poor to pay the rich.

Interestingly, while Chidambaram refuses to recognize us as a political Party, even some police officers like the former DG of BSF, ML Kumawat, have better clarity at least on this question. People like Arnab Goswamy of *Times Now*, who not only reflect the views of Chidambaram and the police top brass but also embellish them with their own perverted logic, become wild when someone says CPI(Maoist) is a political party. How can a party that beheads an Inspector be called a political party, he thunders. But even a schoolboy knows that not just beheading, but burning alive and massacring, thousands of Muslims, Sikhs and Christians, raping women of the minority communities, and organizing mass murders of over 10,000 revolutionaries in the past four decades, have not disqualified the Congress and the BJP as political parties. On the contrary they remain the two biggest representatives of the ruling classes.

If violence alone is to be taken as the criterion to determine whether an organization is a political party or not, then there will not be a single party left in the country's political scene. For instance, even at the peak of the revolutionary war in Andhra Pradesh, studies had shown that in any given period, the violence between the two ruling class parties, the Congress and the TDP in Rayalaseema region alone, took a far higher toll of people's lives than the casualties in the entire state in the hands of the Naxalites. Stories of such rampant, brutal violence between sections of the ruling classes in their dog-fight for power abound in the states of West Bengal, UP, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and several other states. Then with what logic do these so-called analysts argue that a few punishments on the part of the Maoists disqualify it as a political party?

All these ostriches betray their stupidity by imagining that they can transform a political party into a non-political entity with the wave of a hand. Will these ostriches ever lift their heads from the sand?

Q: Speaking to some TV channel Chidambaram said he would love to be the Minister for Environment and Forests so that he can sit in a forest lodge and study books. Any comments?

Azad: (laughing loudly) This is the cruelest joke of the decade. If, to our misfortune, Chidambaram becomes the Minister for Environment and Forests, then would there be any forests worth the name left?

The reason why Chidambaram is longing for the environment ministry is not difficult for any keen observer of the unfolding events to understand. The files of many mining and so-called development projects are languishing in the shelves of the Ministry of Environment for want of clearance. The bauxite project of Vedanta Aluminum Ltd, a subsidiary of UK-based Vedanta got the clearance from the Environment ministry in April this year after pending for a long period. The Company is devastating the Niyamgiri Hills in Kalahandi and destroying one of the oldest indigenous tribes of India—the Dongria Kondhs.

The big steel, aluminum magnates and forest contractors want someone very close to them who will clear their projects without any hassle. If the Environment Ministry is in the hands of their loyal agents that would be the end of all their woes. No wonder, Chidambaram is longing to take over this job. One thing is certain: with Chidambaram at the helm of the environment ministry several more millions of adivasis would be displaced from their traditional homes, the forests would be decimated, the traditional way of life and the cultural identity of the adivasis would be destroyed, water sources polluted, and ecological imbalance would further aggravate.

Moreover, the entire forests will be on fire as the people's war will spread even more rapidly due to the current repressive policies of the government. So can poor Chidambaram fulfill his long-cherished wish to study books in peace?

Q: Now tell us something about the development work in the areas under your control?

Azad: If you visit the adivasi villages in our areas running into a few thousands in the vast hinterland of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Maharashtra you will see what real development means to the poor of this country. The most essential thing and a pre-condition for achieving real development in the lives of the people is an end to feudal and other types of rapacious exploitation. In the adivasi areas, the ruthless exploitation by the forest officials, revenue officials, contractors, village mukhiyas, non-advasi landlords and traders, and the policemen makes their very survival an impossible thing. Manmohan Singhs and Chidambarams may go on shouting from roof-tops about trickle-down effect, percolation of growth, and such abstract phrases that have absolutely no meaning or relevance to the poorest of the poor. As long as the poor masses are in the vice-like grip of the rapacious exploiters who are ruthless to the core, you cannot imagine any sort of improvement in their lives. This is true not only in the adivasi areas but throughout the country.

