



**SINGUR AND NANDIGRAM AND
THE UNTOLD STORY
OF
CAPITALISED MARXISM**

**Editors
Dola Sen
Debasish Bhattacharya**

Our big 'No' to unstable market-centered development
at the cost of stable people-oriented development

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Acknowledgement

For a publication of this nature - where interactions with thousands of people took place and contributions received, it is impossible to thank each one individually, nor, do we believe in offering thanks. for public and social work.

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Dedication :-

*To Tapasi Malik-
a small girl with a big heart; a valiant, selfless soldier
of the Singur movement - who was brutally raped and
killed by the vested criminals in the dark hours of night.
A martyr - who fought for justice but didn't receive it
in life, or, in death. A perennial source of inspiration
in struggles for the defence of land.*

*Photographs
do not lie*

*"No man is an island, entire of itself:
Every man is a piece of the continent,
a part of the main.....
Any man's death diminishes me,
Because I am involved in the mankind;
And, therefore, never send to know
For whom the bell toles:
It tolls for thee."*

-John Donne

- Remembering Tapasi - the young victim of cowardish inhumanity and injustice;
- Remembering Raj Kumar Bhul - the first martyr of the Singur movement;
- Remembering Bharat Mondal, Biswajit Samanta, SK. Salim, Arup Das, Anukul Mondal, Ratikanta Mondal - the unfortunate victims and injureds by drunken, hooliganism of administration backed CPI(M) Cadres.
- Remembering the Steel faces of determination and courage of the Protesters;
- Remembering the midnight screams of the villagers of Nandigram on being attacked by the CPI(M) Goons in Police uniform;
- Remembering the fasting faces of the struggle in Singur/Kolkata-led by the Veteran leader Sri Rabindranath Bhattacharya along with Vijay Upadhyay;
- Remembering every moment of Mamata Banerjee's life and death struggle during her 25 days historical fasting;
- Remembering the lakhs of determined fists of protests at Dharmatala and Singur;
- Remembering the blood soaked faces, broken limbs and torn clothes, due to police brutalities;
- Remembering the innocent face of a two and half year old arrested child in Singur.
- Remembering the dauntless writing of Mahashweta Devi - the 82 years old young fighter;
- Remembering the 'do or die' resistance of the oppressed females in Singur;
- Remembering indomitable and irresistible Medha Patkar, Anuradha Talwar and others;
- Remembering the sincere unlimited support of the countrywide people;
- Remembering the burnt Paddy granaries in Singur lit by police teargas shells and rubber bullets;
- Remembering the scattered plates of rice of the poor farmers-thrown away by Police;
- Remembering the vacant and uncertain looks of the old members of the families of farmers in Singur, Nandigram;
- Remembering the boot-licking, naked Shamelessness of a few media men;
- Remembering the scared falsehood of Buddhadeb Bhattacharya & associates;
- Remembering Salil Chowdhury's immortal thrilling songs of protests;
- Remembering the Green fields of Singur and Nandigram.

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Publisher's Note

Singur reminds us of our roaring times of the Kanoria Movement. Hope, Singur will accomplish the task that we could not. Both the movements have a lot in common, and they differ in several ways too. Singur has raised hopes and fears. But these analyses should be kept in abeyance. The Kanoria Movement of 1993-94 epitomised the call 'save industry, save workers'. This movement crossed the perimeter of the factory, spilled over the realms of the industry and took the form of a mass movement irrespective of political ideology. It was like a tidal wave of mass upheaval in the dried up river of left front led West Bengal, the state renowned in the past as a fortress of mass movements. But after that, a long lapse of twelve years did not experience any significant mass movement. Then came the mass movement of Singur to save the peasants and agriculture and against the government policy of ruining the agriculture and pauperising the peasants. With respect to its future and its depth, this movement holds the promise of surpassing that of Kanoria. This is why every well meaning and democratic individual should shoulder the responsibility of keeping this movement alive, enhancing it and help in every way(s) he can. We can stop only when we win.

The peasant movement of Singur is now standing at a juncture. Repression is imminent. The situation demands standing by the attacked peasants rising above party and group politics. We are clear in our stand—if the government can acquire the private property of peasants for 'public interest', it can also acquire, on the same grounds, unused private or leased land belonging to closed factories, and the government must take the second path. No excuses are acceptable in this issue. This is the only demand of today.

We feel that only the victimised people of Singur, with mass support and fighting the Tatas and the State Government, can achieve their own victory. These victimised people are the determinant force. The support of people around is also very important.

We also feel that if the movement of Singur fails, it will have a far reaching effect on the development of mass movements. The steam roller of 'development' will crush voices of protest. This we know from our experience of Kanoria. A win against the Governmental policy of ruining the peasants is very necessary today. Only then will the aggressive campaign of the anti people, Globalisation & development of the state, stop momentarily.

After analysing the whole situation, we have decided to stand by the side of the peasants of Singur according to our capabilities. This lead us, on the 5th of November 2006, to decide that apart from taking part in the movement, physically, we shall publish a compiled volume of documents and view points on Singur. We conferred this duty to Ms. Dola Sen, who grew up along with the Kanoria movement. Dola took it in her stride. Purnendu Basu a very close associate of our movement did consent to write the preface.

We are indebted to all authors and Newspapers and Periodicals. Acceptance to readers will prove to us that our small endeavour has met with success.

For KJILSSU

Gen. Secreatry
Mr. Liakat Ali Khan

Asst. Secretary
Mehboob Laskar

A word from the Editor's desk :

The meeting of the Kanoria union held on 5th Nov. 2006 conferred upon me the responsibility of preparing a compilation of write-ups and documents on Singur. I took up this responsibility intrepidly but at the same time with huge enthusiasm. Once in the job I realised how hard it was for me. But I didn't want to give up and I stuck to the job. The hardest problem was the time limit because we have to publish it fast but I was a novice at the job.

In this scenario, I got all the help that I sought and more from everybody I approached, got all the help and co-operation and stretching our abilities to the limit, we could at last bring out the Bengali book – *Kanoriar Par Singur* (Singur After Kanoria). But, the suggestion and the demand for the English version for national circulation and awareness made me somewhat puzzled, because of the enormity of the task. At this point, Debasish Bhattacharya's helps and co-operations made it easy for me to fulfil the task jointly. So, he became a co-editor deservingly. We will not underestimate anyone by mere thanks but we must mention that we are indebted to all.

In this compilation, we have tried to select and place the articles in such a manner so that the depth of problem we are dealing with can be gauged and a pathway towards a solution can be Mapped. Whether we have succeeded in our job, whether we are right or wrong, is to be judged by the readers. We have tried to put up a picture of the mass movement on Singur through information and logical approach. We have also stressed upon the presentation of the stand points and programmes of different organisations. We have presented unaltered version of what we have seen, heard and felt on Singur.

We have mentioned the sources & authors of the articles. We are indebted to all of them. We bear the responsibility of the fact that we could not take formal consent from all of them. We are indebted to all the persons involved in the publication. We will feel obliged if it is widely accepted by the readers.

Now, the true face of Growth and Development under liberalisation – capital intensive and labour/farmer displacing, pro-affluent and anti-people, imported and borrowed – is by and large, common in all parts of our country. And, hence, the obvious need for national awareness and regroupment. This is what has prompted us to go for the English version of this edition. Hence, this effort. Honourable readers are requested to consider the fact that almost all articles are literary translations from Bengali and not the original ones. The constraints and the limitations of the translations notwithstanding, we ventured in this daunting task to reach our objective of offering helping hands to the suffering millions all over the country. In case, there is any inadequacy despite our sincerest efforts we apologise for the same.

We are also thankful to the persons – who responded to our calls in every possible way to make the project a true success.

regards,

Dola Sen

Debashis Bhattacharya

Singur After Kanoria

Purnendu Basu

Kudos to the Sangrami Shramik Union of Kanoria Jute Mill who have taken the initiative to bring out this compilation. Kudos to the valiant agitators of Singur.

Thirteen years from now, this same month of November saw the advent of an agitation by the brave workers of Kanoria, an agitation which has now become a part of the study of modern history. That was a history of the transformation of the struggle of the workers of one factory into one huge mass movement. For a whole year it occupied the centrestage of the politics of this state. Kanoria became part of the everyday vocabulary of the common man. However controversial Kanoria may become later, the agitation is unforgettable.

Singur is now reminding us of the roaring days of Kanoria after thirteen long years. Singur is now the Nodal point of state politics. Singur has now become part of the daily vocabulary of the common man. Singur has now become the symbol of protest and agitation against rampant acquiring of agricultural land, against uprooting the peasants. Many events have taken place. Many more are in the offing. Singur is today the destination of the people who protest. It is now a case study. It is a ray of hope in these dark times. Singur is a bright life line in the struggle to stay alive. Singur is gradually becoming a huge mass movement with a broad based peoples' support and overflowing the boundary of agitation imposed by the main ruling clique. That is why the real leftists are by the side of the agitation of Singur. The mask of pseudo-leftism is wearing off. They are ready with their claws & teeth. The ruling front is also plagued by inner differences.

Before going into any comment on this compilation of Singur, I shall exploit this opportunity to uphold some realisations based on the Kanoria agitation.

(1) When we say Singur after Kanoria, we do not mean to say that another movement on exactly the same lines of Kanoria is brewing after thirteen years. History does not repeat itself in exactly the same manner. No two agitations are exactly the same. Then again, all great agitations have some natural commonality. In this sense there are both similarities & dissimilarities between Kanoria & Singur. But this is not what I want to analyse through this article.

(2) Kanoria was a workers movement, which broke the barriers of the four walls of the factory and transformed itself into a mass movement. The Singur agitation is a peasants agitation which is breaking free from its local character in depth and breadth, and gradually expanding and taking the form of a mass movement; a movement that is taking on the politics of Imperialist-capitalist development head on.

(3) Any mass movement in a greater cause, breaks through the narrowness of party and group mentality and draws the support of all irrespective of political standpoints. A responsible leadership rallies all who can be united against the main attacker. It is more important to analyse the subject matter of the agitation and ascertain whether it really has a mass character than to look at the leadership of the movement. In the real field of agitation the juvenile bickerings like – “I won't go with him”, “I won't take him in my team” “They are a party of the ruling class”, have no place at all. It is good to be safe, but not at the cost of being sterile. When an agitation becomes truly a mass movement, it draws people from many a party; becomes, the agitating people from the mass base of those parties, whether some one likes it or not. That is why the Singur movement saw the convergence in the field of agitation of the Congress, the TMC, The SUCI, several M-L organisations, mass organisations, mass initiatives and even the human rights groups & NGOs. There has been a statewide bandh in a single call.

It does not matter very much if there are minor political differences in the propaganda Programme of the political parties. But if one targets the other from the platform of agitation, it will hurt the agitation as a whole. Hence we need a single platform on the basis of a common minimum programme,

although keeping our different political identities intact. A mass movement for a great cause will not advance an inch if you want to act like to tame the horse without riding on it.

(4) It is an useless and puerile wish that different parties will lead the peasants of Singur in different ways. The leading organisation of the agitation is born from the necessity of the agitation itself, and can not be the result of the wish of an individual or the plan of a party. The “Krishi Jami Bachao Committee” of Singur has evolved in exactly this way. It is a wrong notion to distance oneself from the “Krishi Jami Bachao Committee” just because the TMC is in it, although one is ready to support the movement. This a narrow, dogmatic group mentality. We must step into this committee with all our bravado, all our might and start dialogue with the leadership. We have to fight all out against each and every submissive ideas and programmes and thus mark our place. Division in an agitation that is unfolding will only strengthen the hands of the attacker and is not at all expected. We shall do better to avoid the “touch me not” attitude and to remember that many centres in one agitation weakens the agitation.

(5) The real force of any movement is the victimised population of that particular place. They are the determining force, although help from outside is necessary and sought for. People from outside who will stand by the main force of agitators, through their regular and continuous presence in the agitation and by their acceptability can well become a part of the agitating people of that place. But this cannot be imposed from above. This cannot be done unless the process of agitation is accepted as reliable. If one belittles the agitation and wants to reap political harvest for oneself, one will get caught in the eyes of the people. The people who are weathered in the storm of agitation, may keep quiet for a little while now but later on they will raise a hue and cry.

(6) A large movement which involves the fate of a lot of people must stand on the edifice of justice and logic. The demands must be so just and logical so that they can win the hearts of the people easily. Any mistake must be admitted openly, and this will only add to the gains. At the same time the form & strategy of the agitation shall be progressive and logical, so that one step of the movement will be a logical development of the previous step. No part of the movement shall be without synchronization with the whole. The programme of the agitation must project the wishes of the people and understandable to them, so that they can grasp the development of the agitation along its course.

(7) Democracy has no alternative in organisation and the direction of an agitation. Decision making will always be better with the involvement of as many people as possible; but it will be a grave danger if this process becomes only ceremonial. The process of mass involvement shall be made spontaneous. This calls for frequent general meetings. This calls for an extensive propaganda of the decisions of the organisation, everyday as well as that for nullifying the logic of the opposition.

(8) The proponents of the policy against which we are fighting, are very clever. They have a long experience of left & mass movements. We must seek to beat them in their own game. We must utilise the minutest difference among themselves. It will be idiotic for us to label everyone with the same level of enmity. At the same time we have to be firm in the agitation, budging not an inch from our policy but being flexible when required. We must keep in mind that this battle is not against any individual but against the Government's policy, against the Government policy of oiling the industrialists, in favour of the rights of the farmers.

(9) In the long run, the battle of Singur is a battle of stamina. The decision makers of the Government may take the policy of “go-slow”, increase the police-presence, send the CPI(M) cadres to the houses of the people to pressurise, and thereby lengthen the movement and try to create fissures in the determination of the struggling people. Such a situation can make this struggle hard. It may not be possible also to keep up the high tide of the movement later on. In the course of this agitation, many readymade programmes may crop up as solutions but most of the times these will be suicidal. So we must prepare ourselves to stick to this hard battle. As such, measures like door to door propaganda, Question-answer sessions, group meetings, formation of volunteer groups, fund raising, will be of immense help.

(10) Riding a wave of elation and imposed call for armed resistance will be irresponsible and will not advance the Singur agitation by even one inch. The present stage of agitation is that of peaceful

non-co-operation. The course of the agitation will itself decide which path it will take. The main form of the movement at present will be rallying the masses as much as possible. Hence the slogan will be – Alienate the ruling clique of Budhadeb, Rally the masses in favour of the agitation.

(11) The demand of the Kanoria Union from the class viewpoint of the working class, i.e., to establish factories by acquiring the land of closed factories, is very pertinent at this juncture. This demand must be brought to the forefront of the mass movement by nullifying the Government's logic. Many persons have brought this forward. What is needed is to make this demand acceptable to all, as a demand of the working class and the principle of the fraternity between the workers and the peasants. If the private property of farmers can be acquired, the private property of mill owners or the property of Government can also be acquired. If there is no law, a new law has to be made for this purpose.

In this context I should admit that I did not have the intentions to lecture people when I wrote the above. I wrote these from a deep sense of duty; to share my heart.

I do not intend to be high handed; I only request everyone to bring the issues out in an open form. I could not write everything I thought up for obvious reasons.

We must keep this agitation alive with all our might because if this is beaten back the depression in the mass psyche will deepen. We should strive and wait to see other districts also developing their struggles on the same lines. Singur to lead the way. Let this agitation transform itself into the mass movement for real peoples' development, as an alternative to the development of Globalisation.

Now I may concentrate on the present compilation. The editor has published some logical and pertinent articles regarding this agitation centering on the question of development. Mahasweta Devi, have, in her article, decried the illegal and immoral act of the state Government. Mr. Ashok Mitra, Ex minister in charge of the department of finance, is seen here in the role of a communist conscience. He has protested the capitalist oriented policy of the new generation of CPI(M) leaders. Professor Subhendu Dasgupta, in his deft hand have nullified the bogus logic set up by Binoy Konar, Debabrata Bandopadhyaya is an ex commissioner of Agriculture. He in his article has challenged the ideological basis of land acquisition. Our respondent of civic and rural news have projected a real picture of Singur, of the pathways taken by the agitation, which I think will be acceptable to the readers. The question of the direction of the agitation has been brought to the forefront through the article of "Ekhon Sanghati". The first study report undertaken by Partha Bandopadhyaya and Dayavati Ray has played a major role in the agitation as well as in this compilation. Amitdyuti Kumar has taken up the questions on human rights and some other basic issues.

The article of Mamata Banerjee, on Singur, as well as the demand Character of the TMC has been included in this compilation.

The editor has introduced us to Singur at a different level, by way of her experience there. Several reports, programmes of many organisations and many important dates have been included, which will serve as documents of history.

Apart from all these, many tit bits on this agitation have been brought within the covers of this compilation which will be very important for our agitation. She, Debashis Bhattacharya and the Kanoria Sangrami Union deserve congratulations from all quarters. Hope we can overcome our limitations in the future. Hope Singur wins the first battle of a long war.

FACTS & FIGURES

SINGUR-THE REAL PICTURE

[The following work is collected by Smt. Mahashweta Devi and Published in the Statesman (Bengali) on 28th Dec., 2006.]

Population	:	2,65,099	
Male (rural)	:	1,20,874	
Female (,,)	:	1,13,834	
Male (Urban)	:	15,854	
Female (,,)	:	14,537	
Population of the Agro-people			
Share Croppers	:	2969	
Lessee	:	1035	
Small Farmers	:	3500	
Marginal Farmers	:	12,410	
Agro-labours	:	15,584	
Land Variety			
Total Land	:	19,478	Hector
Forest	:	Doesn't exist	
Non-agro land	:	8640	Hector
Unfertile land	:	nil	
Grazing Land	:	nil	
Land covered by Trees	:	321	Hector
Recovery of Waste Land	:	32	Hector
Uncultivated land	:	48	Hector
Current uncultivated	:	nil	
Total Agro land	:	10,437	Hector
Multi crop land	:	9099	Hector
Khas Land	:	304.1	Hector
Distributed Khas land	:	57.12	Hector
Beneficiaries of Khas land	:	1035	
Crop Variety			
Aaush per Hector (autumnal Paddy)	:	2157	kg
Aaman per Hector (Late autumnal Paddy)	:	2436	Kg.
Boro Per Hector (a kind of Paddy)	:	2659	Kg.
Wheat per Hector	:	1907	Kg.
Potato per Hector	:	26,604	Kg.
Gram (Cheek Pea) Per Hector	:	823	Kg.
Mustard per Hector	:	718	Kg.
Irrigation			
Canal	:	6200	Hector
Tank	:	1078 in 1920	Hector
River Lift irrigation	:	2 in 300	Hector
Deep Tubewell	:	102 in 1268	Hector
Shallow Tubewell	:	240 in 1503	Hector
Total Irrigated land	:	11,191	Hector
Fishery :			
Total Land for Fishery	:	847	Hector
Fishermen	:	3190	
Domestic Animals			
Cows	:	45069	
Buffaloes	:	1521	
Goats	:	26,670	
Poultry	:	63,958	
Financial Institutions			
Commercial Banks	:	10	
Village Banks	:	4	
Favoured by Banks	:	19,000	
Co-operative organisations	:	59	
Co-operative Members	:	20,012	

(Source : District Statistical Handbook)

So, this is Singur which as per Brinda Karat, Prakash Karat and Sitaram Yechuri etc. is a mono-crop land! Why Buddhadeb made Singur the Scapegoat? Perhaps, because the majority belongs to the opposition camp here.