So the first thing I wish to emphasise is that our people's war had put an end to this terrible exploitation and oppression of the people living in the areas of our struggle. This itself has brought about a qualitative leap in their living conditions. From a life of slavery and animal-like existence these down-trodden masses are now living in relative freedom, administering their own lives and deciding their destiny. However, they have to ward off the attacks by the state's armed forces and state-sponsored vigilante gangs who are desperately trying to re-establish their lost hegemony and bring these proudly independent communities under their rapacious exploitation. Hence the people will fight unto the last man and woman to defend their new-found freedom and life of dignity and independence under the people's governments.

The second point I wish to emphasise is that development is basically linked to the class struggle of the masses. I will not dwell into the details of the struggles waged by the adivasis under our Party leadership. There is literature on that. I only wish to point out that people had increased their real incomes quite significantly after we took up struggles against exploitation by the tendu contractors, bamboo contractors, forest department, road-laying contractors, traders, money-lenders, landlords, and so on. Through these struggles the adivasi peasants have been able to

increase their incomes and standards of living. The liberation of the people from feudal customs, traditions, values and attitudes due to the conscious effort of our Party has also contributed to releasing the initiative of the masses, particularly women, tremendously.

Now after the formation of the people's governments, there has been further improvement in their lives due to improved productivity in agriculture, formation of co-operatives, mutual-aid teams, proper utilization of local resources, marketing of minor forest produce, setting up poultry farms, piggeries, fish farming and other productive activities. The development in our areas is carried out by the people's governments. You must keep in mind that we are carrying out the development activities in the midst of the incessant murderous attacks by state's armed forces and state-sponsored vigilante gangs, i.e, under the most severe constraints. Hence defence of the people's government and the gains achieved by the people too is an important task of these governments. We had eight departments under each people's government. A few months ago we established the trade and industries department taking the total government departments to nine. These are: agriculture, education & culture, health & social welfare, defence, economic affairs, justice, forests, and public relations.

We have set up schools in villages where the government had never bothered to go. And where school buildings were built, these are used for accommodating the police and the central forces; there are no teachers worth the name in schools which exist only on paper. In all these villages it is our teachers who teach the boys and girls basic subjects and make them basically literate. We have developed the language of the adivasis, published text-books in their mother-tongue, and thus facilitated a flowering of their culture and rich heritage.

There is also a conscious people's movement for the preservation of forests and an improvement in agricultural productivity. Now no dispute in any of our villages goes to the police station, so naturally, the policemen are angry that they are losing their illegal incomes. Health conditions have significantly improved when compared to those existing a decade or two decades ago. We have set up basic medical facilities in the villages.

However, all this development is taking place within the framework of the existing socio-economic system in the country and hence it has its limitations. Moreover, the incessant attacks by the Indian state and vigilante gangs sponsored by the state are obstructing development and even destroying what has been achieved.

Q: The government wants to establish its authority over the areas controlled by the Maoists. Chidambaram has been talking of a policy of clear-and-hold or wrest-control-develop or area domination in the major pockets of Maoist control. His argument is there can be no development without recapturing territory from the Maoists. How do you counter this policy?

Azad: Although we have influence over a wider area, our actual control is confined to a small area when compared to the vast geographical area of our country. And this area is witnessing real development as I had explained earlier. The exploiting classes have absolute control over more than 90% of the country's geographical area. If at all they wish to reach out to the masses with their so-called reforms, who is preventing them from doing so? Instead of addressing the burning problems of the poor in these vast regions under their absolute control they are talking of recapturing territory from the Maoists.

This policy of clear-and-hold as against the search-and-clear operations or sweeps is a carbon copy of the policy pursued by British imperialists in Malaya and the American imperialists in Vietnam during the 1950s and 60s. This policy was described at length by Robert Thompson in

his book “*Defeating Communist Insurgency*”. The dual purpose of the clear-and-hold policy is to kill the insurgents and destroy their infrastructure. The key element in restoring state authority and control is the programme of strategic hamlet. The enemy has realized that short-term raids into the guerrilla bases and zones, however large-scale they might be, will not fetch lasting results and the revolutionaries can regroup. Hence, there is an increasing emphasis on clear-and-hold operations with the creation of strategic hamlet as the key. The basic military strategy of the enemy is to deploy as many of his forces as possible in the same area of operation as that of the guerrillas. And the strategic hamlet is a pre-condition for restoring state authority as this ensures the physical and political isolation of the guerrillas from the population. So run the basic principles of this policy of Thompson now pursued by Chidambaram & Co starting with Lalgargh. The success of the British in Malaya was not due to the greatness of this policy but due to the revisionist line of the leadership of the Communist Party leading the revolution in that country. Coming to our own experience in India, we find that in the glorious Telengana armed agrarian struggle of 1946-51, around 3000 villages were liberated but we lost them to the enemy control due to the betrayal by the leadership of the Communist Party. If a revolutionary line is pursued by the Party and uses the principle of guerrilla war properly, it will be impossible for the enemy to completely clear and hold an area for long, not to speak of development. The colossal failure of the strategic hamlets created through the combined salwa judum-state military campaign is a proof of this.

The Indian government will pour in huge funds and carry out some reforms to win over a section of the people in a few areas. But even in these areas they cannot sustain for long nor can they set up strategic hamlets in a vast region. Anyway their chief aim is to clear the areas of Maoists and hand over the mineral wealth to the corporate sector. So even if they compel us to retreat from some areas through their brute force, the entire population will be on our side and our war will be waged on a far extensive scale against the occupiers.

The case of Vietnam is a classic illustration of the total failure of the clear-and-hold policy propounded by Thompson. Although 8000 strategic hamlets were established in just two years, the enemy could not protect them or insulate them from the influence of the Vietcong, and several of these were recaptured by the guerrillas or used for their operations against the enemy forces.

The most important thing to keep in mind is: Guerrilla warfare is precisely developed to hit and run i.e., to hit at the enemy where he is vulnerable, harass the enemy day in and day out, cut off his supplies, create instability and a sense of insecurity among the enemy forces, annihilate them bit by bit, and finally throw them out from the area. Hence if the enemy wants to set up police and army camps in the interior, he will not last long. He will be under constant attack and harassment from our PLGA and the people’s militia. How long can the enemy stay in these malaria-prone, water-scarce, inhospitable regions without any support or co-operation from the people? It will ultimately turn out to be a graveyard for these mercenary forces.

I can confidently say that within a short period, there will be demoralization and desertion from these repressive forces. We have to wait to see how Chidambaram would deal with these desertions and what measures he would adopt to boost up the morale of his forces. Raman Singh and Vishwa Ranjan have been boosting up the morale of their forces by carrying out massacres of unarmed adivasis as in Singaram, Tongapal, Singanamadugu, etc and claiming that several Maoists were killed by their brave forces. Chidambaram too has to travel along this beaten path thereby sending us more recruits. And the more areas his forces try to “recapture”, the deeper they will get bogged down in an unending civil war. The one lakh and odd forces that Chidambaram is currently deploying in the Maoist areas cannot control a fraction of the entire region. **These forces which spread state terror—the CRPF, BSF, EFR, IRB, CISF, ITBP,**

NSG, Cobras and various anti-Naxal special forces and elite commandos like the Greyhounds, STF, SOG, C-60, and so on—and their state-sponsored terrorist gangs like the salwa judum, sendra, TPC, JPC, NSS, Shanti Sena, Tigers and Cobras under various names, will get more and more bogged down and sucked ever deeper into the quicksands of people’s war. Chidambaram’s fond dream can never be fulfilled even if he turns the so-called red corridor literally into a corridor of red with the blood of the adivasis and Maoist revolutionaries by enacting gory blood-baths.