Land to be acquired by the WB Government*

Project	Place	Land (acres)
1. Salim (MNC):		
a) Chemical hub (SEZ)	Nandigram (E. Midnapur)	10,000
b) SEZ (multi-product)	Haldia (E. Midnapur)	12,500
c) Barasat-Raichak Expressway		3,500
d) Knowledge City	Rajarhat (N. 24 Parganas)	850
e) Health City	Burdwan	na
f) Food Park	Sankril (Howrah)	400
g) Motorbike Factory	Uluberia (Howrah)	2,000
h) Township	Kukrahati (S. 24 Parganas)	5,000
i) Fish Farming Project	Amta (Howrah)	25,000
2. Videocon SEZ	N. 24 Parganas	2,700
3. Videocon SEZ (IT)	N. 24 Parganas	310
4. Videocon SEZ	Siliguri (Darjeeling)	na
5. Salarpuria SEZ	N. 24 Parganas	520
6. Bengal Srei SEZ	Kharagpur (W. Midnapur)	500
7. Kulpi Port (SEZ)	Kulpi (S. 24 Parganas)	3,002
8. Industrial Development Zone	Uluberia (Howrah)	2,000
9. S. 24 Parganas District Hqs.	Baruipur	3,000
10. Industrial Development Area	Kharagpur	1,200
11. Cement Unit	Murshidabad	150
12. Several Projects	Siliguri (Darjeeling)	1,000
13. IT Complex	Jagadishpur	330
14. Industrial Projects (Telcon/Tata, Tata Metaliks etc.)	Kharagpur (W. Midnapur)	9,000
15. Jindal Steel	Salboni (W. Midnapur)	5,500
16. Tata Motors	Singur (Hooghly)	997
17. Township	Baruipur (S. 24 Parganas)	3,750
18. Township	Bhangar (S. 24 Parganas)	1,500
19. Township	N. 24 Parganas	1,000
20. Commercial Blocks	Eastern Link Highway	1,000
21. Institutional Area	Adjacement to District Hqs.	1,000
22. Small Industry Development Industrial Estates	Backward Districts	2,032
23. Track Terminal + Health City + Sports Complex	Rajarhat (N. 24 Parganas)	130
24. Nuclear Power Plant	Haripur (E. Midnapur)	700
25. Thermal Project	Katwa (Burdwan)	1625
26. Reliance Ind. Retail Network	19 Districts	1680
27. Foundry Park	Howrah	500
28. Sagardighi Projects		150

Total = 1,04,826 (approximately)

*incomplete; Complete list of SEZs is given later

(Source : Prepared from data collected from newspaper)

SEZs in West Bengal*

Formal Approvals

Name of the Developer	Location	Type of SEZ	Area (hect.)
M.L. Dalmiya & Co. Ltd.	Bantala (Kolkata)	IT/ITES)	48
M.L. Dalmiya & Co. Ltd.	Kolkata (Kolkata)	Leather	44
DLF Info City Developers	Rajarhat (Kolkata)	IT/ITES	10.12
Oval Developers Pvt. Ltd	Banagram (S. 24 Pgs)	Electronics	12.14
Riverbank Holdings Pvt Ltd (Bata India)	Batanagar (S. 24 Pgs)	IT sector	10
Enfield Exports Limited	Panagarh (Burdwan)	IT/ITES	26
Shapoorji Pallonji and Co. Ltd.	Rajarhat (Kolkata)	IT/ITES	20

In-Principle Approvals

Xenitis Infotech Pvt. Ltd.	Purusottombati (Hooghly)	Electronic Hardware & Software	12.14
Enfield Realtors Limited	Panagarh (Burdwan)	Biotech	10
Parasmani Infrabuild Pvt. Ltd.	Karaidanga & Bhatipouta (24 Parganas)	Hardware & Software, IT/ITES	40
Asian Gateway Ltd.	Siliguri	IT	200
Enfield Infrastructure Ltd.	Rajgarh (N. 24 Parganas)	IT/ITES	20
-Do-	Kharagpur	IT/ITES	16
SEZ Infrastructure Developers	Uluberia-Haldia Corridor (How)	Engineering	105+
Videocon Realty & Infrastructure res Ltd.	Motiagacha (N. 24 Parganas)	Multi-product	1080
-Do-	Suryapur (N. 24 Parganas)	Electronics	144
-Do-	Kharagpur	Multi-product	1000
Salim (New Kolkata Dev.)	Haldia	Multi-product	5000
-Do-	Nandigram (P. Mdn.)	Chemicals	4000
Salarpuria Properties Pvt. Ltd.	Between Barrackpur-Barasat	Electronics	100
Bengal Srei Infrastructure Dev.	Kalyani Expressway	Auto Components	100

Total = 11,997.40 Hectare or 29,993.50 acres approximately

*October 2006; some of the bigger SEZs still not get any form of approval till now

(Source : <http://www.sezindia.com>)

Unused Lands of closed Factories in Barrackpore Industrial Area (3 Bigha = 1 acre)

Palta Enamel	-	100 Bigha
Titagar Paper Mill	-	100 Bigha
Hindwire Limited (Khardah)	-	25 Bigha
Calcutta Silk Mill	-	50 Bigha
Hindustan Wire Ltd. (Panihati)	-	40 Bigha
Como Polite, (Panihati)	-	40 Bigha
Inberi Machinaries	-	10 Bigha
APL Rangkal	-	25 Bigha
Texmaco Panihati Works	-	30 Bigha
Kusum Engineering (Panihati)	-	20 Bigha
Sodepur Potteries	-	25 Bigha
Basanti Cotton Mills	-	40 Bigha
Beni Engineering	-	50 Bigha
Ramanlal Industries (Kamarhati)	-	30 Bigha
Mohini Cotton Mills (Kamarhati)	-	100 Bigha
Oriental Cotton Mill (Kamarhati)	-	15 Bigha
Hindustan Safty Glass (Belghoria)	-	50 Bigha
RIC Bonhoogly	-	150 Bigha
Kamala Engineering (Baranagar)	-	30 Bigha
Birati Textile Mills (Dum Dum)	-	100 Bigha
HMV - Dum Dum (Unused)	-	25 Bigha
Jeshop Dum Dum (Unused)	-	100 Bigha
Bengal Enamel, (Noapara)	-	300 Bigha
Mahalakshmi Cotton Mill (Noapara)	-	400 Bigha
Dunber Cotton Mill (Jagaddal)	-	150 Bigha
Annapurna Cotton Mills (Jagaddal)	-	610 Bigha
Titagarh Copper Mills (2) (Vatpara)	-	550 Bigha
Ulka Moss (Vatpara)	-	132 Bigha
Indian Paper Pulps, (Bijpur)	-	435 Bigha
Gouripur Jute Mill	-	750 Bigha
Jonson and Nikolson	-	260 Bigha

(Courtesy - Daily Satesman)

Constituents of the Krishi Jami Raksha Committee

1. All India Trina Mul Congress (AITMC)
2. Paschimbanga Samajwadi Party
3. Party for Democratic Socialism (PDS)
4. CPI (ML) State Organising Committee
5. CPI (ML) New Democracy
6. Majdur Kranti Parishad (MKP)
7. CPI (ML) Janashakti
8. CCR (ML)
9. Communist Revolutionary League of India (CRLI)
10. Marxist Communist Party of India (MCPI)
11. Paschimbanga Khet Majur Samity
12. Sanghati Udyog
13. Kanoria Jute & Industries Ltd. Sangrami Sramik Union
14. Gana Protriodh Mancha
15. Uchchhed Birodhi Committee (Asansol)
16. Janata Dal (United)
17. United Communist Party of India (UCPI)
18. Workers' Party
19. National Alliance for People's Movement
20. Gana Unnayan O Jana Adhikar Sangram Samity.

Name of the Supporting Organisations

1. Bar Council of West Bengal Employees' Association.
2. Indian Medical Association (Calcutta Branch).
3. West Bengal Primary Teachers' Training Student Union.
4. Jatiya Mahila Sanghati.
5. Freedom Fighters Welfare Association.
6. Govt. of India Industrial Employees' Union.
7. Walk for Development 2006.
8. State Govt. Employees' Federation.
9. West Bengal Govt. Employees' Union (Nabaparjay).
10. Netaji Bhavna Mancha (Chairman : Purabi Roy – CPI)
11. Indian Scheduled Castes/Tribes Council.
12. Frontier (Editor, Timir Basu). Madhusudan Pal informed on behalf of Frontier (Editor – Timir Basu) that – “We are charmed and impressed to hear the songs of Birsa – the Santhal Hero in Presence of Mamata. Our journal has covered on ‘Birsa’. Alas the renowned poet ‘Samar Sen’ is not alive to-day. Otherwise he would have never supported Buddhadev.”
13. Krushi Bachao Andolan – Orissa
14. Gana Mukti Parishad
15. All West Bengal Sales Representatives' union
17. Mahamumbai Shetkari Sangharsh Samity
18. Green Circle of India
19. AIADMK
20. MDMK
21. Samajbadi Dal (Chandrasekhar)
22. APDR
23. Hind Motor Sangrami Sramik Karmachari Union.

24. State Govt. Trinamul Employees' Federation.
25. Mahakaran Sangram Committee.
26. Bharatiya Kissan Sangha.
27. All India Refugee Front
28. Progressive Retired School Teachers & Employees Association.
29. National Union of Waterfront Workmen.
30. Sramajibi Mahila Samity.
31. National Federation of Sales Representatives Unions.
32. The Calcutta Tram Majdur Sabha.
33. Nikhil Bharat Swadhinata Sangrami Committee.
34. Paschimbanga Prathamik Sikshak Samity.
35. Sage Publications, New Delhi.
36. Runner
37. Manav Adhikar Sangram Sangha.
38. Swadeshi Jagaran Mancha.
39. Desh Samajik Utthan Samiti.
40. Proutist Universal.
41. Srijan Sandhani
42. Darpane Muktomon (Forum of Free Thinker's)
43. Republican Party of India.
44. Sonar Bangla Democratic Party.
45. Committee for protection of Democratic Righter (W.B.) (CPDR)
46. All religious co-ordination of individuals & organisations.
Shree Mauni Muni Maharaj Saheb.
Shree Mahendra Muni Mission Trust.
Md. Shafiuddin Rahamani
Vijoy Yogi, Mahesh Vora
Revd. Sukhendu Biswas
Syed Athar Abbas Rizvi
47. Moulanas – Noorur Rahaman Barkati, Md. Shafique. Abdul Matui, Abdul Hannan, Chand Khan, Md. Ayub, G. Qadir, Abdullah, A. Siddiqui.
48. Pragatibadi Lekhak – Buddhijibi O Sangbadik Sangathan.
49. Bangiya Christiya Parisheba.
50. People United for Better living in Calcutta (PUBLIC)
51. Pratibandhi Darpan.
52. Campaign Committee of Human Rights & Trade Union Rights (CCHRTUR)
53. Banga Bhasha Sanskriti Prasar Samity.
54. All India Anti Corruption Committee.
55. Ultadanga Sochchar.
56. All India Quami Tanzeen.
57. Indian Justice Party.
58. Community Human Right Welfare Association (CHR & W.A.)
59. Ultadanga Kritibash Janaseva Samity.
60. Group of rural Advertising Media.
61. Dum Dum Park Unnayani Samity.
62. Manabadhikar Suraksha Mancha (Masum)
63. “Ahalya” Womens' Magazine.
64. All India Union Muslim League
65. Jharkhand Party (Naven Hansda)
66. New Trade Union Initiative
and many other pro-people like-minded organisations.

At the Dharmatala Mancha

West Bengal and Kolkata witnessed an unprecedented assembly of lakhs of people from every walk of life during the 25 day Fasting of Mamata Banerjee, Abhash Munsii, Vijay Upadhayaya. The mass gathering shook the rulers countrywide. The people were highly motivated by the spirited presence and speeches, songs, recitations by eminent personalities some of whom are as follows :

Hon'ble Governor of West Bengal Shri Gopal Krishna Gandhi

Mahashewta Devi

Amlan Dutta

Santosh Bhattacharjya

V. P. Singh

Medha Patkar

Debabrata Bandopadhyaya

Sumitra Kulkarni

Prafulla Mohanta

Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi

George Farnandez

Rajnath Singh

Kashikanta Moitra

Saifuddin Choudhury

Mr. Vaico & Dr. C. Krishna (MDMK)

Mr. N. Jyoti & Mrs. S. Indira (AIADMK)

Haradhan Roy

Sunanda Sanyal

Jaya Mitra

Pratul Mukherjee

Kabir Suman

V. B. Cherian

Vilas Sonwane

Sujato Bhadra

and others including many from Trade Union, Social and Political fields.

Move aside for greater need,

Your will to live on is a problem indeed.

What else is development of the land?

Some has to be sacrificed you better understand!

Pratul Mukhopadhyay

(Translated by Debashis Bhattacharya)

Tapasi

Mamata Bandopadhyaya

[The Poem written in the memory of Miss Tapasi Malik, who was brutally raped and burnt down by the vested interests in Singur on 18th December 2006. She was a valiant 17 year old girl from the family of a poor farmer and a perennial source of inspiration to the farmers' movement in defense of their fertile agro-lands. The poem was penned down by Mamata Bandopadhyaya, in Bengali, in her fasting bed on the 15th day of her historical fast. Hope, the readers will appreciate the limitations of the translation of a poem to maintain the original spirit.]—Editor.

Tapasi, you are a hermitage of recollection,
a distant nebula, or a moon, a sun,
a Star, or a Planet.
May be a distant Star in the horizon.

The earth has been your dream
More than a girl, you've been a rebellion.
In the struggle for the soil and the land
you were in the forefront, a winner.

Those who shamelessly dance on your flesh
are not aware of the curse for brutality.
your sacrifice is a mirror to the human society
your burning pyre is a great sin of the rulers.

Our heart bleeds
by the kicks of your desperate cries.
Those who are delighted at your blood
No whips of condemnation is enough for them.

You are not alone in Singur.
We shall never meet again in that dreamland of Singur.
Those who have wiped you out from this world
do not know the depth of the sadness that Singur suffers!

I remember, meeting you near the Ujjawl Sangh.
Your indomitable courage
was fully revelled
in the surroundings of greenery.

You were also a fearless comrade in the struggle
Trampled under the boots of the oppressors,
you wanted to desperately protest, Tapasi,
But, the cruelty of the immoral
made you stunned and quiet.

Was your face tied down?
Silently you tolerated the unbearable pain.
Even then you were alive.
The living pain was engulfed by the fire!

Your life was full of sufferings.
The heartless immoral are ruling to-day.
You will live through the paddy crops in Singur.
As a martyr, you will remain alive in the pages of history.

Tapasis never die.
They live in the hearts of the movements.
Your dream of life will remain alive
in the lonesome stretch of cropping plains of Singur.

All great movements give birth to martyrs.
Your self sacrifice is the sigh of Singur.
You are the golden paddy
in the defense movement of Agro-lands.
Your life will remain encompassed in the cropping green paddy.

Our hearts bleed for you.
The green paddy is shuddered.
Ma-Earth and the human beings—all shed tears.
You are the Sunrise, the dawn of Singur.

We bow in obeissance, we salute you
our great fighter!

(Translated by *Debashis Bhattacharya*)

ENDING THE DARKNESS, OR EMBRACING IT?

Ashok Mitra

A lot of wisdom is being freely distributed nowadays. Since the breakdown of the experiments with building socialism in Eastern Europe, it is being said that the philosophy on which socialism is based has been comprehensively defeated too. The second thing being oft repeated is that for the last fifteen-sixteen years the onset of globalisation has utterly transformed the old ideas about socio-economic conditions; all the old beliefs now lie in the dust; even the analysis of capitalism carried out from around the middle of the nineteenth century by socialist thinkers need to be considerably modified if they are to have any relevance now. Everyone now has to obey the logic of capital, and follow the principle of efficiency: whoever is not efficient has no right to exist. This new doctrine now holds the reins in our country, even in our very own West Bengal.

It is quite clear that there is something rotten about the grounds of our belief. Loud voices are raised from public platforms against the conspiracy of global capital, yet, when it comes to action, it is being said that there is no way but to give in to globalisation. Just because we of the Left have been in power in West Bengal, it does not follow that the all-pervasive influence of globalisation will fall flat on its face here, apparently we too have to make our productive activities more market oriented, otherwise we will not survive. Even if, for the sake of argument, we accept this statement for the moment, even if production has to make some compromises with the dictates of the market, why should the conditions and processes of production become dependent on the market, that is to say, on private capital? A clear debate on this issue is an urgent necessity, and most urgently so in Left circles.

It is crystal clear from the results of the recent elections that there is no alternative to the Left Front in West Bengal, there is no credible opposition in the state. But the Left Front is no formless omnipotent divinity, there will be lapses and failures, setbacks and hesitations in its programme of activity. Development, the resources necessary for development, the objectives of development, and so on and so forth – a discussion of these issues falls within the ambit of communist commitment. And thus this essay.

Everyone knows that development needs investment, and for investment we need capital. But just because we need capital, do we need capitalists in quite the same way? We are gradually losing the ability to separate capital from capitalists, but why?

In our state the Left Front felt the need for capital from the first time it came to power. But the constituents of the Front came to a clear understanding among themselves. It was possible to explore avenues to progress through land reform in the agricultural sector, the introduction of the panchayati system of local governance, and the improvement of irrigation facilities. But a full solution of the state's manifold problems was not possible through such measures, nor did such a solution come about.

Many lakhs of urban unemployed still exist. It is not that that they are all utterly without any work, many have entered their names in the unemployment registers in the hope of better prospects. But to set them and their problems aside would be disastrous. We can see quite clearly how those who have completed school or college, or have graduated from technical institutes, have to run around madly in search of proper jobs; when they don't get jobs they settle for petty, low-paying professions. On the other hand, thanks to globalisation, factory after factory is closing down, and those who once had jobs are now joining the ranks of the unemployed. At the same time, the growth of information technology has led to a constant reduction of the workforce in banks, the insurance sector, and suchlike. In such a situation, the state urgently needs more industries. In the sixties and seventies of the last century, many industrialists packed up and left from West Bengal, partly due to fear of the Left, partly due to the central government's licence-permit *raj* and the shortsighted policies of the investment distribution in public enterprises or because of the price equalization policy.

When the Left Front came to power towards the end of the 1970s, it was bound by certain promises made to the electorate which had brought it to power with a large mandate. It is not possible for this state to depend on private capital for a new phase of industrialisation. Why is this not possible? Capitalists are not only bound by their class affiliation, their investment decisions are largely dependent on the laws and ordinances passed by the central government. When private capitalists get involved in some new

industrial enterprise, they as much as 90% of their capital for investment from various central government controlled financial institutions. If this is the case, why shouldn't the Left Front government of West Bengal place its demands for investment capital directly to the central government, since this can be done without the mediation of private capitalists?

At the time of its first coming to power, three demands were made by the Left Front government with a view to increasing investment in the state. (1) There should be a fundamental reworking of the centre-state relationship so that the major part of the country's revenues are handed over to the states. (2) The central government should make provisions in its own budget for direct investment in West Bengal. The centre had made no significant investment in the state since the Durgapur Steel Project, some twenty years earlier. (3) Finally, the centre should direct the various financial institutions under its control, such as the National Insurance Corporation, the Unit Trust of India, ICICI, IDBI, IFCI, and so on, to pay renewed attention to increasing investment in West Bengal. Two facts need to be mentioned here. Following Independence, the central finance ministry had directed the financial institutions under its control that, since West Bengal was comparatively more developed than other states, there should be a temporary halt in investment in the state and more attention should be paid to other, less well-developed, states. Second, and equally important, if potential investors applied to the central government for licences at this time, they would be clearly informed that licences would not be issued if their intention was to invest in West Bengal, such licences would be readily available if they decided to invest elsewhere.