The reactionary rulers can neither wrest, control nor develop any of the regions but will get embroiled in a war of attrition causing thousands of deaths of innocent adivasis and losing their own forces in huge numbers. They can only destroy the villages through their policy of “**kill all, burn all, destroy all**” as pursued by their reactionary counterpart Chiang Kai-shek in pre-revolutionary China. **The more destruction and havoc these mercenary forces cause the faster our people’s army will grow and our guerilla war will spread to wider regions in the country.**

Thanks to salwa judum, our war had achieved in four years what it would have otherwise achieved in two decades. Now thanks to Chidambaram, our war will expand to wider areas, mobilise wider masses, and also will gather new momentum and get new dynamism. Every mercenary repressive force, by its very nature and sense of insecurity in rebel-held areas, will end up murdering people and destroying their property. This is what even the mightiest army is doing in Iraq and Afghanistan and getting rapidly alienated from the people.

Q: But the Home Minister says the government is duty-bound to establish the “rule of law”?

Azad: The “rule of law”, huh! Is the Home Minister serious about it? If so, why does he allow his police and the army to abduct people, illegally detain them for days without end, torture them in secret torture chambers in the most brutal manner, and murder them? Why did he permit the SIB of AP to abduct, torture and murder our central committee member comrade Patel Sudhakar? Why did he not ask his men to produce comrade Kobad Ghandy in the court within 24 hours after his arrest and instead kept him in illegal detention for four days? Chidambaram revealed how big a liar he is by announcing that Kobad was arrested on the 20th of September and produced in the court within 24 hours. Just ten days ago, two of our comrades Ravi Sharma and Anuradha, were arrested from Jharkhand but the police vehemently denied even after the news was flashed in the media and the AP High Court called for an explanation from the police after a habeas corpus petition was filed. Only after they were completely exposed and all-round pressure was built up, the police produced them in the court on the 14th claiming they were arrested only the previous day. The list of such incidents is endless. As regards the atrocities on innocent people I had already described in some detail.

The so-called “rule of law” bandied about by Manmohan, Chidambaram, Raman Singh, Buddhadeb and others is only an empty phrase that exists on paper. In the eyes of the people it is merely an eye-wash and, moreover, is an instrument used to oppress and suppress them. If the “rule of law” is really implemented, the entire corrupt and lawless bureaucracy, police, and the political class would be languishing in jails.

Q: What of the child soldiers? Some papers and TV channels have even shown some photos of child soldiers recruited by the Maoists. How is it correct to arm the children when you say you are fighting for liberation from all exploitation?

Azad: Child soldier is another myth that is deliberately concocted and circulated by the police, the various reactionary parties ruling the country, some so-called political analysts employed by the reactionary rulers and dishonest media personnel as part of the enemy's psychological warfare. Some media channels have been carrying out vicious propaganda that Maoists are preventing children from going to schools, using them in various war-related activities, and so on. They exhibit photos of young boys and girls in our guerilla camps and conclude that they are used by us for fighting the enemy. Shame be on these liars and distorters! They do not even have the minimum honesty and integrity to verify the facts before telecasting such falsehoods. Besides these deliberate distorters and liars, there are also some well-meaning friends and human rights organizations who too are misled by this propaganda. At the same time, the employment of young boys and girls under 15 as SPOs in Chhattisgarh is conveniently forgotten by the very same people who cry hoarse about the non-existent child soldiers in the Maoist PLGA.

I can confidently tell you that there is not a single child soldier in our PLGA. Boys and girls in the villages do create problems when our PLGA squads visit them. They want to come with us and even parents request us to take them and teach them as there are no schools in the villages, or, even where there are schools, there are no teachers. So we take them to our camps and use the period to teach them basic knowledge—the three essential Rs. Then they go back home. They do PT exercises but no arms are given to these youngsters. It is these photos of children doing exercises that some channels have been showing and claiming that these are child soldiers. Our Party is a highly disciplined party with proletarian values and culture unlike the lawless lumpen goons of the ruling class parties who have the sole aim of gaining power and money. Even if a single case of recruiting someone who is under 16 years of age comes to the notice of any Party committee action is taken promptly. 16 years is the minimum age for joining the PLGA. One may debate on this as the minimum age in the armed forces and police is 18 years. We have already explained in several interviews why 16 years is good enough in the conditions obtaining in the war zones where children are associated with the Party and the people's army from a very young age. We can proudly say that the adivasis have received basic education only after our Party gained a foothold in these areas. Successive reactionary governments, whichever party they belonged to, have done absolutely nothing in this regard even though they were in existence for almost six decades. And now light has dawned upon rulers and they talk of development! Can there be greater hypocrisy than this?

Moreover, why are Manmohans, Chidambarams and all the ostriches refuse to free the children held captive in millions of sweatshops, quarries, and innumerable other places and send them to school? The children in the Maoist areas are a small fraction of the total child population in the country. What prevents the rulers from stopping child labour and providing education to them? And even worse, why are these gentlemen allowing their mercenary forces who call themselves C-60 commandos to rape pre-teen girls like the 13-year-old girl in Pavarvel village in Dhanora tehsil in Gadchiroli district, and leaving Munna Singh Thakur and other rapists scot-free even after they are identified by the victim?

Q: There have been several reports of extortion by your armed cadre. Some media reports allege that extortion money by Maoists reaches a whopping Rs. 2500 crores annually.

Azad: This is again a part of the dirty propaganda war of lies and falsehood unleashed by the reactionary rulers who thrive on extortion. These rulers have more than a trillion dollars (almost 50 lakh crores) of black money sucked from the surplus produced by the Indian toiling masses and also siphoned off from the funds meant for the people. The top one per cent of the Indian population—the fatty layer thriving on fraud and extortion—wallow in filthy luxury, possess palatial buildings and what have you. Sonia, Manmohan, Chidambaram and the leaders of the

major parliamentary parties are the political representatives of this filthy parasitical class. They have no right to speak against the selfless, dedicated revolutionaries who have given up everything to serve the people, literally live among the people, and have become martyrs for the people's cause.

The extortion money you are talking about is perhaps the money which the reactionaries could not extort from the people due to Maoist presence. In all the Maoist-controlled areas the local police, the government bureaucrats, forest contractors and other exploiters are unable to procure money from the people. They might have calculated how much they had lost due to the ongoing people's war and hence concluded that this money is going into the hands of the Maoists.

As far as our funds are concerned, we rely mainly on the people. We also collect taxes from the traders and others in our areas of dominance but it is nominal. This is not extortion. Extortion means what the political leaders, government bureaucrats, encounter specialists and police officials collect through coercion and intimidation from businessmen and people from all walks of life. The entire world knows who are the extortionists and yet the very same extortionists and other pseudo-intellectuals have the audacity to accuse the Maoists as extortionists. One is reminded of a thief himself shouting "*Thief! Thief!*" There are cases of extortion by state-sponsored pseudo-Naxalites like TPC, JPC, PLFI and so on who share the booty with the police officials.

Some of the pseudo-intellectuals and police top brass even allege that Maoists derive huge income from narcotics business as the DGP of Chhattisgarh, Vishwa Ranjan, has been doing. If our Party had some legality we could have sued this rogue for spreading lies and defaming the Party. The fact is, it is the police who had encouraged the cultivation of ganja in Malkangiri and when the Maoists tried to stop it, the disgruntled elements from the ganja growers were turned into their informers by the police and used against us.

Q: Lastly, what is your Party's call to the people at large?