It must be admitted that this three-pronged demand, made during the first phase of Left Front government in West Bengal, was not particularly effective. Following countrywide agitations, the centre was forced to set up a commission to examine centre-state relations, but the recommendations of the commission were not put into practice, nor were the states' financial powers increased. (The situation now is much worse: the states' financial crisis has not abated a bit, it has become more acute. Yet, West Bengal's Left Front government, displaying great initiative, has handed over control of the primary source of revenue – that is sales tax – to the central government!) Second, it has not been possible to force the centre to make direct investment in various enterprises in the state. Nor has it been possible to make financial institutions under central control invest their excess funds in West Bengal.

Private capital is guided by narrow class interest. The owners of such capital have no sympathy for the aims and aspirations, the dreams and desires of the people of West Bengal. It is my personal belief that chasing such capital is not only a waste of effort, it cannot be justified on ethical grounds either. On the other hand, the political context of our country has now changed completely. The same central government that paid no attention whatsoever to West Bengal's Left Front government for 20-25 years, which looked upon it with hostility, is now, or so I am told, dependent on that same Left Front for its very survival. Left leaders themselves claim that the central government now stands or sits down as they command, why it even jumps when the Left asks it to! It is well-known that the financial institutions under central control are now sitting on piles of billions of rupees. They are even using these billions to gamble on the share markets. These financial institutions have never before seen such huge sums of money. Yet they remain strangely reticent when it comes to the question of direct investment. The reason being, they follow the dictates of the central finance ministry. The central finance ministry does not like investment in government enterprises, be they of the centre or of the states. Those who are in charge of this ministry are perfectly content to let private capitalists take on the responsibility for investment. They will provide funds to private capitalists, get intoxicated by the seductions of the share markets, but will pay no heed to the need for increased investment in government enterprises. The intimate relationship the central finance ministry has with the powers-that-be in Washington is an open secret.

This is where the Left has a great opportunity for increasing investment in West Bengal. What prevents us from boldly telling the central government, which now stands or sits as we command, that it is now time for them to reverse their earlier discriminatory policies, that the government that once refused to bring about a change in centre-state relations, that declined to increase investment in West Bengal from the central budget, that prevented financial institutions from investing in West Bengal, all because of its Left leanings, should now make a u-turn where investment in West Bengal is concerned? Why should we not declare that West Bengal has no dearth of eminently skilled technologists, scientists, and women and men with entrepreneurial skills? The Left-inspired people of West Bengal are eager and willing to serve in enterprises under central guidance, they want to work under central leadership. Therefore, let the central government and the financial institutions under central control earmark at least ten thousand

crores every year for investment in West Bengal.

It is now possible for the Left to clearly declare that the yearly funds granted to West Bengal will be used for various government schemes, either on some central schemes, or on state schemes; or they may be used by and for some state and central government approved private-public joint ventures. Every government-created enterprise should function in a way that is designed to increase the industrial infrastructure of the state, according to guidelines laid out by the state. In these guidelines, employment generation will receive the highest priority, and in order to fulfill this, emphasis must obviously be given to the balanced existence of large, medium and small scale industries. Private capitalists will seek to garner glory by investing in enterprises here and there according to their own whims and fancies. But there is no analysis of whether such investments serve the interests of the state or the country as a whole. If we can act as I have outlined above, we can be freed from the clutches of such a situation.

Why shouldn't we be able to make such demands? Why have we forgotten the promises of the first stage of Left Front rule? Why are we informed, every day, of the many attempts at soliciting private capital, Indian or foreign, being made by the West Bengal government whenever we glance at the television or open a newspaper? It makes one cringe to read and hear these reports. We have such power in Parliament! We boast of possessing the power to topple the central government whenever we wish, yet why are we so diffident when it comes to exerting pressure on the centre to increase investment in our state? Ready funds for investment are lying around in the central financial institutions, yet we pay no heed to this, we keep busy in desperately seeking private capital.

What saddens me most is that in seeking private capital we are displaying a particular kind of inferiority complex. Why are we sucking up to these capitalists? When private capitalists invest, they are not swayed by sweet invitations, they are guided by rigorous calculation. There are many reasons why they are now favourably inclined towards West Bengal. The massive investment made in the power sector in the first phase of Left Front rule means that, compared to other Indian states, the power situation in West Bengal is now abundant. Capitalists are thus, naturally, inclined towards this state. Besides, the environment and infrastructure in places like Hyderabad and Bangalore are gradually deteriorating. Even the spectre of a workers' movement has raised its ugly head in such places! Such as has happened in Haryana's Gurgaon region. And apart from this, the low cost at which skilled and efficient scientists and technologists are available in West Bengal is becoming increasingly difficult to find in other places.

Those capitalists who want to come will do so for their own reasons, there's no need to go out of our way to bring them here. If the time and enthusiasm being expended on them were to be spent in getting funds for investment in West Bengal through governmental channels, from the central financial institutions, then the interests of the state would be much better served.

I want to say a couple of other things. At this very moment, our ministers are chasing after a capitalist who has set Bangalore afire. If he would kindly set up an IT factory in our state, we would be eternally grateful. He wants a hundred acres of land, and our government is instantly ready to provide him with the land. Yet this same capitalist brazenly declared, just a few days ago, "Ninety-seven and a half percent of my outfit's net profits come from the US, Germany and Japan. It makes no difference to me whether the poor of India live or die." That a Left government would seek to bestow favours on such an individual – this I cannot reconcile with my conscience.

Make a few enquiries, and you'll realise that those capitalists who have promised to invest in West Bengal (and who, in some instances, have also kept such promises) are really interested in the acquisition of land. Populations are increasing the world over, in every country. Land prices are shooting up ever higher and higher. Many capitalists have applied for land from different state governments only as an investment they can make a quick profit on. They claim that if they don't get such-and-such quantity of land, it will be difficult for them to make investments! Those in power in our state ought to make some calculations before distributing land to these capitalists - just how much land is required for investment in different kinds of industry, here or abroad; what type of factory requires what quantity of land – otherwise they may live to regret their decision in the future. But the last word, which is also the first, is, how many jobs will be created from the kinds of investment that are being spoken of? If investing fifty thousand crores creates jobs for five hundred people, what noble service will be rendered to the nation by such investment?

Of course, I hear another kind of argument nowadays. The capitalists want money, there's no need to ask too many questions about why they want it, how does it matter if they want to build a golf course, or

a pleasure city, or a hotel or a hospital? How does it matter if the increase in direct and indirect employment from these enterprises is only marginal; the profits these capitalists make will be used somewhere or the other to increase the capital of the country, leading to an improvement in the nation's commerce and industry. What is good for the country is good for everyone, including the working classes.

But is this really so? It is by no means certain that the profits reaped by foreign capital will be used for investment somewhere or the other in the country. And the profits reaped by Indian capitalists will be used by them to invest for their own benefit, not for the benefit of the nation or its working class. The capitalists' doctrine is to exploit the working class to increase the margin of their own profits. They have never deviated from this doctrine, nor will they do so now. So why should we go out of our way to make things easier for these capitalists, such as by announcing in advance our opposition to the right to strike work in some industry or the other?

Let me, with some diffidence, mention another example. We have announced, idealistically, that we will not allow our development efforts to be tainted by US government funds. Our promise has been made as a mark of our disgust at the hellish destruction unleashed by the US government all over the world since the end of the Second World War. Yet, why should we turn our faces away from the history of thousands upon thousands of communist leaders and workers killed with horrifying cruelty some forty/forty-one years ago, by the US government supported General Suharto of Indonesia? Why should we plead with those bosom buddies of Suharto the Salim Group, to invest their capital in West Bengal? Who does not know that a large part of the wealth accumulated by Suharto and his cronies from the brutal oppression of the Indonesian people forms a significant proportion of the assets of the Salim Group?

It is our historical duty not to celebrate darkness but to vanquish it. I am often reminded of a poem by Jibanananda Das. Have we suddenly lost our way in the quest to defeat darkness, have we forgotten how to end the darkness and embraced it instead?

[Transcribed by *Dola Sen*]
(Courtesy: *Shramshakti*, June 2006)
[Translated by *Samantak Das*]

No; you have no property in dominion; dominion was vested in you, as it is in every Chief Magistrate, for the benefit of the community to be governed; it was sacred trust delegated by compact; you have abused that trust; you have exercised dominion for the purposes of vexation and tyranny - not of comfort, protection, and good order; and, we therefore resume the power which was originally ours; we recur to the first principles of all government - the will of the many, and it is our will that you shall no longer abuse your dominion.

Charles James Fox
(in his deliberation to abolish the Tyranny of the East India Co.)

Mahashweta Devi speaks from the heart

If the State Government

I promised that I would visit Singur on October 27, 2006. On 14.2.2007 I would complete eighty one years and step into my eighty second year. I could not imagine I would succeed, but visited Singur. I thought that I would fall sick, but I didn't. While returning I felt younger; even now I feel that way. I like roaming in glades and glens. I keep well when I am among people. I sense this reality. I hope that again and again I will be able to go among people.

Medha (Patkar) visited us. This was a real reward. Neither Medha nor I visited Singur at the invitation of any political party. We were invited by the people of Singur. The peasants of Singur opened our eyes to the dire need for immediate launching of a mighty movement against the anti-people policies of the state government. If the State Govt. continued with extreme arrogance their anti-people policies with the help of the armed might of the state and in meeting after meeting they carry on tirade against the toiling masses, militant resistance is bound to arise. And that is what is happening. What did the state government think would happen in Singur? What kind of state government we have? Is it being run by a front of several leftist parties? Or, is it a one-party rule by CPI(M)? May be I am a political ignorant. But I am steady fast in my basis stand, sensing danger to their existence the people of Singur have risen in protest. Twenty-one year old Rajkumar has laid down his life. Twenty two women and a two and a half year old child had been incarcerated for three days. I had the notion such things happen only to Kheria-sabars of Purulia or Lodha sabars of Medinipur.

We are hearing so much about Singur. We can only say we are hearing. It is not possible to say we are getting to know. In the case of our state government it is "victory" all the way but in the case of Orissa it was a different case. There the state government bought the land from the tribal peasant and permitted the Tata Company to carry out eviction.

But we are different. We do not hesitate to build new housing projects even in Tagore's Santiniketan. Then why should the government spare these men live on agriculture. I mean landowners, share croppers landless labourers, marginal farmers.

It was heard that CPI(M) party allowed blickkilns to be started on farm land. The affected peasants raised a storm. There blickkiln owners were defeated. It was, in effect, a defeat for CPI(M).

In Singur the unrecorded share croppers will not receive any money. Because they do not have any legal status. But they are more in number. Based on the 1894 law enacted by the British rulers. The state government encashed the term 'peasant'. The Govt. garnered a huge harvest by using the results of the "Tebhaga" movement. But the so-called land reforms failed only a small segment of the share-croppers. One may get a correct picture by roaming in the country side. I work among the aboriginal tribals. Funds allotted for development of the tribals are pocketed by the all-powerful panchayats. Usually funds received are not spent. Gram Samsad (Village Parliament) and gram Sabha (Village Meeting) of the panchayats are to be held every May and November. Were they held? Was there any discussion in the gram Samsad and Gram Sabha of Singur the state governments sudden decision to hand over multiple-crop land to the Tatas? All these questions are coming to the fore. They claim that the landowners are giving away their land "willingly" to the state has a bad stink. We hear that papers relating to transfer of land are being cooked up somewhere. We must know.

Thank you, Singur, once again

On 2/11 wrote an article in a newspaper thanking the people of Singur. Once upon a time I expressed my thanks to the fighters of the decade of the seventies. Sometimes I expressed my thanks to the great rebel, Birsa Munda or at times for the anti-British rebels of 1857-58. Repeatedly in articles I have gone on thanking them. It is mandatory for writers to thank the uprisings in protests. This is how we were trained. We learnt about our motherland and her history. The time period or ideological ambience in which we grew up such a thing was natural. I had promised I will be by their side. I am writing standing by their side.

Thank you singur, once again. What I am writing would not have been possible if I had not thanked Singur Yesterday. A firm conviction has grown in me that this was just a propaganda with loud drumbeating: "Peasants are offering their land to the government". What I am writing now is the real truth about what is happening at Singur; its substance.

The land acquisition of 1894 clearly lays down that land can be acquired by government for its (i) own work like construction of road, hospitals, or similar projects like constitution of aerodromes, railway station, or shipping harbours etc. This is the first provision. I am not going to discuss the provisions about the modalities of acquiring of land. The central government had commenced a meeting at New Delhi to discuss the matter of acquiring land in public interest. The meeting was called to discuss the modalities of acquiring tribal land. We three – Sundarlal Bahuguna, Medha Patkar and myself – were present to oppose the move. Now I am coming back to the case of Singur.

There are two parts in the Act of 1894. The first part deals with acquisition of land by government in public interest. In that government has to follow laid down procedures. But if the government wants to acquire land for a private company then it has to follow a different set of procedures. The government is acquiring land in Singur in an unseemly haste. The procedure adopted by them is illegal (Yes, it is illegal). They have flouted all the way the laid down procedures for acquiring land for private purpose. The law specifies that (1) if a private company wants to acquire land the amount of compensation “has to be deposited to the collector of the district” After the company deposit the amount of compensation as aforesaid if would sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the district collector or Magistrate specifying the purpose for which acquiring of land was needed. This has not been done. why? (2) The company has to deposit the entire amount of compensation indicating the purpose for which land was required.

In Singur the West Bengal government is handing over a huge tract of land to the Tatas free of cost. The Tatas have indicated that they would pay Rs. 20 crores 5 years from now. The government's action is illegal and immoral. This will be the compensation for the acquired land. The rate of interest will be 0.01 per cent. In that case the discounted value would come to 10-12 crores. This means the Tatas will pay 12 crores and in return, take away property worth Rs. 100 crores. The state Government knowing every thing, completely illegally is handing over a vast tract for a paltry sum destroying huge crop, and countless men. Is there any comparable precedent? The Government has been acting illegally all the way. The Chief of this government and his minions are liable to be proceeded against under clause 13 of the Anti-corruption Act of 1988.

People of Singur! I am with you.

Stand by Singur

Yesterday I wrote that how the Left Front Government while acquiring land in Singur has acted illegally flouting the provisions of the land acquisition Act of 1894 displaying sheer pride and arrogance. Was the illegal action done at the behest of the Left Front; or was it the handi work of CPI(M)? If some one or some group say they were not party to the illegal act then the Left Front Constituents should proclaim their stand loud and clear. This is my demand as a citizen of the country. On 14.1.2007. I will complete my 81st year. I am one of those who were the followers of undivided Communist Party. I have always considered myself a ‘leftist’ in my thoughts and deeds.

In 1998 and 2000 we and our association filed a public interest litigation against the state government against its sinister tribal policy and their despicable conduct. Even then the Government did not stir a bit. We will come to those some other time. Now I think the time has come for the vote-seeking political parties to declare their position on land acquisition. What is their attitude to state government's land acquisition policy.

The Tatas have violated the provisions of 1894 according to which the Tatas are required to intimate the district Magistrate for what they need land. The law enjoins the intending buyer to deposit entire amount of compensation with the District Magistrate. After the money is deposited the company has to sign a Memorandum of understanding with the District Magistrate.

If has not been done. One Ranjit Mondal informed me that landlords are gleefully accepting cheques for compensation amount. It may well be the case. May be the absentee landlords are doing so with a view to wriggling out of the obligation to share their crops with the borgadars (Share Cropper).

This is not the first instance of the Government violating laws in acquisition of land. They have flouted laws in Kalna of Burdwan district. Elsewhere too the Government going to repeat the same. It was inaugurated by extreme leftist Somenath Chattopadhyay. He has already started the performance of the funeral rites of “Rabindranath”.

With humility I ask a question to the Chief Minister of the State. Is it because the government was hell-bent to illegally acquire arable land they have been for the last 30 years carrying on “intensive cultivation of illiteracy?” All praise to your farsightedness. Young turks of your party are mostly semi-literate they only follow their leaders blindly. When ever the Government has acquired land in Singur as also in Burdwan District by making wild promises : “We will do this, we will do that for you”, They have brazenly flouted the

laws. With out declaring their intention, violating the laws as they have done in Singur. The Chief Minister of the state, and all the government offices of Hooghly district are liable for prosecution under clause 13 of the prevention of corruption Act of 1988. They are all culpable.

Dark clouds are descending on Singur as because the peasants intend to cultivate potato, after they harvest their paddy. Police will not intervene. But there will be party cadres “who are prepared to do any thing for their party, they will be on the rampage. I saw such elements some years back elsewhere. They can go to any length at the behest of their leaders.

My spirit is strong, but flesh is weak. That is why I call upon everyone to go to Singur to render all help to the farmers. I am calling upon the entire people of the state to go to Singur to stand by the peasants. May I ask what right the state government has to breach all laws on acquisition of arableland to promote the interest of a private company?

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(Translated by Pranab Ghosh)

“There can be no distress, there can be no hard times, when labour is well off. The man who raises his hand against the progress of the working man, be a labour or a farmer, raises his hand against prosperity. He seeks to restrict the volume of production. He seeks to degrade the condition of the man who is steadily improving himself, and in his own improvement is accomplishing the improvement of all mankind. But this attempt will fail.”

Bourke Cockran.

Industrialisation, Yes But Not by Harming Others

Debabrata Bandyopadhyaya

According to print and electronic media reports, the West Bengal Government is going to acquire 40 to 50 thousand acres of farm land for industrialization. A few days ago, I was stunned to see a picture in a TV channel : an official of the Beni Santosa group of Indonesia pointing out how much land his company required at a place near Haldia and a local leader of the ruling party indicating with an obliging smile that he would get what he wanted. While turning his finger, perhaps involuntarily it pointed towards the Hooghly river and from the expression of the leader, it looked as though he were willing to hand over the river as well! I am not joking. I want this incident to be taken seriously.

There can be no two opinions that unemployed young men and women should get jobs, that there should be industrialization, economic progress and better infrastructure. But while welcoming industrialization, one has to keep in mind its negative aspects. Today, the universally accepted development theory is that the development of one should not be at the cost of another. This means that the post-development standard of living of all the stakeholders (whether direct or indirect beneficiaries of development) should be better than before. In other words, the benefits of development should be fairly, if not fully equitably, distributed.

In times of war, especially of limited wars, there is a tacit understanding that collateral damages – that is, unintentional destruction of life and property around a strategic target – should be avoided. However, sometimes it becomes unavoidable. But this concept (of collateral damages) does not apply in the case of development. If it does then it will imply that for the sake of profit, enjoyment and amenities for one section of people, other sections are being made to suffer extreme inconvenience and hardships. For a government committed to social justice, this would be highly immoral.

The government can easily claim that land is being acquired legally and all owners will be given compensation they are legally entitled to. How, then, does the question of moral principle arise, since nothing is being done illegally? One thing that should be clearly understood is that all that is legal is not necessarily moral. The Government is supposed to acquire land legally and pay its price as compensation. But land to the peasant is not merely a property, it is also his means of livelihood. Paying the price of the property acquired is not compensating him for his loss of vocation.

Secondly, the compensation will be paid only to the landowners and a few *bargadars* whose names are on record. But two to two-and-a-half decades after land reforms, the agrarian scene has undergone some changes. All farmlands in the controversial Singur area are irrigated. Two irrigation canals of the DVC pass through this area. Apart from jute, *boro* and *aman* paddy, many other crops like potato, vegetables, oilseeds, etc., are grown here between two principal crops. In fact, these lands do not grow just two crops but five to six crops.

A hard-working peasant can raise enough crops from a plot of one-and-a-half to two *bighas* of land to live comfortably together with his family. And it is here that 1200 acres of land is being acquired for setting up a motor car factory, displacing around two to two-and-a-half thousand peasants and leading to the loss of livelihood of another four to five hundred *bargadars*. I am not raising here the question of *thika* peasants because I do not know their number. But roughly, about one-and-a-half to two thousand agricultural labourers are going to be deprived of their livelihood along with the landowners. So, in all, about five thousand people will lose their means of livelihood.

Against that, how many people are going to get jobs at the motor factory? The Government is keeping mum. But it may be guessed mathematically. A motor car factory of today cannot be compared with Henry Ford's 1920 factory. During those days, the workers used to stand on either side of the assembly line every ten or fifteen feet apart and make different parts of the car. Today, the entire process is automated, computerized and robotized. No worker will use a hammer or a screw-driver for shaping an iron sheet or tightening a screw. Today, the manufacturing process has become so capital-intensive that it requires a capital investment of Rs. 5 to 6 crore per worker. That precludes the possibility of providing direct employment to more than 250 to 300 hands. The Toms, Dicks and Harrys who will lose their land at Singur will stand no chance of getting a job there.

I do not know of any historical instance where Marxism had to act as a facilitator for promoting capitalist development. It is a sort of logical contradiction. Rather, history says that capitalism has its own cruel and ruthless laws and dynamics of development. It pursues its own inexorable course and there is no reason to believe that it will take a different course in West Bengal.

So, what is the alternative? Is there no scope of industrialization in this State? Of course, there is. First, there are about 55 thousand sick or closed industries in West Bengal. They are occupying some 40 to 50 thousand acres of land. There has been no effort at reviving them. This could have created jobs for many. A serious attempt should be made to explore this possibility.

Secondly, there are vast tracts of land acquired by the government but never put to any use in and around Kalyani, Haringhata and Durgapur. Nobody can say that there are no infrastructural facilities for setting up industries there. If there are some inadequacies, these can be removed with minimum expenditure. Why is this not being done? Is there really any reason for not setting up a car factory in the Durgapur-Asansol belt?

Thirdly, by locating all industries in and around Kolkata is not the government unwittingly creating an inter-State regional imbalance? There are plenty of fallow (tarh) lands in West Medinipur, Bankura, Purulia, West Burdwan and Birbhum where practically nothing is grown and where cultivation in real sense will require heavy investment. why such lands are not being considered for setting up industries.

And then, is North Bengal outside West Bengal. The tea gardens here have enough surplus land. what is the difficulty in setting up industries here? Has anybody given thought to it? As regards infrastructure, there is already an east-west road corridor, the old metre-gauge railway track has been replaced by a broad-gauge line and the Chukha power plant in neighbouring Bhutan generates enough power which is now being exported to other States. Why, in spite of all this, the industrialization of North Bengal is not being considered? Are our industrialists crying babies that they have to be pampered and all their whims indulged?

**(The writer is former Land Commissioner, West Bengal,
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(Helped in Transcription: Pabitra Sarkar)

(Courtesy : Sharadiya Kalantar, 2006)

(Translated by Himangshu Halder)

The end of all political associations is the preservation of the rights of man, which rights are liberty, property and security; that the nation is the source of all sovereignty derived from it; the right of property being secured and inviolable, no one ought to be deprived of it, except in cases of evident public necessity, legally ascertained, and on condition of a previous just indemnity.

Thomas Paine

A conversation with a Government Peasant Leader on Singur

Shubhendu Dasgupta

Once I went to Jalpaiguri to attend a conference of the Association for Protection of Democratic Rights. Read in the morning newspaper that Tata people had gone to Singur to see the land for their proposed automobile industry – perhaps accompanied by the representatives of West Bengal Govt. The farmers and their families opposed, protested and demonstrated against them. On that very day, during a stroll on the Streets during a break of the conference – a book shop came on my way. It was an attractive one and I went in. While glancing through and purchasing some – I got one by Benoy Konar named ‘the death cry of the peasant lovers’ published by National Book Agency – The publishers of CPM, published in October, 2004.

Why did I purchase this? Benoy Konar is a famous peasant leader and a front ranking CPM Leader, a central committee member and the interim Secretary of the State Committee functioning in absence of Biman Basu. His words on Agro-matters are last words in CPM. The discussion on Agro. Land acquisition for industry made me interested.

I never had a face to face discussion with Benoy Konar. There was no occasion also. Twice we were together on television interviews. There was no consensus between us. But owing to the limitations of a T.V. debate – I wasn't satisfied fully. After going through his book – I am tempted to air the different views on Singur as well as on the roles of Benoybabu and his friends in Singur.

Arindam and his friends are taking photography on Singur. They visit me sometimes. They had come during this write up and informed that at 2 am on 25th September night the left front Police attacked the farmers in every hut, tortured and lathicharged the females, even the children were not spared. One death, three missings-may be dead, even a child has been arrested since her father refused to handover the land. Arindam and his friends have taken the photographs.

Benoybabu has become nostalgic on the very first page of his book remembering Tebhaga Movement in two Phases between 1946 and 1951. During the first phase 84 persons were sacrificed, the second phase had the martyrs of Bara Kamalapur, Dubirbheri, Sandeshkhali, Kakdwip; he also remembers the story of the split womb of a pregnant mother named Ahalya. He remembers these tortures by the predecessors of the present Congress and Trinamuls as a brutal one. This peasant movement which makes Benoybabu nostalgic was for the rights of the farmers on their harvests – which later turned to a movement for the rights of the land. The present movement of farmers in Singur is for the rights of the Agrolands, is against the snatching away of the land, is against the eviction from their own lands. I want to ask Benoybabu whether he is ready to call the present tortures and oppressions on the farmers by the successors of the communists of those days as equally brutal or ghoulish?

See, I am already in conversation with you taking into consideration that you are speaking through the books. I am replying, not criticising. Just exchanging the views and the questions which are peeping through my mind as I was going through the book. It may appear to be one sided. My request to my friends of Ekok Matra that they should also publish the reply of Benoybabu – if he feels to do so. For the time being I shall talk and let others hear.

Are you angry, Benoybabu?

He remembers the period between 1967-70 – when lakhs and lakhs of agro labours, poor farmers, share croppers from the villages arose from their long time inertia; recovered the private land, the nameless land, the hidden and excess land, recovered the High Court injunctions through the blades of ploughs – shedding blood from the chest. Do you still remember? Then see that the same lands which were acquired through the shedding of bloods and tears of the agro-labour, poor farmers and share croppers – are being snatched away by you! Those were the days of land acquisition movement. Today it is the movement for defending the laws. And, what an irony that this movement for defense of the land is being undertaken against you who were in the forefront of the land acquisition movement in those days!

You talk of Globalisation! You said, ‘A silver lining has arisen today for industrialisation despite the liberalised infrastructure of the centre in the backdrop of Imperial Globalisation.’ My humble observation you didn't utter this consciously. The word ‘despite’ has perhaps been wrongly uttered. It should really be as follows – ‘Today's industrialisation is due to liberalisation policy of the central Govt. in the backdrop of

Globalisation. There is no such control on the national and foreign capital as before due to globalisation. Hence, they are powerful now. They think – they can do anything. I understand your problem. On one hand you have to censure Globalisation and the central policy. On the other hand to caress the monopoly capital and have to cater to their needs including the needs for the land.

And, if anyone says it's wrong, then blame others and tell, they (who tortured the farmers earlier) are against the building of Industry on agro-lands. Yes, it's true but who objected to the industrialisation as such? Industrialisation on fertile agro lands' and Industrialisation as it is are not one and the same thing – you'll agree.

On Globalisation you have gone a little further. You said that the left front influence on the middle farmers and urban people is on the increase due to your propaganda against the negative points of Imperial globalisation. But as you said earlier – it's not the negative points, but the positive ones which are attracting, the national and foreign investments, the Salems to you and you are also approaching here and there. This I do understand but, I am in a fix as to the other comment. I am interested to know what exactly was your propaganda against the negative effects of globalisation which has helped to increase their urban influence? On the contrary what we experience is the post globalisation grandeur of Kolkata! Flyovers, shopping malls, Multiplex, broadening of roads with the removal of trees/footpaths, everything shining on display here! Real Estate, Luxury Park, Five Star Hotels – are really pleasing for the urban middle class. The eviction of the poor for urban beautification without any protests from the middle class! On the contrary they are happy with the show. No protest when Housing Complex are being established on the closed factory lands, no objection even to the steady deterioration of Public hospitals and steady increase of expensive private hospitals, not angry at the failures of corporation schools and Bangla Schools for the poors giving way to the grand Convent Schools. My question is whether these are the kind of people who have come into the focus on your increased influences, or pleased on your performances, they have increased your influences? Which is true? And, none the less, please think over whether people like you should have become happily overwhelmed at this development?

And, I can see the reason of your increased influence among the middle farmers. This, at present is your pet subject. I read it somewhere. As far as I remember you have said that the experiments with the small farmers are over, now it is the turn of the big and middle farmers. They are your hopes for the present agro-policy. You have accepted Mckinsay's suggestion that it's beyond the limit of the poor and small farmers to cultivate commercial crops for the processing of food, fruits and flowers which should be allotted to small and big farmers. West Bengal has less no. of big farmers, but there are middle farmers. You have to cross the agro-boat with their help only. And, you understand it most since you are involved in agriculture so-long.

So, either due to the positive effects or due to the negative effects of Globalisation you are running for the big capital or foreign capital, going after the middle farmers leaving out the small ones, and this may lead the fools to ask you – what happens to your long standing views and opinions? Why you have abruptly changed? Since you are a declared marxist your reply is in the name of Marx only which is like this, 'there is no place for orthodoxy in marxism. It is a science for movement of human society as well as the nature of the world. It's implimentation depends on the relative conditions and the existing situations!' You have an advantage always. Most of the people are ignorant about Marxism. Same with your party cadres. but, you are a learned Marxist. We shall abide by your explanation of Marx. Additional excuse you have when you say that there is no place for orthodoxy in Marxism. Taking advantage of this statement you can pass on everything. And on any objection to that you can always say it's orthodoxy which has no place in Marxism!

Let me, an idiot in Marxism, raise a question. – You just said that the implimentation of Marxism depends on the relative strengths and the existing condition. Suppose, I agree to this for agruments sake and ask in return that you take away the land of the poor farmers in Singur and hand it over to rich Tata. Is it because you implied marxism on the relative strength and situational analysis? It doesn't become clear which situation you mean? If again for the sake of argument if I say that situation whatever it is would change you and not the opposite. Is it a foolish question or is it an example of orthodoxy? Why should you accept such a situation which prompts you to snatch away a land from the poor farmer and offer it to Tata. And, it the combined strengths of the small farmer and the Tata goes in favour of Tata should you accept it or work for a change since you are a communist and not anything else? Even if it's orthodoxy – You as a marxist can afford to be an orthodox. At least the poor farmer could have been saved with the land!

It is clear that you will stick to your own explanation of Marxism. So, you went ahead and said, "Marx

said that when capitalism is blooming, when the production capacity of the society will be increased manifold, when all produced will turn into a social production, when the production relation will become an obstacle to the path of productive forces, when the production power will be centralised on the hands of few with the eviction of the small producers, then evicting these few evictees the working class will reach communism through socialism.” When I was a party worker I used to attend regular classes, have regular studies and discussions such as these. One thing we were told at that time that whatever and whenever the things have been written and said by Marx, Engels, Lenin and others, they did so in a perspective like time, country, subject, condition, situation etc. A statement made at a particular perspective may not hold good necessarily in all countries, in all condition. Generally, we do not bother to remember this. We don't remember the perspective of Marx's words. We put it where it suits our own logic. Now, leave this. In reality, what you said in the name of Marx is let the capitalism blossom through your party and Govt. you support for the eviction of innumerable small producers to facilitate centralisation of power at the hands of few only. And, let's hope that will help the working class to bring socialism by uprooting the capitalism. And, you propose to support the present capital for that future socialism, isn't it? You have to handover the agrolands to Tata in Singur. Do it. But, this stupid fails to perceive how can all the production turn to social production through the manifestation of capitalism based on individual capitals. It may be possible if it was a state capitalism. Let me dare to ask you a different question. The way your Govt. and party advocates for acceptance of all demands of the capitalists to the workers and trade unions for the development of Capital, then how the productive relation can be obstacles to the productive forces. I read it in a daily newspaper that the Tatas have asked for your permission to appoint contract labors in their automobile factories and you have granted the permission. Is it true, Benoybabu?

However, you have used the shield of marxism in your own way for the role you want to play in the development of capital. Perhaps, you raised the question of the closed industries out of a pricking of conscience somewhere – When you said, ‘old industries are becoming invalid gradually? Let me share my experience on this. Nowhere you, your party, your govt. or trade union has explained in writing—why there are so many closed industries in your state? who are responsible for the closures? How the revival can be undertaken? What problems did you face during revival efforts – if any? or, how these problems could be solved – you didn't pen down on these questions anywhere! In reality, it's just the opposite. The owners have fled away under your protection from the profitable industries without even paying off the dues of the workers, selling off the land illegally making ways for the real estate to enter. We can furnish the details of our work on this – if you so desire. Let me tell you something more on this opportunity. We, through Nagarik Mancha, made four reports on our own efforts to explore the possibilities to re-open four closed factories on a labor co-operative basis and deposited the reports to your Govt. Even though your officers acknowledged the receipts – we were never invited for a discussion on the reports. Workers were ready to run them through co-operatives. You accept expensive foreign advices and listen to them. We expected you all to go through our reports at least once before rejecting outrightly allowing us to break the myth that a village yogi doesn't receive a dole. But, let me put the fact straight. after long effort we could meet your comrade, the minister of Industry, Nirupam Sen and held a discussion on one closed industry – for which the co-operative proposal was submitted. The trade union people of the factory were with us. Nirupambabu as usual behaved really well. But, showed no signs or made no efforts to re-open the factory on a co-operative basis. He talked of number of problems. We were ready and offering solutions to each problem. We prayed to him with folded hands that please propagate a word that you are in favour of the revival through a co-operative basis, rest we shall take care and everything will be OK. He didn't agree. That time we thought and this time we realise that anything can happen if you want, if Nirupambabu wants. You are materialising everything you want in Singur. Even, you could mercilessly beat the villagers by RAF in the midnight. We didn't ask for that much. Only a portion of your grants and gestures in Singur in favour of Tatas would have been sufficient for us – and the closure could have been lifted. You have endless organisations under you. Please make one survey through at least one organisation and see for yourself the pains and problems of the labours and their families of the closed industries. We have done the survey and can give that to you if you are interested.

Look, this is my problem. I have moved away from the Singur – Tata issue to the issue of 50 thousand closed factories in West Bengal. Are they same? Not at all. You have used only two sentences to justify – ‘old industries are becoming invalid’ and ‘should we not make endeavours for newer industries?’ Certainly so, but, won't you pause for a moment to ponder over matters like – why industry? What type of industry? Small industry, co-operative industry? necessary manufacturing industry? A comparatively labour intensive industry, environmentally conscious industry, village industry, cottage industry, – none object for the

installation of such industries? But, instead, in the name of new industry you encroach upon the fertile agro-lands? and, justify by saying, 'the labours won't get anything without industry! Their capacity to labour will become lost.' Well, what is your thought, Benoybabu, on the lost labor-capacities of thousand and thousands of closed industries?

Well, let it go. Let me come back to your old favourite topic of the manifestation of capitalism – which you think as your solemn duty. That's what you are actually doing. 'The manifestation of capitalism is the pre-condition of its death or socialism' Really, how ignorant we are! So far we had known that it's the owners of capital and their organisations of Govt. who activate the development of capitalism. We didn't know that it's the solemn responsibility of the Communists to develop capitalism in a capitalist state. However, someone can jokingly ask that you are installing Tata industry in Singur to bring socialism through the de-facto death of capitalism. Let it be so. But the Tatas are made aware of this motive inadvertently?

In order to activate the development of capitalism, perhaps absent mindedly you have mentioned in a haste – "Capitalists out of their class enemies were unwilling to turn up here since they wanted to see the end of the Left Front Govt.' Let me make it more clear. So-far they weren't coming because of the enmity. Now they are coming, so the enmity has evaporated. Now it's your friendliness on the basis of class-politics with the capitalists. Isn't it so? So-far the deterring force was the desire to see the end of Left Front, now the favourable desire is to see their own ends. Is it true? You said it that you will bring socialism by causing death to capitalism through the development of capitalism. Have I understood correctly, Benoybabu? So, you have handed over fertile agrolands to Tata in Singur with a view to bring socialism by inflicting death to capitalism. Is it correct, Benoybabu?

You are intelligent and correctly anticipated the next question – why automobile industry on agro-land? Your justification 'industry depending on the purchasing power? If someone asks industry here is for the higher class who have the purchasing capacity, but what happens to the lower class sacrificing their lands – the source of their purchasing capacity? Your positive answer justifying your action in Singur is evident. Suddenly, you might think you shouldn't have said this carelessly. As a result, you have given excuses for the land acquisition. As far as possible waste, infertile, monocropper, bad, unprofitable for cultivation' – these are the adjectives of the land attributed by you. Benoybabu, you are an expert on lands, please excuse my audacity. These adjectives are relative and you can change the conditions at your will. It has been changed earlier. But, since your target is different you said, 'One has to take some agro-land along with the waste land. Necessarily some good land is also required.' You went further ahead and said, 'we don't want the farmers to remain farmers permanently, Farmer' lives are not that attractive. There is a vast difference in the per capita income of urban and rural people. About 150-175 years ago to-days industrial workers' forefathers were all farmers. Farmers cannot remain farmers at someone's will, no.' Then the agro-economic, food production industrial agro-production, food security, agro-technology, folk-knowledge, agro-science, social security of the farmers, Govt. subsidy in agriculture, land distribution, land movement, land reform, agro-reforms – all these are obsolete and useless today? All farmers will become workers? Then for the sake of farmers and cultivation why did you all went for your pet subject – the land reforms? It is for the vote catching so long? What now? You have already said, 'Marxism had no place for orthodoxy. It's a moving science for human society along with the nature of the world. It's implementation depends on the relative conditions and existing situations.' That is why on the present situation of making industry on the agro-lands you are about to erase out the cultivation as well as the farmers. And finding different excuses for it. Like, 'the profit and loss of the land owners, the profit interests from Bank deposits the farmers will not suffer financial loss. etc. since, this is your pet subject, you utter this here and there at different times, never got the opportunity to tell you on the subject. Please, be attentive and listen to me today. Hope, you will understand.

(1) Crops are cultivated on the land. The farmers cultivating the crops–eat them, the villagers eat them, we also eat them. If the land goes, the harvest will be reduced. Those who thrive on the crops will find it difficult to get food. And, the problem will be faced by their dependants also. (2) There are underground water of the land which is useful in many ways. So, with the land, the water will also go leading to a scarcity of water, (3) There are different worms and insects on the land, different plants, variety of creatures so to say– which are indispensable for the maintenance of eco-balance and environment. This eco-balance will be disturbed if industry take place on the agro-land-endangering our lives. (4) In addition to the landowners, agro-labour also work and live on the lands. With the loss of land, they will suffer from the loss of income. (5) Apart from the land owners and agro labours, the share croppers also live on the lands and are likely to suffer from the loss of livelihood with the loss of land. (6) apart from the cultivators there

are many others who make rice from the paddy, make different other food varieties from paddy and other crops, who make agro-machineries, and undertake the repair work, those who work to carry the crops from one place to other. Their livelihood is dependent on the agro-land. Moreover, suppliers of different commodities to the agro-families will also become redundant. (7) Apart from the crops – the agro land provide many useful things to the farmers like food, fuels, things to build and repair house, and other domestic utilities which they generally do not or can not purchase. They will lose all these things with the loss of lands and the lives will become really hard for them. Apart from the human beings, birds and animals also thrive on the lands and their lives are equally important for environment and eco-balance. The animals like cows are indispensable for a human life. What will happen to them when the lands disappear from the agro-scene? After all, the world is as much for the animals, as for the humans.