Azad: We appeal to the people of our country to stand up boldly against this unjust cruel war on the poorest of the poor waged by the central and state governments in the name of suppressing red terror. **The only terror that is terrifying the people of our country is state terror, saffron terror, and the terror of the exploiters and oppressors. Violence is a structural feature of our society: it is an inbuilt, inherent characteristic of the existing unjust, authoritarian, hierarchical, oppressive and rotten society. Just think of it! A mere five per cent of the country's population oppresses and suppresses the remaining 95 per cent through extremely brutal violence reminding us of unthinkable medieval brutalities. All tools for perpetrating violence are monopolized by the ruling classes and their representative state apparatus. The poorest sections of the society, who live a life of extreme misery and destitution, are forced into meek submission to the exploiters as they have no means to fight the violent repressive tools in the hands of the state. It is these hungry and angry masses who form the backbone of our revolution. Their violence is only defensive violence or counter-violence to the eternal state violence.** Every peace-loving democratic citizen of this country should realize this truth and defend the revolutionary violence of the oppressed led by the CPI(Maoist).

We must all ask the question: who is spreading terror? Whose policies have led to the suicides of two lakh farmers in just one decade? Who has been spreading insecurity and pushing the vast majority to live under daily fear of hunger and starvation? Who is artificially hoarding essential commodities and terrorizing the people? Who is snatching the lands from the adivasis, dalits,

poor and middle peasants and handing them over to a few rich business houses and MNCs? Who is indulging in the massacre of religious minorities with the aim of ethnic cleansing and creating terror among the 20 crore minority communities? Who is setting up vigilante gangs and unleashing a brutal reign of terror, butchering adivasis, raping women, destroying property, and displacing over one lakh adivasis in just two districts of Dantewada and Bijapur? Who is abducting Maoists and supporters of revolution, cruelly torturing them and murdering them? Who is a terrorist? And who has given Sonia-Manmohan-Chidambaram clique the right to wage war on the Maoists?

It is time for every Indian to raise these crucial questions and declare boldly: **“Stop this brutal war against the people! Not in my name, fascist Chidambaram!”** It is the organized resistance of the people and people alone that can stop this brutal war waged by Delhi’s war-mongers—Sonia, Manmohan and Chidambaram—and the warlords in the states, for serving the class interests of their masters. This alone can ensure that the biggest traitors who publicly mortgage the interests of our beloved motherland to their imperialist masters—the Sonia-Manmohan-Chidambaram fascist clique—can never achieve their fond dreams of handing over huge chunks of our land to the imperialist marauders and their comprador agents in India.

Terrorism and “Left-wing extremism” are used by the reactionary ruling classes as a pretext to step up their fascist offensive on the people at large. This is necessary for the reactionary rulers in order to enforce their imperialist-dictated, anti-people, market fundamentalist, policies on a reluctant population.

We also call upon the policemen, who are sent to suppress their brothers and sisters for the benefit of a handful of exploiters and oppressors, to understand the conspiracies of the ruling classes, and appeal to them to desist from opening fire upon our own people. We have nothing against them so long as they cooperate with us and do not harm the people. We also call on them to join the revolutionary ranks or to help us through various means to defeat the cruel war being waged by a handful of hawks against the overwhelming majority of the Indian people.

Finally, we appeal to the media to verify the facts before propagating them and not to be carried away by the outright lies, deliberate distortions, baseless allegations, and the incessant mud-slinging by the police, bureaucrats, political leaders, and some so-called political analysts, who have unleashed a dirty psychological war against the Maoists and the revolutionary movement. The rulers have launched an all-out multi-pronged war and are engaged in a vicious propaganda campaign against us. You know that our Party has been banned and our members and supporters are constantly being hunted. Hence, we have hardly any scope to explain our stand-point to the people of our country and answer the unending baseless allegations against us. **Let us not make truth a casualty during this war.** We hope the media will provide some democratic space to the other version of the Maoist revolutionaries while leaving the ultimate judgement to the people themselves.