You know all these, Benoybabu you know the land like the palm of your hands. Even then I reminded you as you said that the farmers will not suffer financially! The matter is far more important than mere economic consideration, and, as for the economic consideration, you said, Bank deposits will fetch income. You know, the bank interests are dropping everyday. This is not on the hands of the farmers, but increasing the income through land cultivation does lie on their hands. You also know the rupee value is regularly decreasing unlike the land value. And, above all farming or cultivation is a work. How can you suggest someone to sit idle and eat on bank interest without work? Can we suggest any politician to leave his political work in exchange of an adhoc amount and sit idle and eat on bank interests. How does it feel?

Well, I have arrived at the end almost. Before I conclude, let me deal with last part of your book. You have said, “We undertake agro-movements to free agriculture from the feudal and capitalist exploitation. As a friend of the working class – to direct towards socialism through the completion of farmers' democratic revolution. Not to give permanency to his identity as a farmer. By engaging more than 60% of our people to small, stray, backward cultivation permanently one can nullify the realities of socialism, but one can not progress.” You have advanced such a statement or theory already. If I understood clearly it's like this– that agriculture is backward, an obstacle for the development of capitalism, industry is an advanced state, capitalism will be manifested through industry. And, this manifestation of capitalism is, in fact, the death of capitalism and marking the advent of socialism. Is that alright? Now, let me understand your last theory in conglomeration with this. Agriculture has to be made free from feudal and capitalist exploitation. And, for that it has to be driven out from the agriculture itself! Because you are reluctant to give permanency to his identity as a farmer. As a result, it's imminent that a farmer has to be brought out of this farmer's identity and be driven out. Otherwise, as you said, socialism will not happen, OK. Now I understand why you are driving out the farmers from their lands in Singur. The poor farmers have to leave their rights for land in order to facilitate your intention for socialism. The poor chap is in the dark and failing to understand the greatness of your endeavour for the socialism in West Bengal and, as a result you had to send police force on 25th Sept. midnight to make them understand the fact through merciless lathicharge on them, their families and children. Now, I admit, the complexities of Singur is as clear as water!

After such a heavy discussion, Let me conclude with a light hearted remark. Benoybabu, on the first page of your book you have joked, ‘For the possible misfortune of the fishes – there are floods in the eyes of crocodiles.’ I understand by fish – you mean the farmers. But who are the crocodiles? Is it you? The crocodile eats fishes. You are eating farmers, driving them out of their lands. For the fear of the evil of the farmers, which means for their good only you are doing all these. That's what you have wanted to convince through your book. I know you are a serious person. Please, don't mind the pranks.

And, the last word for the time being. Don't get angry please – with all these arguments. I have also realised the fall out of your anger like the farmers of Singur.

With regards,

**(The Writer is eminent economist & social thinker)
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(Translated by *Debashis Bhattacharya*)**

“Privileges shall have an end, but the people is eternal.”

Mirabeau

West Bengal on the Wrong Track? The Singur Syndrome

Praful Bidwai

As Ms Mamata Banerjee's fast against the Singur project in West Bengal moves into its third week, and as the deadline for handing over land to the Tatas approaches, the conflict over the proposed car factory is coming to a head. One can only hope that a just solution is soon reached on acquiring land in Singur village. By the time these lines appear, a compromise may well have been reached. It is of the utmost importance that this be a sustainable and comprehensive settlement which includes the rehabilitation of all those who will be displaced. What happens in Singur will create a benchmark for all future industrial projects in West Bengal, including export-oriented special economic zones (SEZs). Singur has become a new paradigm of development, and a test case for the ruling Left Front's economic policies and its relations with the United Progressive Alliance. It's not difficult to understand why Singur has become so controversial. At stake are 997 acres of land, and the livelihoods of 12,000 landowners and share-croppers. Given that the village is barely 45 km away from Kolkata, just off the Durgapur Expressway, the landowners know their land is valuable. At least 30 percent (according to one report, 68 percent) of it is multi-cropped. Some want higher compensation for it than the government has offered (basic rate, Rs 6 to 8.9 lakhs). Both the political Right and the Far Left have jumped into the fray by focusing on their discontent. The Communist Party of India (Marxist), the Left Front's leading component, claims the landowners had written in their consent to sell 954 of the 997 acres of land. It also says it has rehabilitation and employment plans for the local population. It denies that the police used brute force against peaceful demonstrators. Most controversially, Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee dismisses all protesters as "forces opposed to Bengal's growth". However, according to the "status report" on Singur published by the government (see The Times of India, Dec 16), prior consent for land purchase was obtained only for 586 acres-and that too on the day the government started fencing off land. It had no consent for acquiring the rest (411 acres). It clamped Sec 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, banning the assembly of five or more persons, and imposed the Land Acquisition Act, 1894 (LAA)-a colonial law whose application the Left parties rightly oppose in many states! The LAA permits forcible land acquisition for "public purpose", but the Tata Motors factory fulfils no public purpose, as distinct from purely commercial objectives. It passes comprehension why the government agreed to procure a large contiguous plot on the Tatas' behalf, rather than ask them to buy it themselves. In respect of SEZs in other states, the Left parties oppose such mediation by governments, as well as the acquisition of multi-cropped land. There's a problem about land value too. The government claims it's paying Singur's landowners more than the going market rate. But it's known that less than half the market price is registered in land deeds. Extrapolating from recent purchases (e.g. at Dankuni, about 25 km from Kolkata), land in Singur could be worth about Rs 30 lakhs/acre. Matters are even more complicated because the bulk of Singur's land belongs to absentee landowners, and is actually cultivated by share-croppers (Bargadars). The cultivators will get just 25 percent of the land value even if they're registered under the land reform programme known as "Operation Barga". If they aren't, as is bound to happen with any large-scale programme, they will get no compensation. Their number is significant-estimated at 250. Even if they're brought into the net, the compensation payable would still be meagre-only one-quarter of the land value. As for the 1,000 or so landless agricultural workers and other providers of village services like blacksmiths, mechanics and barbers, the less said the better. They will get wiped out without any compensation. This land transaction model will have a profoundly negative effect on West Bengal's agrarian situation. "Operation Barga" not only registered share-croppers, it also reduced the landlord's share in the harvest to one-quarter or one-third of the total. At Singur, that ratio will be reversed-a sign of what may be called counter-reform. The Left Front will have turned its back on the biggest and most successful land reform it executed in Bengal in its three decades in power. The West Bengal police used force against peaceful demonstrators, injuring at least four, and slapped serious charges upon them, including attempt to murder. This aggravates the state's culpability. As does its bypassing of the village panchayat-in violation of Article 74 of the Constitution. One can and should criticise Ms Banerjee for her Right-wing politics, coercive tactics and opportunism. But that doesn't exonerate the Front. This is doubly tragic. First, the Left should know that the land issue is at the cutting edge of today's class struggles, which pit the poor against predatory commercial interests. Second,

the Left had the responsibility-and a unique opportunity-to create a worthy model of consensual and humane land acquisition and full rehabilitation in Singur. This would have allowed the Left Front to redeem its indifferent record of rehabilitation in West Bengal. A recent study finds that the state has rehabilitated a measly 9 percent of the people displaced by the Damodar Valley project and other World Bank-funded schemes since the 1950s. This is a far lower proportion than Andhra's 28 percent, Orissa's 33 and Goa's 34. Once instituted, the Singur Paradigm will be applied to a much larger area, over 40,000 acres, to be acquired near Kolkata for a host of other industrial projects, including SEZs and industrial parks, of the kind the Left parties oppose elsewhere. The Left Front government has received requests for a total of 125,000 acres from 20 Indian and two foreign companies. Among the latter is the favoured Salim group from Indonesia, known to be a front for the super-corrupt Suharto family which has looted national wealth. Singur's significance or impact doesn't end there. Singur is a concentrated expression of the pattern of industrialisation and development that the Left Front has embraced in Bengal. This pattern is led or dominated by private capital, and is weak on social development. The Front government seems desperate to attract private corporate investment, including foreign investment, at any cost, and irrespective of whether it generates employment, skills and other spin-offs, and contributes to public welfare. This means the Front is adopting the neoliberal model in which the corporate investor calls the shots and sets the market rules, leaving elected governments and other publicly accountable institutions helpless in directing investment into the most desirable areas to maximise public welfare. The Left Front vocally-and rightly-opposes neoliberal and corporate-led pro-globalisation policies at the national level. Of all Indian parties, the Left alone has a coherent critique of such policies, which are creating havoc through their vicious dualism, contribution to widening disparities, and callousness towards the poor. If the Left follows a contradictory approach in the states where it rules, it will attract the charge that it practises double standards. This will damage its credibility, and also weaken its ability to act as a pressure-group on the UPA in favour of progressive policies. This pressure-group role is the central reason why the Left supports the UPA government from the outside. It would be tragic if this function were to get undermined. India's Left parties, which today enjoy their highest-ever representation in Parliament, and which rule in three states, command a level of credibility and respect far in excess of their membership or direct political influence. At the present juncture, they are better placed than ever before to develop an alternative model of development and industrialisation which is not predatory on people's livelihoods and does not squeeze the peasantry to fund the creation of factories and services. By persisting with the Singur model, the Left stands to lose in yet another way. Over the past decade or so, a healthy coalition has emerged between the organised Left, and civil society groups, grassroots people's movements, and the radical intelligentsia. Singur has created a serious rift within this coalition. Unless this is healed, it will weaken all its components and reduce their effectiveness. The Left Front must not sit on prestige on Singur, as Mr Bhattacharjee would like it to do. It must radically rethink and revise the Singur land acquisition plan even if that means the Tatas carry out their threat to relocate the project if land is not handed over to them by the year's end. Far too much is at stake for the owners of a car factory to be allowed to dictate terms to the Left.

(The writer is an eminent Journalist)

“Our people want a future free from landlessness, homelessness, unemployment, poverty and want. They want to live in peace, free from the wars imposed from the outside by vested interests. They want to prevent destruction of their nations and of their sons and daughters.”

Anomalous Land Acquisition and the Singur Movement

Sunanda Sanyal

“We’ve got 80 per cent of the land required. The people of Singur and the rest of West Bengal are on the side of the Tata Industries. Who shall we obey – the people or the persona non grata that is holding a public hearing? And what hearing? Who are *they*?” said our chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee.

They are Medha Patkar, Mahasweta Debi and Justice Malay Sengupta. A commission comprising them arranged a public hearing on 27th October, 2006 at Madhyapara Durgabedi, Gopalnagar. The hearing was organised by Singur Krishijami Raksha Committee and Sanghati Uddyog. The trio, among others, addressed a meeting on Hospital Maidan, Bajemelia, after the hearing. Mahasweta Debi said it was heart-warming to see the Singur uprising developing into a people’s movement. It looked as if the Bengalis were rising again in protest against zulum. She called upon the students and youth to participate in the Singur movement. Medha in sum said that the CPI (M) was doing exactly the opposite of what it was saying in the other states. She raised a number of questions in the context of the public hearing she had earlier held. The Government of West Bengal must answer them all.

The *Ganashakti*, the mouthpiece of the CPI (M), however (28 October, 2006) headlined its report “*Singur-e Trinamuli adalate Medhader Kajir Vichar* (The Likes of Medha Patkar Hold Hearing at Trinamuli Kangaroo Court): “The clash between the Trinamulis and the Naxalites became apparent at the hearing. One said it would be disastrous to ignore Mamata’s contribution to this movement. Naxalites on the contrary handed out a leaflet contending that such movements could not be left to Trinamul.” I did not get the leaflet. My friends who attended the hearing didn’t get it either. Even so, the opposition parties will do well to bear in mind that this people’s movement is basically a fight for principles. The question before us is: can we trade off the farmer’s right to earn his living as such against a car factory? Can this be called “development” by any stretch of imagination?

I had the privilege of attending both the hearing and the public meeting. From what I saw and heard the Singur movement for saving the farmland had indeed grown into a people’s movement. At both the places the representatives of the SUCI, APDR, Congress, Ganamukti Parishad and so on explained their thoughts on the acquisition of multi-crop farmland at Singur. But none used its banner, and each speaker admitted that the Krishijami Raksha Committee was altogether a non-partisan effort, which was ready to accept any assistance from any political party that came along. Indeed, a number of participants in the movement were farmers loyal to the CPI (M). It seemed the more the government would hit out at this movement the more would it gain in strength. And those, on the other hand, who opposed it would be looked upon as public enemies.

Naturally the CPI (M) would like to assassinate this character of the popular movement. One wouldn’t be too surprised if that party used its ‘moneybag’ to buy and sell off the certain political parties and leaders. After all the CPI (M), the so-called party of the destitute, is one of the ‘capitalist’ political industries that are sitting on whole mints of money: worse, their leaders have a lifestyle to maintain. And to keep up that lifestyle, they must stick to power with leechlike tenacity. So they have no option but to be natural comrades of Ratan Tata, Mukesh Ambani and so on. You may know that at the Delhi headquarters of the CPI (M) Sitaram Yechuri, general secretary and Prakash Karat, President, received Diwali gifts last year from Vijay Malya and Mukesh Ambani. The gifts were, hold your breath, dry fruit, Champaign and whisky.

True, there is a general tendency the world over today to set up factories on farmland. The industrialists are themselves deciding what kind of land, and how much of it, they want. The governments take their dictates like slaves so to speak. Buddhadeb has made no bones about confessing that he is ready to acquire any land that the industrialists prefer. What Buddhadeb hasn’t said is that the Tatas themselves have dictated the terms and the price of the land. The chief minister has accepted them both unconditionally. It is reported the Tata Motors will pay Rs. 20 cr for 997 acres five years hence – practically without interest. The well-known IAS officer D. Bandyopadhyay calculates that in 2011 the sum would work out at Rs. 12 cr. However the farmers of Singur, for the life of them, are determined not to part with their land. They gathered together in front of the BDO office on September 25, 2006 just to say ‘no’ to the government – and were mercilessly beaten. So was Mamata Bandyopadhyay, the Trinamul chief.

Our chief minister is unwilling to consider any counter-argument. He says: “We have to consider what

we are going to gain in exchange for Singur. True, we are giving away farmland at Singur. The questions are: What price would the land fetch? How many man-days would it (the factory) generate? How much wealth would it produce? How many work-hours would it generate? What price would an automobile factory at the site fetch? How many people are going to be directly and indirectly employed at the factory (Ganashakti, 31 October)?" Questions like these were answered by Koushik Sarkar in *Rabibarar Patay, Ganashakti (29 October, 2006)* in a piece called *Mor Ghorano Prokolpo Singure* (The Project that Can Be a turning-point for Singur) says: "The total area of (available) land in West Bengal is 88 lakh 75 thousand hectare. Of this 63 per cent is farmland. Thirty-two lakh 87 thousand hectares are fallow and uncultivable. However, West Bengal has only 3 per cent of the cultivatable land of this country, although eight per cent of the total population lives here. The state also produces just eight per cent of the total food crop. The total farm produce in the state is high, and, naturally, the cultivation is intensive. Again, consequent on successful reforms, land has been distributed among small and marginal farmers. Naturally, the land they have got is fragmented. So in a densely populated state like ours the number of people to be adversely affected by the acquisition will obviously be relatively high. For example about 4000 farmer-landlords and about 1000 bargadars used to live at Singur where about 1000 acres have been acquired. It is all but impossible to provide alternative land to the evictees in the State. Nor is it possible to provide, at the main plant, employment to at least one person per affected family... This is impossible, statistically speaking. Moreover, the members of the affected family cannot acquire overnight the highly technical skills required for such worksites."

This means the members of even the CPI (M) are aware that not a single farmer of Singur, not to speak of the rest who depend on the land there nevertheless, is going to get any kind of gainful employment. The promise of training is a plain hoax. The harsh reality is that the farmers are going to lose their land, homestead and their living – and above all their ambience and neighbours. Durgabedi, Bajemelia Hospital Ground, Santoshimatola and so on will be lost to them. The school-buildings will be pulled down. The children can no more hope for bites of fruit, picked up free under the trees. This is of immense nutritional value according to the World Bank. Going by experience, many of the evictees will commit suicide; many more having lost their livelihood will end up below the poverty line. And those that fail to be qualified as Alimuddin Street's "poor" won't get the BPL cards. As the procession of the dead goes on and on thereafter the CPI (M) will contend that the deaths are caused by malnutrition rather than starvation. For all that the CPI (M) will continue to go to polls undaunted – and win. For the grouchy and pugnacious opposition parties will never put up a united fight. Let the opposition leaders bear in mind that the mudslinging among themselves annoys the commoners no end.

Finally, let me answer the chief minister's question: "What price would the land being ceded to the Tatas fetch?" I have already tried to explain why the price cannot be calculated in terms of money. Moreover, the price being paid for the land concerned out of the public exchequer – quite illegally. In its submission to the unofficial commission of enquiry headed by Medha Patkar, Ganamukti Parishad said: For the land it wants to acquire a private company is first required to deposit the estimated cost with the Collector, and then sign the MOU with the Collector having stated in detail the purpose for which the land is required. Only thereafter can the Collector begin the process of the acquisition. But concerning the Tatas the land being acquired for them is paid for from the public exchequer. This amounts to illegal and unethical grant of favours to a private company, for which all the public servants concerned are liable to proceeded against in terms of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988.

Incidentally, this is the interpretation of the law as given by Debabrata Bandyopadhyay. A former IAS officer, Bandyopadhyay happened to be the Director of Land Records and Services, who is the actual architect of land reforms in West Bengal.

**(The Writer is renowned educationist)
(Courtesy : *Bartaman*, 6-11-2006)**

"To conquer we have to dare, dare again, always to dare!"

Danton.

Industrialisation, And the Crisis of Leftism

Ratan Khasnabis

The method adopted by the Left Front Government for acquisition of land for industrialisation has raised a lot of questions even among its supporters. The extent of land required for setting up new industries in the next couple of years will be very large, according to official announcements. The immediate requirement is 9980 acres and all of it will be in South Bengal. At Singur 1000 acres will be needed, at Uluberia 2000 acres, at Sankrail 1100 acres, at Kharagpur 1200 acres, and at Haldia-Nandigram 2500 acres. There is a proposal to acquire 3000 acres of land at Kulpi for setting up a port and an industrial complex. At Rajarhat-Bhangar the requirement is 850 acres. For building the Barasat-Kulpi expressway, another 600 acres will be acquired in North and South 24 Parganas. The need to acquire these lands was felt even before it became evident that vast tracts of land will be required for the proposed Export Processing Zone (EPZ). The question agitating the public mind is : how far these projects will benefit West Bengal.

The question is quite reasonable. Already, 26,000 families have been displaced for setting up the Rajarhat township. Another 15,000 families lost their land and livelihood when the Bantala Leather Complex was set up. How many more thousands will be evicted by the new wave of acquisitions can only be guessed. But one hears that for the proposed township at Bhangar and the Kulpi-Barasat Expressways, About 82 thousand families will be affected in North 24 Parganas alone. There is a growing fear that a heavy price will have to be paid for industrialization at Singur or Uluberia, Nandigram or Sankrail – in terms of human suffering.

The senseless public posturing of the CPI(M) leaders has only heightened the fear. They have said different things at different times about what type of agreements they have signed with which industrial houses and on what terms. It is not yet clear why the Tatas must be allowed to set up their factory at Singur and Singur alone. The people still do not know why the proposed car factory cannot be set up at the practically unused Dankuni Industrial Estate, or on the Abandoned Land at Kalyani industrial complex or the large low-lying areas adjacent to it. All these sites are quite close to national highways, railways, an airport and the Kolkata metropolis. Why these areas cannot be considered and why only the two-or three crop lands at Singur must be acquired for the car factory, is not clear.

And precisely because it is not clear that the belief is growing that this mindless government had not at all thought about possible sites other than Singur. The same mindlessness is evident in the case of investment by the Salim group. This group is in the promoting business. It has little interest or experience in setting up manufacturing industries. The land the Salims will get will be used for setting up townships, health-care villages and logistic bases (that is, godowns for storing materials for house and road building). Before getting over-enthusiastic about the Salims and their investment, one should have thought whether it was at all necessary to involve them in such a project. They are supposed to build townships and roads also. Did the State Government do any home work to assess the Salim Group's experience or decide what type of industrial infrastructure will be built for what type of industries in the industrial township they will build? Nobody knows. It is doubtful if the party leaders themselves know it, because in their speeches and writings one does not come across any relevant facts or data. One only comes to know that “they” (the critics) do not want industrialisation.

It is the practice in civilized society that when you acquire land, you pay compensation to the affected families and arrange for their rehabilitation. But what the Left Front is doing in this regard is enough to make the Leftists hang their heads in shame. It is the State version of a British Act of 1894 that fixes the quantum of compensation. And that Act is almost a photocopy of an earlier law enacted in 1858 to enable acquisition of land for building railways. The concept of “justice” prevailing in the middle of the nineteenth century has been incorporated almost as it is in the State Government's law. It cannot be argued that the State Government cannot pass a “humane” law because of constitutional limitations. Under the Constitution, the State Government is fully empowered to enact legislation for acquisition of land and payment of compensation.

When the question of protection of livelihood has come along with determining the quantum of compensation, the Left leaders have shown shameful stupidity. One heard them make such comments as: “They will work as domestic servants in the townships”, “Keeping money in banks is more profitable than

agriculture”, “these lands have already passed into the hands of the promoters”, etc. One look in vain in the demeanour and deportment of the Left leaders of any sign of recognition of the fact that these very people have been so liberal in their electoral support to the Left Front and it is they who carry their flag. It was unthinkable even in a bad dream that Left leaders could resort to the type of police terror that Singur has witnessed, or try to block all democratic ways of expressing protest. The Left leaders seem to have totally forgotten that something more could have been done to the evictees other than thrusting compensatory cheque in their unwilling hands.

The money required for issuing the cheques, it is learnt, is Rs. 140 crore. Yes, one can only say “it is learnt” because the legal right to information notwithstanding, nobody has been able to see the text of the Tata-West Bengal Government agreement. The money has been given to the West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation and it has come as a bank loan. What ever its source, no one knows what will be the eventual return to the State exchequer after spending this money. Will the Tatas buy the land (a little less than 1000 acres) directly? Perhaps not. If they do, what price will they pay? We do not know because the relevant paper have been kept secret. If the same policy is followed as in other States, the acquired land will be given to the Tatas on lease. What will be the terms of the lease? Perhaps a small initial payment by the Tatas and easy annual instalments after that for retaining the lease. If that happens then the State exchequer will never get back the Rs. 140 crores paid for land transfer. The tatas will be the net gainers. In the same way, land will be gifted almost free for the proposed river port at Kulpi or the chemical complex at Nandigram.

There is no doubt that the State Government is going through a critical period. Under the impact of globalization, the traditional industries of West Bengal are gradually falling behind and closing down. The State Government does not have the wherewithal to bring in new technology to revive them. There is a huge army of unemployed and in the last fifteen years the number of agricultural labourers, who do not get employment for the whole year, has increased by three millions. Many people are migrating to other States in search of jobs. We look down upon the domestic servant's job. But many Bengalis are crowding in cities like Delhi and Mumbai for such jobs. When we say that what is going on in the IT industry in Sector V of Salt Lake is nothing but a slave system, we forget that for doing the same job, our young men and women are rushing to Bangalore.

The situation has been further aggravated by an unhealthy competition between the States. There is no central control on industrialisation. We do not want the licence *raj* any more. Site selection for industries has been left to the market force. Industries will come up in those States where the need for capital investment is relatively small and infrastructural facilities are comparatively cheap. The State Governments are trying to lure the industrialists into their respective States. They are willing to offer, if necessary, attractive incentives like free land, cheap electricity, waving of sales tax (VAT), etc. If the Left Front decides against giving concessions to the Tatas, the latter will go to Uttarakhand to set up their car factory. If Jharkhand does not permit export of iron ore to other States, then the steel industry will have to come to Jharkhand, it will not come to West Bengal.

These realities have certainly to be kept in mind and it will be irresponsible to argue that the Left Front Government should take leave of their responsibility of governance and wage a battle for maintaining the purity of Leftism. The people did not vote for them for this. The Left will have to search for the best options in these circumstances. We are afraid, the ruling Left Front has lost both the courage and the urge to make this endeavour.

If land has to be given in this manner, then there should be a search for finding alternative sites which, unlike Singur, does not grow two to three crops or is served by canal irrigation. We believe that before starting their negotiations with the Tatas, the Left leaders did not even try to do the homework for such a search. The bosses at the Writers' Buildings do not have the necessary data about the availability of land, type of land and the pattern of land use. For collecting such data, no “McInsey” is needed. In Kerala before the People's plan was launched, the Panchayets had prepared reports on their local assets. In West Bengal, too, the Left-controlled Panchayats could have been asked to prepare such a report which could have helped the drawing up of a plan for proper land use. This would have enabled the State Government to derive the maximum advantage while negotiating with industrialists intending to come to this State. Our Chief Minister claims to have done it. However, enquiries reveal that the concerned departments are not aware of any such thing being done.

So long, the Left Front leaders had one source of strength: they used to explain to the people what their limitations were. And the people had no difficulty in understanding them. This transparency in running

the administration is a sign not of their weakness but of their strength. But their unwillingness now to take the people into confidence as to what exactly the Tata deal is all about, or what conditions the Government is being forced to accept in the present circumstances, their reluctance to disclose all these details, seem to indicate that they are forgetting the source of their strength. They are not showing even a fraction of their enthusiasm for verbal duels with the Trinamul Congress for preparing a blue-print for industrialization. They are overly concerned with this or that promoter's scheme for a new township. They are over-zealous in using the police to beat up the peasants of Singur. But they seem to have lost their natural instinct to think what they should do for the people.

Some intellectuals may feel proud of their punditry, saying "this is the inevitable consequence of revisionism." I humbly tell them, this is not something to be happy about. If leftism retreats in West Bengal, it will have a very painful impact in the rest of India. People will assume that the path of development being dictated by Washington is the path for India to take. If that happens, then all the scholastic pronouncements against revisionism will become socially irrelevant. Those who think this view is not correct, rather the battle against revisionism will strengthen the "real" Left movement, need to be reminded that the space being vacated by the retreat of Leftism is not being filled by the "armed revolutionaries". This space is becoming the grazing ground of such NGOs as believe that Marxism – the "revisionism" of which is a matter of concern for our intellectual friends – is an 'ism' already rendered obsolete by history.

(The Writer is an eminent economist)
(Courtesy : Ekok Matra, 7th year, 3rd issue, Nov. 2006)
(Translated by Barun Dasgupta)

*"Men make their own history,
but they do not make it just
as they pleased, they do not make
it under circumstances chosen
by themselves; but under circumstances
directly encountered, given and
transmitted from the past."*

Karl Marx

Doing away with peasantry

Derek O'Brien

The Trinamul Congress's objections to the setting up of the Tata Motors plant at Singur is not against reforms. It is against the Left Front's policy of giving the farmer in West Bengal the short shrift.

ONE of the attributes of the Left Front government in West Bengal has been its remarkable almost creditable, ability to project its so-called achievements outside the state. Its opponents are traduced, vilified and demonised, painted as na'ive or anti-development or anti-progressive – whatever those terms may mean to Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya.

In the past few weeks, a similar propaganda campaign has unfolded. It has painted the CPI(M)-led government as the champion of economic resurgence and the Trinamul Congress as a Luddite. The nub of controversy is, of course, the 997 acres of fertile farmland in Singur, 45 km from Kolkata, which the government has requisitioned for the proposed Tata Motors plant.

It is necessary to set the record straight. To understand why Mamata Banerjee of the Trinamul Congress – a party that represents about 30 per cent of the popular vote in West Bengal – has, since June 2006, consistently and determinedly opposed the modalities of finding land for the Tata project, it is important to debunk old Communist myths.

In various forums, including at a presentation made by the Trinamool Congress before the Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Banerjee has made it clear she is not opposed to economic reforms, to industrialisation or, indeed, to the Tata project. She has only sought reforms with a 'human face'. Rebuffed by a cussed Chief Minister, she has been forced to resort to a hunger strike.

There are many issues Bhattacharya and his government have to clarify. First, in a state where 1.8 million acres of non-agricultural land is available, why is there a pressing need to allocate a prime agricultural tract for an industrial unit? The government is taking the easy route. It is not bothering to develop the infrastructure support that the 1.8 million acres will need, but is simply grabbing multi-crop farmland right on the national highway.

"Property is theft," the French philosopher Proudhon famously remarked. This is being ratified in Buddha-babu's Bengal. Forty per cent of the Singur land has been requisitioned by coercion. Affidavits from the landowners are available. The area is teeming with outsiders, policemen brought in by the government and hundreds of private security guards hired by the West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation. Instances of police violence on villagers have been documented by the media. The 'outsider' guards are prime suspects in the molestation and murder of a young woman who, as it happened, was among the Trinamool protesters.

Even if one accepts the argument that agriculture must inevitably give way to industry, is this the way to 'persuade' and 'convince' people? Only the CPI(M) knows the answer.

Second, Singur is a symptom of the tension between West Bengal's farmers and their government. The cause is larger. It is rooted in the state's agricultural crisis. A quarter century ago, the Left front's 'land reforms' made landowners of sharecroppers. This class became the new landlords. It will make money when the state acquires farmland for industry; the rest will not. In Singur, 60 per cent of the farmers are share-croppers or landless labourers. They are not seeing dollar signs in their eyes.

Recently, mango growers in Malda have dumped excess fruit, tomato farmers in Cooch Behar have thrown their produce on the highway, protesting against low prices; potato farmers in Hooghly have committed suicide, and a failed sunflower cash crop experiment has driven Nadia farmers to despair. These are only samples of stories that have gone unreported by the national media that believe farmer suicides happen only in Vidarbha. What has been the Left Front's response? Studied inaction. In the past 10 years, the government has turned over half a million acres of farmland to industry. Reined in by ideological faddists, it has gone slow on introducing biotechnology and such interventions to energise agriculture. Its record of fostering agro-based industry or food processing has been very patchy, and usually limited to CPI(M) bastions such as Arambagh. No wonder the farmer is feeling cheated.

Third, if agriculture is so penurious and precarious, why is such a large proportion of West Bengal's workforce still dependent on it? The answer is simple; the government has killed off the options. It is ironic that the Left is talking of reviving industry after having first destroyed it.

In the Sixties, manufacturing units in West Bengal contributed 21 per cent of the national income; in

2005 it was 4 per cent. Forty-seven percent of India's sick small-scale units are in West Bengal. It has more educated unemployed people than any other state. In the past 20 years, the number of big industrial investments worth over Rs 100 crore has averaged one per year. Just where are the jobs? Bengal was an early industrialiser in the 20th Century and could have pioneered the post-industrial economy. A state that should have been a service sector/ITES natural was held back by the Left's bad policies. On coming to power, the CPI(M) abolished the teaching of English in primary schools. This rendered two generations of Bengalis unfit for BPO jobs. This also explains why, as her father's farm is occupied by the government, the Singur farmer's daughter cannot aspire to work at the impressive Wipro facility barely an hour away in Kolkata. Her government has not allowed her to.

Certainly, West Bengal needs the Tata Motors project. Yet, the cars don't need to be made, and company executives don't need to be housed, precisely on the 997 acres of fertile land. At least some of it can be spared, perhaps swapped for less valuable land across the highway?

More important, rather than abide by crony capitalism (some years ago, it gave away 227 acres of wetlands in eastern Kolkata for a so-called 'world Trade Centre') the Left Front has to respond to the Trinamool demand for LAMP; a land Acquisition and Management Plan. Once and for all, the government has to set norms and parameters for land takeover and use-change. Let there be no more ad hocism. And no more Singurs.

**(The Writer is a renowned media personality & member, Trinamul Congress Working Committee)
(Collected from *Times of India*)**

*Take it, it's nothing more than my heart,
hold it in your hand.
So that when the day has come
You'll open up your hand
that the sun may bring warmth to it.*

Ernesto Che Guevara

STRUGGLE

'We will give blood, not our land'

Sumit Chowdhury

*Hei samalo, hei samalo
Hei samalo dhan ho
Kasteta dao shan ho
Man kobul or jan kobul
Aar debo no, aar debo na
Rokte bona dhan
Moder pran ho!*

Hei watch over, hei watch over
Hei watch over the paddy ho
Hone your sickle ho
Life and honour, we pledge
No more we'll give, no more
The paddy sown with our blood
Our life ho!

Salil Chowdhury's immortal song on the Tebhaga movement is echoing in the lush paddy fields of Singur. Almost every farmer family in Singur is saying, 'We'll give blood but not our land.' The land that gives them the golden harvest is their mother. And, to take away the honour of their mother comes, riding the juggernaut of 'industrialisation,' the same government that has declared 'agriculture is our foundation.' But mother's honour cannot be compromised, 'No way will we give up our land,' Singur is saying.

The Singur saga began in May, during the elections to the state Assembly. Many of us remember seeing on television, the Chief Minister, having won a whopping majority of seats, addressing the press at the party headquarters. An official hands him a piece of paper, glancing through which the Chief Minister's eyes brighten up. With a big smile on his face, he says he won't tell but eventually lets the cat out of the bag – Ratan Tata has expressed through a letter that the Tatas are interested in setting up a factory in West Bengal producing a cheap automobile.

The very next day, a representative of the Tata empire comes down to hold an extended meeting at the writers' Buildings. A few days later, the emperor himself turns up. A deal is struck – no one knows what transpired – and as their factory site, the Tatas opt for a tract of land in Hooghly district, alongside the spanking new Durgapur Expressway and near Kolkata. This site is Singur.

The Tatas asked for 1000 acres. Desperate to bring in investments in West Bengal, the state Government accepted their demand without blinking or taking a good look at the proposal. Subsequently, The Government, not even bothering to consult the local bodies, became hyperactive in acquiring the land. Apprehensive of losing their sole safeguard to life, the farmers spontaneously got together to launch a resistance movement under the banner of 'Krishijami Raksha Samiti' (Association for the Protection of Agricultural Land).

From the very beginning, the farmers' wives and daughters have been in the forefront of the movement. With 'Life and honour pledged,' they began to 'Hone the sickle.' The state government, hardly bothered about the plight of the farmers, remained stubborn, repeatedly reiterating that the Tata factory would come up on that piece of land. Thus, began the conflict between the farmers and the government. Singur became the name of a new peasant struggle, a name that has created ripples in the stagnant political waters of West Bengal.

A catastrophe for farmers

The five villages on whose farmland the Tata factory will be built are Gopalnagar, Beraberi, Bajemelia, Khaser Bheri and Singher Bheri. These are typical Bengal villages, tranquil, charming and green. The residents are mostly farmers, yet a touch of the urban breeze is palpable. Most of the houses, lining the winding, unpaved village road, are *pucca*, every home has electricity and television, quite a few of the village youth ride motorbikes, the children go to school and some have achieved higher education.

Singur's cultivated plots are small and fragmented. Only a handful has land above one or two *bighas*. Those owning bigger plots are mostly absentee, living in Kolkata, Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. Those who stay in the villages cultivate their own land, producing bumper crops. In general, those with less than five *bighas* are considered poor, subsistence farmers but Singur's farmers, despite having tiny plots, are not too badly off.

The major reason for this is that Singur's land, coated with silt from the Hooghly and Damodar rivers and their tributaries, is extremely fertile. To say that it is single-crop is to blatantly distort the truth. What doesn't grow here – paddy, jute, potato, cauliflower, pumpkin, brinjal, cucumber, so many types of green vegetables! About six to 12 crops grow on Singur's highly productive fields. Paddy and potatoes grown here are the finest. There are five cold storages, five deep and 27 mini tubewells in the locality, a clear indication that the land is well irrigated. No wonder, the areas of darkness, like Amlasole and Belpahari, where starvation deaths are common, have been far from casting their long shadows over the villagers of Singur.

It is around land that Singur's economy revolves. Not only the landowners, a sizeable population of *bargadars*, wage-labourers and sharecroppers – mostly belonging to the lower castes or the *adivasi* community – depend on the land for their livelihood. Besides, there is the migrant agricultural work force coming from Burdwan and other parts of Hooghly districts during the peak harvest period. There are also land-related occupations that help feed several families. For instance, the cycle-cart (called 'van') driver who carries the land's produce to the cold storage or the wholesaler, the vendor who sells rice or vegetables in the market, the supplier dealing with seeds and fertilisers, the carpenter and the blacksmith who make or repair farming tools, so on. On any given day, about a thousand people detrain at Kamarkundu junction to work in Singur on jobs directly or indirectly related to farming. The markets at Beraberi and Bajemelia thrive almost entirely on Singur's farming community.

Land is so vital for Singur's residents that if it goes, their survival will be at stake. So, when the government is taking over their land, they are putting up a stiff resistance. They will give their lives but will not give up land. No matter what the government claims and the media propagates, records show that less than 27 percent of the 11,000-odd landowners have till date voluntarily given up their land. Those who have acquiesced are either absentees or have done so out of fear or coercion.

Meanwhile, the Land and Land Revenue Department, invoking the colonial Land Acquisition Act of 1894 (suitably amended in 1984), have taken over 997 acres required for the Tata factory. This land has been declared as *Khas* (vested) and is being sold to the West Bengal Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation for handing over to the newly-formed company, Tata Motors.

Under pressure, because of a massive public outcry, the government agreed to raise the compensation amount to 52 percent of the market price of land and, to persuade landowners to sell their land, announced special incentives to those who would do so on their own. Yet, the government continued, and is still continuing, to extend the deadline for voluntary handing over and receiving the compensation cheques, the latest being October 31. Clearly, not too many landowners are buying the Government's extravagant assurances that selling off the land will benefit the farmers.

The new God will deliver

Why have the Tatas plumed for this 4-12 crop land in Singur is not difficult to guess. Being near Kolkata and adjacent to the brand-new expressway can be alluring in terms of connectivity and communicability. Uncultivable or low-lying marshlands – such as the one available in Singur itself, on the other side of the highway – are not liked by one of India's largest capitalist enterprises because filling up such land will incur a huge expense. Having a sharp business sense, the industrial house is not willing to spend even a single paisa on developing land for industrial use. They are happy as long as mountains of profit accrue. If it means disaster for the farming community, so be it.

Whatever the trade-off between the Tatas and the Left Front Government in West Bengal, it is shrouded in secrecy, in spite of the RTI. Apparently, the smaller Front partners and even some of the cabinet ministers have been kept in the dark. A local television channel has revealed that a considerable Rs. 140 crores will go out of the state exchequer to buy the land and pay compensations while the Tatas will be gifted that land in lieu of a cheque for Rs. 20 crores, that too five years later. The industry house will be spared the ignominy of purchasing the stamp duty; and when the factory is under construction or in operation, it will be provided water free from the burden of taxation even as the power rates will be slashed to what the domestic consumer pays with great difficulty. Needless to add, like many other big real estate and industrial projects coming up in the state, no EIA has been carried out.

The government did not deny the surprise revelations on television. Instead, the minister of industries

promptly told the press that the deal referred to was for an earlier proposal and no firm pact had yet been made with the Tatas. The Chief Minister, however, contradicted him soon after, informing that a package deal had been struck. The question is, if there is no agreement as yet, where was the need to acquire land at such breakneck speed? What if the Tatas back out now for some reason?

Later, the minister of industries declared that the arrangement with the Tatas could not be made public as it was a 'trade secret.' The Chief Minister also made it clear that he would reveal only what he felt could be revealed. So much for the right to information and transparency in governance!

The Government and the party running the Government for 30 years are promising the heaven in defence of the Tatas. They are comforting their vote-bank, and their doubting cadres, saying that the 'automobile hub' growing around the Tata factory will work as a miracle to turn-around the decadent state of the state's economy. History, of course, tells a different story. The Tatas are coming here to do business, not for the well being of the people of West Bengal. Orissa and Jharkhand, where the Tatas have invested in steel plants, mines, aquaculture and an assortment of projects in the past seven decades, are the poorest states in the country. Industrial and other ventures by the Tatas have not changed the lives of the ordinary folk in these places. On the contrary, a terrible curse had befallen on the forest-dwelling and pastoral communities wherever the Tatas went. It may be recalled that the Kalinganagar incident earlier this year, in which 12 *adivasi* men, women and children lost their lives in police firing, took place when the farmers displaced by the Tata steel-plant project were agitating against the non-payment of compensation.

The argument put forward by the minister of industries that the Tata motorcar factory will create vast employment opportunities is unadulterated nonsense. The market targeted for the small car to be produced here is the two-wheeler owners who dream of a car and, to make it easy on their pocket, the car's market price has been fixed at Rs. 1 lakh. To produce a car at such a discounted price, and keep a good enough margin for the company, a large workforce cannot be employed. In keeping with the globalising times, the technology, too, will be state-of-the-art, surely not labour-intensive. At most, a few hundred jobs will result and those recruited will be from the hallowed precincts of the IITs and the IIMs.

The honourable minister has argued that even if there is no direct employment in Tata Motors, the ancillaries will open up the floodgates. He, of course, is not suggesting how many such ancillaries will come up and how much employment generated by these. It is only a speculative presumption not based on any rigorous calculation. Whether the hundreds of small, supporting units will also be technology-dependent and how much agricultural land these occupy is yet a guessing game.

If at all an industrial paradise does descend on Singur will the farmers have the requisite skill to work in a sophisticated factory? Facing such tricky question, the government announced the launching of two industrial training centres to train the local youth. It could not, however, give any assurance that those receiving training at these centres will get jobs either with Tata Motors or the ancillaries. In fact, the Tatas were categorical that no such jobs can be guaranteed.

The Tatas' demand for 1000 acres for their car factory puts a question mark on their intentions. To set the doubts at rest, the minister of industries recently cited the example of the Honda automobile production unit in Gurgaon. He told the press that the Gurgaon plant has come up on 1250 acres of land and produces three-lakh cars per year. A visit to the Honda website discloses another set of facts – the unit has come up on 250 acres and produces six-lakh cars annually. Yes, the Minister is an honourable man!

The legal provision being used by the government for acquiring the 1000 acres states clearly that land can be acquired with due compensations for 'public purpose.' So, when, in this case, land is being acquired for a corporate establishment for purely commercial purpose, will it be wrong to assume that the government is acting illegally? But then legality and ethics are not exactly the government's forte when it comes to appeasing the industrialists.

The manner in which the decision to acquire the land was taken ears out an authoritarian, top-down streak in the government's functioning. None of the democratically elected local bodies – the *zilla parishad*, the *panchayat*, the *gram sabha* – were consulted or taken into confidence. The party, too, sent out orders from its central office and the issue was not discussed with the grassroot workers. Clearly, 'decentralisation,' 'participatory democracy' or 'democratic centralism' are mere catchwords.

In the wake of rising public opinion against the displacement of farmers from their land, both Tata Motors and the government, backed by party luminaries, went into a public relations exercise. Both, citing the examples of its Pune automobile hub and the Jamshedpur steel town, harked back to the Tatas' noble tradition of 'social welfare and community development.' Reality check, however, may not corroborate. Any sensitive soul visiting Tatanagar may well perceive that the beneficiaries of 'social welfare and community development' have been the Tata managerial class living in luxuriant style whereas the original inhabitants

have not even received the crumbs but pushed to the margins. Well, the Tatas deservedly have the right to blow their own trumpet because it is their business to blow their own trumpet but how could a Left Government and the Left leaders go into raptures over the big, bad capitalist who till the other day was their sworn enemy? Expediency does make strange bedfellows.

Since announcing its New Industrial Policy in 1994, The *Sangramer Hatiyar* (Weapon of struggle) government in West Bengal, backed by the party in power, has been treading the neo-liberal path with great gusto. As the Left leaders elsewhere in the country were fuming against the globalising policies of successive central governments, their counterparts in the state, with full blessings of these same central leaders, were increasingly taking a pro-globalisation, pro-capitalist stance, albeit in a guarded manner. With the installation of the incumbent Chief Minister on the throne, fawning on the capitalists has become rather a habit. The leaders of the main Left party now daily rub shoulders with the captains of the corporate world, ideals and ideology, even the Left rhetoric, having been given the complete go by.

That these leaders are willing to go to any length to please the industrial tycoons becomes evident in the Singur issue. They are putting forward weird arguments, telling out-an'-out lies, issuing contradictory statements, being suspiciously secretive, carrying out a disinformation campaign and spreading canard, even using abusive language, about the resisting farmers. Tata is now their new God whose 'responsible business house' and 'social service' legacy the leaders of the main Left party cannot but get gaga over. Going by their recent statements, one may wonder if the Tatas' advertising agency's newest address is 33 Alimuddin Street. The editorial published in *Ganashakti* about the Tatas' acquisition of the multinational steel giant, Corus, reads more like a Tata publicity brochure. And this when their party in Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand and other states have vowed not to give an inch of farmland to the Tatas or any other industrial marauder. Having long abandoned even the rudimentary land reform that has been keeping them in power for so long, the leaders of the main Left party in the state have nothing more to offer to the people of West Bengal. And they are pinning all their hopes on the Tatas to deliver.

The night of the long sticks

The Singur farmers' stiff opposition to the Tata project has struck alarm bells. The Government's nervousness, its discomfort with the rising popular support for the movement is becoming more and more conspicuous. In the dead of night on 25-26 September, in a pre-planned move, it let loose a reign of terror on thousands of unarmed demonstrators at the BDO office in Singur town. It was the first day cheques were being handed over to those who had agreed to part with their lands and the demonstration against this had begun in the morning. By the afternoon, several cases were detected in which those who had already sold off their land to others, but the mutation process was not complete, were being given cheques denying the present legal owner. Protesting such illegal deeds by government officials, the demonstrators sat on a *dharna* at the BDO office, even gheraoing the District Magistrate for a brief period. The firebrand leader of the only opposition party in the state arrived with her troupe and she, too, joined the *dharna*. Soon after midnight, power was cut off and a huge police force, reportedly under the influence of alcohol, mercilessly thrashed men, women and children with lathis. The leader of the opposition party, also a Member of Parliament, was manhandled and, with her sari torn to shreds, packed off in a police car to Kolkata. She had to be admitted to a nursing home a couple of days later for severe pain in her chest caused by a 'blunt trauma' in the lungs.

Hundreds were severely injured in the police assault and 72 put behind bars. Women with children in their arms were arrested under the Arms Act and /or charged with murder. Payel Bag, a two-and-a-half-year-old, spent four days in prison, along with two other boys who are yet to reach their teens. 26-year-old Rajkumar Bhul became the first martyr of the Singur struggle after he collapsed with severe internal haemorrhage from police beating. Bhul's mother, in an open letter to the Chief Minister, has squarely blamed him for her son's death. Two other persons are said to be still on the missing list. On the first visit to Singur by this writer as part of a fact-finding team two days after the police action, and during subsequent trips, the hapless and angry women in the villages – some with broken arms, bandaged eyes and scars here and there – said that the policemen were drunk, cursed in the filthiest language, kicked and molested them.

The national General Secretary of the main Left party, who has never been to Singur, announced from the BTR Bhawan in New Delhi soon after the lathi-charge that Singur's land in one-crop, that the farmers there are queuing up to hand over land, that the demonstrators were anti – 'development' hoodlums. The same comrade General Secretary has written the introduction to a recent publication titled *The left and Environmentalism!*

The best actor award, however, goes to the Left Front Chairman. The language used by the once-upon-a-time student leader, now a member of the politburo, to insult and humiliate the land-losing farmers of Singur will make any civilised person hang his head in shame. In defending an indefensible act, the leaders of the 'party of the proletariat' have lost all sense of proportion and self-respect.

The Chief Minister and the other stalwarts of his party were in the country's capital on the night of the carnage, apparently to attend a high-profile party meeting. Sceptics, however, see it as an attempt to establish an alibi. On earlier occasions, whenever there has been brutal police action on democratic movements, as in 1994 on the struggling workers of Kanoria Jute Mill, ministers and party leaders were en masse some place else. In any case, apart from the party get-together, the Chief Minister and his colleagues had a long session with the Tata top brass. At the end of the closed-door meeting, the Tatas announced a 'community development' package for the Singur farmers that contained a lot of promises and platitudes but not much substance. Sticks were delivered at Singur and carrots dangled from New Delhi – a brilliant strategy indeed!

Returning to Kolkata, the merciful Chief Minister acted Jesus Christ – 'Forgive them; they do not know what they are doing.' Two days later, bowing to the pressures of public opinion, he admitted that sending the police there was 'unwarranted,' as if he didn't know. Then, after all the acts of the play have been played out, he summoned an all-party meeting – what was he doing all these days, partying with the industrialists? For nearly five months, the farmers in Singur, who would lose their land, have been agitating but the government never thought it appropriate to hold talks with them. Sitting on brute majority, it was trying to find a way out through political jugglery.

The opposition party didn't come to the all-party jamboree, the other parties did. These and all other Left Front partners lodged their strong protest against the police action and the handing over of farmland to industries. Yet, at the end of the meeting, the government announced that the Tata Motors factory would come up on Singur at any cost.

The opposition parties and the Naxalite groups called for a 12 hours statewide *bandh* on October 9 to protest the police atrocities. As it usually happens with *bandhs*, it was more or less total and passed off peacefully except for stray incidents. But, this *bandh*, it had appeared to this writer from conversations with ordinary people, was spontaneous. The party in government, rather stupidly, threatened to unleash its cadres on the streets to foil the strike, making people even more stay indoors, fearing violence. The fact that there were hardly any skirmishes between pro-*bandh* and anti-*bandh* supporters meant that cadres also took it as a paid holiday. Evidently, they could not be motivated.

The *bandh*, nevertheless, failed to rid the government of its obduracy. It has now taken the 'terror' path to intimidate the protesting farmers. Contingents of rifle-carrying policemen have been posted in every nook and corner of the otherwise quiet and peaceful village. During this writer's interactions with the Singur villagers, a number of women complained about how the police were daily harassing them and how their movements out of their homes are being restricted after sundown. Any outsider dropping in are 'suspected of being Maoists' and are interrogated – the fact-finding team, of which this writer was part of, was intercepted and questioned by the OC, Singur *thana*, himself. The police are occupying the tea-stalls in the markets where now no one dares to visit, resulting in loss of business for the poor tea-stall owners. They are also camping in the school building which they have turned into a drinking den. The government, surely, is ushering in 'development' with an iron hand.

Threats are being issued from the corridors of authority as well. When the police action failed to dampen the fighting spirit of the farmers, the honourable minister of industries warned that he would suspend all developmental work in Singur if the Tata factory was not allowed to be set up there. The message is unmistakable : Give up your land, or else you will not be treated as citizens of West Bengal.

The minister's words have been taken literally by some unidentified miscreants. In the last couple of weeks, two of the five deep tubewells, providing irrigation water to the controversial land, were vandalised one after the other in the dark of the night. The pumps had been there since before the Left Front came into power and the villages are usually free from theft or robbery. Also, mind you, a strong police force was patrolling the villages. The villagers, angry as hell, cannot be faulted if they believe that the wreckage was the handiwork of goons hired by the party in power and the intention was to deny water to the ripening crops in the field. The *panchayat pradhan*, a big landowner and an influential party leader of the area, passed the incidents off as the work of those opposing the land acquisition in an effort to blemish his party. He, of course, did not explain how the farmers could do something that would destroy their own crop. Sanity in the line of reasoning seems to have melted into thin air in a resurgent West Bengal.

The struggle continues

The Singur struggle is a do-or-die resistance movement by the farmers against attempts by monopoly industrial capitalism to establish its hegemony. Everyone in the villages have come together to fight the looming threat to their lives and livelihoods. Women and the youth are the life force of the movement – *mahila samitis* and youth committees were formed in the very first days. The men, even though they have grown up in the patriarchal rural world, have wisely left the front lines to the womenfolk. The entire family is participant in the struggle, including the elderly and the children. For, it's struggle for survival.

The landless *bargadars*, registered or not, and the poor, marginalised farmers with negligible land are playing the lead role in the Singur resistance. It was this section that took the initiative in forming the 'Krishijami Raksha Samiti' and has been the vanguard of almost all the protest actions. Now, they have been joined by the seasonal, migrant labourers. After all, a struggle for survival is a struggle of the poorest.

The resistance movement has been completely peaceful till now. Meetings, *michhil* (rally), *bikhhobh* (demonstration), *Arandhan* (no cooking), *Nishpradip* (no lights), *rasta abarodh* (road blockade), *bandh* (strike), so on have taken place without a whiff of violence. Yet, the movement is not passive or listless; there have been enough pointers that it has vigour, vitality and determination. The way the farmers chased away the Tata officials, the women with brooms in hands blocked the government officials' entry into the villages and the villagers, over looking the watchful eyes of party-crazy, showed black flags to the Land and Land Revenue Minister holds out the promise that the movement can rise above the habitual and, if need be, turn more militant.

Singur, it may be recalled, was a major arena of the Tebhaga movement. The British masters and their government of the *zamindars* unleashed the police and the army on the peasantry to suppress their struggle but the peasants of Singur did not yield and refused to part with their share of the harvest. There is a tiny hamlet in the vicinity called Chhoto Kamlapur where the movement had a strong base, *Chhoto Bakulpurer Jatri*, Manik Bandyopadhyay's short fiction set against the backdrop of Tebhaga, was inspired by the spirited struggle of the peasants of this village. After six decades, the same spirit appears to have been revived in Singur.

It is amazing how a battle for survival opens up the creative energies of ordinary people whose abundant talents could not have otherwise seen the light of day. This writer was particularly impressed by the powerful poetry that has been penned by an elderly peasant woman regarding the movement. Songs parodying popular Hindi and Bengali tunes by another elderly housewife – the Chief Minister, the government and the Tatas were the butt of the jokes – were remarkable for their sense of satire. A people's movement is not only about protest actions, it is also an expression of people's dreams and imaginations.

Only a cynic will have misgivings that the Singur movement is a genuine people's movement. Nothing like this has been seen in West Bengal since the much-celebrated workers' movement at Kanoria Jute Mill in the mid 90s. In the case of Kanoria, the battle lines were drawn between the mill-owner and the workers, with the government tacitly supporting the former. In Singur's case, the farmers are directly confronting the state. Kanoria was essentially a conflict of class interests that held out a cultural dimension. Singur, on the other hand, is not much of a class struggle but a struggle for survival consequent of Government policy. It, therefore, has a greater political content than Kanoria.

All the opposition political formations in the state, including the various Naxalite factions, have joined hands to extend their support to the farmers' struggle. The smaller Left Front partners, too, are not happy with the government's land-grabbing for industrial houses. Bickering between the big brother and the smaller stakeholders in cabinet and Front meetings have become the norm of the day. For the first time in three decades, the opposition is uniting while cracks are showing in the Left Front.

The two main opposition parties, one still aligned with the NDA and the other leading the UPA government at the centre, are in no position to take the Singur movement to its logical end. The coalitions these parties are part of are the very perpetrators of the globalisation onslaught that is at the root of robbing the farmers of their farmlands in the name of 'development.' How can these parties be sincere about the farmers' struggle to save their land? how can they wholeheartedly oppose the policies they themselves are pursuing in the states they are ruling in? It is no surprise, therefore, that these parties are vying with each other to assure the Tatas that they don't want them out of West Bengal.

Some have even gone to the extent of locating the site for the Tata factory in the vest wastelands of Purulia, Bankura and West Medinipur. They are also suggesting that huge tracts of land are locked up in the innumerable closed factories where the motorcar-making plant can be located. Regrettably, quite a few well-meaning groups and individuals supporting the Singur farmers are voicing a similar argument. The questions that these may consider raising instead are why such enormous amount of land lie fallow even

after 30 years of Left Front and why so many thousands of factories are closed or closing down. In the case of the former, the land should be made cultivable and distributed among the ever-growing number of landless *bargadars*; in the case of the latter, the factories should be reopened and all the workers who lost their jobs reinstated and paid their dues.

The mainstream opposition parties are trying to make political capital out of Singur. And the media is trying to create an impression that it is just a wrestling match between the party in government and the parties in opposition. Nothing can be further from the truth. The battle of Singur transcends narrow, electoral party politics. When confronted with the question of survival, the farmers couldn't be bothered about which party is with them and which party against. Herein lies the strength of the Singur movement.

Herein also lies the downside of the movement. No movement, however strong its democratic credentials, can endure on sheer spontaneity. To be meaningful, to carry it forward, a movement needs to be guided by an all-embracing ideological vision which, in the case of Singur, the rag-tag opposition parties are unable to provide. Besides, when the adversaries are India's biggest corporate house and a party, which in 30 years of its rule has spread its tentacles in all spheres of life, the fight can be taken on only with a rock-solid organisation. The fact is, none of the backers of the Singur movement have it.

Yet, all of West Bengal, particularly the entire farming community, is looking to Singur. In the coming months, nearly 60,000 acres of farmland will be acquired by the state government and handed over to national and multinational capitalist enterprises for setting up SEZs, townships, knowledge cities, health cities, retail outlets, shopping malls, expressways, so on. Approximately, two-thirds of these will go to the Salim group, the notorious Indonesian business house. None of the projects for which land will be taken are productive investments and their employment-generating potential is almost negligible. With loss of land and age-old occupation, thousands of farmers will be reduced to begging in the streets. If the Singur movement gains steam, the farmers elsewhere will be stirred into resisting the neo-liberal aggression. If Singur fizzles out, West Bengal's agriculture and the farming community will head for oblivion. In this sense, the Singur struggle is also crucial for the farmers' fury raging across the country.

The state government has announced that land will be handed over to Tata Motors at the soonest, if possible by October 31. But the farmers are not going to give in. The police assault on September 25-26 has only steeled their resolve to resist. They are now getting ready for the final battle to take on the might of the state. Whatever the outcome, Singur has already put its stamp on the history of people's resistance to neoliberal globalisation. And the history of peasant revolt in Bengal.

30 October, 2006

(The Writer is a documentary filmmaker and the editor of *Ekhon Sanghati*)

I impeach Warren Hastings in the name of the people of India, whose laws, rights and liberties he has subverted; whose properties he has destroyed; whose country he has laid waste and desolate.

I impeach him in the name, and by virtue, of those eternal laws of justice which he has violated.

I impeach him in the name of human nature itself, which he has cruelly outraged, injured and oppressed in both sexes, in every age, rank, situation and condition of life

Edmond Barke

Tata-Salim are now hybrid Communist leaders

Mamata Banerjee

A new game has started to pamper the farmers of Singur by some land share with the help of dark forces of repression. And the operator of this 'carrot and stick' policy is today's repressive left front Government. The way in which thousand of acres of land is being snatched away by a hybrid Communist Chief Minister with the help of administration and mafia is not only illegal but also a matter of shame. In the true democratic state such tyrannical rules are dismissed through democratic means. In a dictatorial state, repression is terrible and the dictators also get punished for their repression in a terrible way.

In today's Coalition politics of India, Governments do not act as a protector of Constitution, but they act on the basis of political colour of coalition partners. So while democracy is there in name, in most states particularly in 'Communist' ruled West Bengal, the State is being run in an authoritarian way. Otherwise how does the Chief Minister of the state dare tell the media in a casual way that he would not inform them about the secret pact between the state Government and Tatas. What does it mean? The way the state government is behaving like a tyrannical 'naked king' to fill the pocket of a particular industrialist depriving thousands of farmers puts us all to shame. Where is the law and where is the constitution? Tata and Salim are the Constitution. They are the leaders of the hybrid Communists. They are the saviours of CPI(M).

An ordinary industrialist, or an agriculturist or a shopkeeper or an ordinary man has to buy land at market rate, paying tax to the Government. But the great Government will collect tax from the people and will give it to the great Tatas on the plea of tax exemption. What law is this? What justice is this? Oh Hon'ble C.M. Oh Left Front leaders, now will the bones of dead people be collected in Tata's palace All the shelter will be taken away from common men and given to Tatas. This is a shameless permanent settlement. Is this a project to sell out Bengal? Is it to sacrifice all interests of the motherland? Is it the advent of a new East India Company? Why are those, who did not have enough to eat once, who had showed farmers a new hope through the Tebhaga movement silent today? Is it that greed is being used by Tata and Salim to cover your body and mind?

Agricultured land in Singur and elsewhere cannot be taken away by force. If you put your hand in the fire, it will get burnt. The call will now come for saving your motherland. Either we shall live or die. But we shall not live bowing our head before injustice, wrong and oppresion. The Government will live if people survive. If people do not survive nobody will be able to save the Government. Let people's struggle start. Let the struggle start from the soil of Singur. Take a fistful of soil and wake up to save the motherland.

This is a struggle to save life and livelihood. This is a fight for survival. This is a struggle for the defence of your rights. Long live Bengal.

(Translated by Saugata Roy, M.L.A.)

Man is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance and an ability to stand for a cause if necessary even going out of the way.

William Falkner

Trinamul-Charter of Demands

Why the non-co-operation movements!

By and large the peoples rights are being trampled down in West Bengal under the regime of Left Front Govt. Loss of dignity and lack of courtesy are commonly faced by all organisations-irrespective of political affiliation. It's an open game of oppressions by the joint venture of CPM and administration. The voice of justice silently sheds tears. As such the common people are well within their rights to non-co-operate with the Govt. – when the Govt. is in a role of confrontation all the time in every walk. That is why in keeping with the ideals of non-co-operation movement of Gandhiji–the state TMC (Trinamul Congress) are issuing the First List of Charge Sheet to the State Govt. through the People before waging a battle of full-fledged non-co-operation.

It's being observed since last few years that the Left Front Govt. after coming to power by hook or by crook unilaterally promotes the interests of the capitals and capitalists ignoring the overall interests of the common people, their lives and livelihood-thereby turning themselves into unethical promoters mainly. By looting the fertile agro-lands, by allowing the expired, adulterated blood kits to market, by squandering away the public funds, by encouraging corruption–the Govt. is unilaterally snatching away the living rights of the common people by not caring a hang for the democratic norms or the constitution. Peoples' tax money are being misutilised for the wrong propaganda works of the party as well as the Govt. The resultant net out come being that the industry, agriculture, employment or rights – all suffer with the suffering of the people. The Police oppressions on the peaceful democratic movements are over shadowing the same of British rule. TMC under these conditions are committed to fight for the protection of Peoples rights as well as the dignity of the mother land and accordingly issues warning and caution to the state Govt. here. The failure of proper response on their part will lead to a non stop democratic movement by TMC and th LF Govt. will be solely responsible for the repercussions what-so-ever.

Facts and Figures on the conditions of the People of West Bengal

- The highest indebted state of India. 48% of the state revenue is spent to pay off interests only. The debt in 1977 was 1200 Cr. today it is 1 lakh 37000 cr. Rupees and is in an acute debt-trap.
- As per the Govt. information more than 10% of our villages, 4612 to be specific are in extreme poverty.
- 31.22% of our villagers are in extreme poverty – whereas the national figure is 27.09%, in Punjab its 6.35%, in Haryana it is 8.27%, in Andhra Pradesh its 11.50%.
- W.B. is 12th among the 15 Big States of the country Index wise WB is 33% as against 81% of Punjab, 72% of Haryana, 55% of Maharashtra and 54% of Tamilnadu.
- During LF rule a total of 1999 CAG audit para still remains without proper reply. This is in addition to the misuse of thousands of Crores of rupees.
- Scams worth rupees thousands of crores include CTC, Bengal Lamp, Saltlake land scams, Wakf, Alipore Nazir, PL A/c. Mid-day meal, Track Permit fee, Export of Iron ores, KMDA scams, fraud on blood kits, saline bottles and series of land scams etc.
- A national survey reveals that 77% of the villagers are deprived from minimum 2400 cal. of food value. The per capita food intake is also reduced from 478 gm. to 418 gm.
- In respect of average food value for specially, the young, female & the children WB is one of the backward states (HDR, Page 125)
- Starvation in Jallangi, Amlashole has been established. The Chief Minister proudly admits there are other sholes as well. Starvation death and suicides amongst the workers of Tea Gardens and Jute Mills has crossed 1000 mark.
- 26% of the basic agro-lands are under Govt. irrigation as against 40% of the national figure. Misuse of ground water through shallow tube wells and arsenic pollution with it has given a new dimension to the problems of irrigation.
- Rising price of irrigation, fertilisers and pesticides are leading the agriculture to a non profitable proposition. During last 10 years agro-work has stopped in 5 lakh 83 thousand Acres of land.

- Today 57% of the farmers in the state are landless agro-workers. During LF regime 40 lakhs of people have become landless agroworkers – making the total tally to 74 lakhs.
- Of the 70 lakh tons of produced potatoes here only 42 lakhs are preserved in 348 cold storages. Fruits, flowers, Vegetables produced quantity is 1 Crore 80 lakh tons but the cold storages for preservation are only 33 with the capacity of 1 lakh ton only. Why the farmers are deprived of the market price?
- What is the quantity of Agro-lands in West Bengal? What was it above 10 years back? What is it at present?
- In the Govt. Agro-policy is there any specific plan for employment and compensation for the common men whose non-agro lands are acquired?
- W.B. has become a haven for the smuggling of arms and drugs and kidnapping of girls. As per a UNICEF report 5 lakhs of females have been kidnapped through W.B.!
- Criminal cases settled in W.B. is the lowest (22.6%) as against the national figure of 41.8%. Particularly justice for the Female Kidnapping and sex exploitation rates are lowest in India (HDR, 2004, Page 168). W.B. is as good as a desert in respect of the justice for the law and order for common men. Murders, lofts, Kidnapping, theft, Dacoitys are on the increase.
- W.B. is a front runner in the Country in respect of Jail and custody deaths which is 84 in number between 1999 and 2002.
- “The infrastructure for health service in W.B. lacks both quantitatively as well as qualitatively,” (HDR, 2004, Page 136) Hence the obvious question about the functioning of LF rule for 30 years arises.
- Please refer to HDR, 2004, P. 9 which points to the lagging behind of W.B. Whereas in many state 100% electrification have been achieved, here it is 33% as against the national average of 41%

Industrialisation – the realities

- 70 lakhs unemployed youth which is the 17% of India and the highest in the country. 34 lakhs literate unemployment also the highest; rural unemployment – 31.27 lakh again the highest. Rate of unemployment growth is 14.99% against the national figure of 5.99%. The present registered unemployment figure is 72 lakhs plus.
- The industrial production in the state has come down from 21% in the 60's to the present 4% level. 1980-93 – India – 6.4%, W.B. – 1.8% 1994-2001 India – 7.63% W.B. – 3.37% The net value added production rate has actually declined.
- 55000 closures during last 15 years, Lay off 15 lakhs. Negligible new employment.
- 47% of the closed small industries of India is in W.B. numbering to 1 lakh 50 thousand 85% of which are permanently sick.
- In organised sector employment in 1980 was 26 lakh 64 thousand, in 2001 it is only 22 lakh 30 thousand.
- Loss of Govt. jobs due to privatisation is more than 80000.

Our Observations/Comments

- Particularly during last 6 years – the ruling left front have misled the people by distorting facts & figures and propagating through media and advertisement by misusing Govt. Funds. May we very humbly know the total expenditure on these mal propagandas during last 6 years?
- Agro-Land should not be acquired. Decision of acquiring Agro lands every where in Bengal including Singur have to be withdrawn.
- Industrial land Bank has to be built for setting up of Industries on the waste-lands.
- Why the landless farmers have increased from 39 lakhs to 79 Lakhs?
- during last 5-6 years 18 lakh Bigha or 360 lakh Kathas of Agro-lands has been converted to non-agro lands – for whose interests?
- We demand a white paper on total acquisition of agro-lands during last 10 years.
- The list of beneficiaries of the total acquired land by the Govt. should be made public. And all deals with the industrialists like Tata-Salim or Realiance Group have to be made public with minute details.
- The details of compensation against the Rajarhat land acquisitions along with the list of families who

have received the compensation as well as those who haven't received anything – have to be made public.

- We demand a complete list of beneficiaris of the thousands of acres of land in Rajarhat.
- What are the total agro-land in W.B.? What was it 10 years back? What it is now?
- Is there any specific plan in the Govt. Agro Policy in respect of compensation and employment of the common people whose non agro-lands have been acquired?
- How much wheat have been imported in W.B. during last 5 years?
- How much food grains are imported here?
- How much land has been allotted to Mr. Govinda Sarda – the man connected with the Kit-scam and why?
- What are the prices for land offered to the farmers in Rajarhat? What are the prices offered to other institutions?
- The list of land acquired and distributed by WBIDC has to be made public.
- What are the details of On-line Lotto Contracts? Why these anti-social programme should be allowed to continue?
- Liquor license in every booth are pushing the students and youths to hell. The list of liquor shops where license have been issued during last 5 years to be made public.
- The fraud on Kit scam should be properly investigated by CBI and the offenders should be taught a befitting lesson.
- The State sponsored terrorism on the peaceful democratic movements unleashed through torture by Police has to be stopped.
- Election Commission and the election process has to be de-politicised. Party cadres shouldn't interfere with the electoral process.
- Why and how West Bengal has become an oasis for the terrorists? What are the extents of secret nexus between the terrorists and the political parties?
- Why the Govt. is unwilling to arrest the open misuses of foreign currencies in North-Bengal?
- The arrested offenders of mass democratic movements should be treated as political offenders and should not be tortured and harassed through false cases including murder cases.
- The list of prisoners without trial has to be made public. Govt. steps for the release of the prisoners should be spelt out. All criminal cases should be resolved fast and the prisoners without reason and trial should be released.
- Police administration should be de-politicised. There shouldn't be any political interference in administration.
- CPM interference in School, College, & hospital as well as in other Govt. affairs has to be stopped.
- What is the amount of Internal and external loans of W.B. Govt.? What are the foreign loans in last 10 years and what are the conditions? How much loan has been taken from the World Bank and ADB Bank?
- The list of students/youths leaving Bengal during last 10 years to be made known.
- What are the numbers of organised & unorganised workers in West Bengal? How many agricultural labour are there?
- The plans to bring out Kolkata and State Electricity in the open competitive market to be spelt out.
- Which are the industrial organisations opting for setting up industries directly under state Govt. during last 5 years?
- How many MOUs have been signed and implemented during Last 5 years? Which are the signed contracted organisation?
- How many nationalised industries were there under W.B. Govt.? What is the latest position?
- The complete list of BPL card holders has to be notified in BDO offices.
- How many times during last 7 years there has been increases in the electricity rate by CESC and WBSEB?

- How many times there have been increases of taxes and freights in rural and urban areas during last 7 years?
- How many Polices have died during last 10 years? How many employments from their families have taken place?
- When the Govt. have started contractualisation? How many contract employments are there?
- How many employments have been offered through Employment Exchange during last 10 years? How many names have been registered during this time?
- Has there been any audit in village-Panchayets, Panchayet Samitis and Zilla-Parishads during last 5 years? Districtwise reports on this has to be published.
- What are the conditions of the contracts between DFID and the State Govt.? Is the loss of 80000 jobs-an important pre-condition?
- Has the Govt. arranged for any tax-free special package for the indigenou small and medium industries?
- Which are the organisations who after acquiring lands for industrial purpose utilising them for real estate business?
- Whether the W.B. Govt. have implimented right to information bill. Furnish the details.
- What are the total no. of closures of big and medium industries during the L.F. regime.
- Who are the defaulters of Provident Fund/Gratuity? What are the actions taken against them?
- We demand the details of the WBIDC-Bonds in the market.
- We want to know the minute details of the political branch organisations and NGOs in the state.
- How many families of CPM-cadres receive monthly allwance at Govt. expense?
- What are the plans of the Govt. to counter draughts and floods?
- What are the Govt. plans to arrest the wrecks of river Ganges?
- We demand the abolition of fee-hikes in schools and colleges during last 10 years.
- The sufferings of the common people for the privatisation of Health Services – must be prevented.
- How many times the state sponsored terrorism have been unleashed on the peaceful democratic movements under the home ministership of the present Chief-Minister?
- Is there any master plan for the development of North Bengal?

Why the people of West Bengal are deprived of democratic, economic, Social, human and moral rights?

(Jago Bangla, 10th November, 2006)
(Translated by Debashis Bhattacharya)

Trace to the root the cause that is thus producing want in the midst of plenty, ignorance in the midst of intelligence, aristocracy in democracy, weakness in strength – that is giving to our civilisation a one sided unstable development.

Henry George

Headline Singur

Amitadyuti Kumar

It was the 3rd week of May, 2006 – the 18th day to be exact. The Left Front Government was sworn in for the 7th time in a row. Almost immediately Singur, an otherwise non-descript rural area in the Hooghly District, suddenly made the headlines. On that afternoon, the Chief Minister Mr. Buddhadeb Bhattacharyee, sitting alongside Mr Ratan Tata, the chief of a dominant Indian capitalist group - the TATA's, announced in a press conference that Tata Motors had made an agreement with the state government to set up a factory for small cars at Singur. In the press conference it was also made public that the state government would hand over 1000 acres of land in Singur. It cleverly remained silent on whether any Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) had been signed.

Towards the evening the news spread in Singur and so did the people's anger. The next day marked the beginning of public outrage. It did not wait for any organizational strength, political leadership. The fear of unemployment and starvation was so palpable that it broke all the barriers of age, gender and what's more their political identities. It is not the first time that farmers' land is taken away. Haldia, Bakreshwar or Rajarhat have their own sordid tales of how the government had given away their land to the industrialists or promoters, all in the name of development and industrialization. There were resentments and protests in those areas too. But the administration strengthened by the muscle power of the ruling party CPI (M) chose to ignore the popular sentiment. Protest and opposition in Singur assumed a different dimension, and because it assumed a different dimension, Singur could find a place in the media, if not hitting the headlines. Even the ruling CPM organ the Ganashakti had to find place for two to three news item/commentaries a day without exception for the last seven months— because while struggling for their right to life and a dignified livelihood Singur people has brought to the fore certain basic and important issues regarding development-industrialisation-urbanisation and the eventual eviction and destruction of farmland. The more the issues were raised and in-depth discussions and debates went on, the more the government, the ruling party and their leaders took refuge in more and more lies and deceptions. The movement of the people of Singur for their right to life and farmland no longer remained the struggle of Singur people alone. It gave rise to more serious questions about the efficacy of development projects that keep 96% of the population of the area outside its ambit. The intelligentsia, economists politicians and sociologists came forward to find solutions of such riddles and have tried to deal with the issues. Their overwhelming opinions supported by facts and figures, expert opinions, and past experiences in home and abroad conclusively point to the fact that the government is erring. It has triggered off a whole lot of questions like whether it is a car manufacturing unit (or for that matter a liquor shop per thousand population or ultramodern housing projects) that West Bengal primarily needs at the moment for development. Questions are raised whether such projects are necessary to solve its basic problem of industrial stagnation and unemployment? If that be so, then by whom, when and on what basis has this approach been decided upon? Questions were also raised about how to select the land necessary for industrialization, about the long term as well as immediate effects on environment as a result of conversion of farmland to industrial plot, whether alternative sites can be found without disturbing agricultural land and so on. Comparisons are made to find out whether there will be any real employment generation if industries are set up on agricultural land. People became concerned about the future of those who are going to lose the roofs over their heads and their daily bread, whether justice is being meted out to them or not. The imminent uncertainty in the availability of food and the likely food crisis resulting from wanton destruction of farmland are also making people concerned.

Singur

'Singur' is a name new to the present day political workers. The railway routes of Howrah-Barddhaman Chord Line and Howrah-Tarakeswar branch make a perfect cross at Singur. A few decades ago, the area remained mostly inundated during rainy season by the two overflowing rivulets, the Kankanti, the Zulkia, and the discharge from DVC dams. The last 24 years have seen the execution of only half of the planned Ghia-Kunti Drainage Scheme under the Lower Damodar Basin project. This alone has substantially reduced the fury of flood. Three major national highways run through or by Singur area. Bowbazar and Sheoraphuli Hat, the two of the biggest wholesale South Bengal markets for fruits and vegetables are in the range of 8/10 kms. The famous Ratanpur potato market is in Singur. One of the biggest Multipurpose Cold storages of the state, meant for storing vegetables as well as potato is situated in the area.

As the fury of flood has been tamed to a certain extent, the farmers have been making a modest earning thanks to the harmonious blend of fertile loamy soil and labour. Besides paddy and jute, potato and vegetables are the main cash crops here. Even the young graduates or the masters of these poor and the middle class families have engaged themselves in farming once the prospect of getting a service proves to be an illusion.

Because of improved farming techniques, application of fertilizers and pesticides, Singur two-thirds of Singur flood plain has by and large become a multi-crop land.

According to the statistics provided in a state government booklet (*Krishi Upakaran Byabsayee Sahaika—Handbook for Agricultural Input Dealers*, published by the Singur Block Agricultural Development Department in 2005), the block uses a whopping 10,001 metric tonnes of fertilisers and 3061.5 metric tonnes of insecticides and other plant medicines every year. To cater the needs there are 303 agricultural inputs trading centers in the Block, whose 83% (8830 Hectares out of 10,526 Hectares agricultural land) is irrigated. The crop density of the Block is 220%, a step higher than the district average of 215%

Singur and its surroundings have a glorious past in peasant movement and democratic movements. The names of Dubir Bheri, Bara-Kamalapur and other villages are gloriously mentioned in the annals of the famous *tebhaga* movement of the 1949-52 period. Late Dulal Ray, the noted Tarja Singer immortalized the heroic struggle of the legendary five women and other *tebhaga* movement activists.

Why Singur?

This is the Singur that the Government chose for Tata's small car project, About 27% of the five mouzas (out of 16) of the Block has been finally selected 'acquired' and fenced off with a massive police action for the purpose. The process of selection of the site is quite unprecedented and queer. From the statements of the Chief Minister, only this much could be ascertained that the Tatas opted for it and the government accepted readily. Even as late as on 26 December, the CM was reported to have said that the government had no option but to accept Tatas' proposal. The Government's avowed policy is to consult with the affected and local people on all programmes of development. The 74th Constitutional amendment also calls for such consultations. There was not a semblance of a consultation or a discussion. The people first learnt from the media that the plots of land that has sustained them generations after generations, despite odds of floods and draughts were going to be taken away by the government. These are the plots of land around which they have weaved the dreams of their future taking it for granted that these plots of land were going to be the only means for the future sustenance of their children who will not be able to find a better living in the scheme of development of the country. They could not believe their ears, when they first heard it. Presently a small plot of land of as little as 5 cottas can encourage a sharecropper to send his kids to school nourishing an aspiration for a better future—this is going to be grabbed in the next couple of months. They could not believe their ears, when they first heard. Not only the people going to be affected, even the functionaries of the local government viz., BDO, the head of the Panchayet and even the local CPI (M) bosses were kept in dark too. But the laws of the land, the declared state policy all say in unison that all projects should be planned at the grass roots that are at Panchayet level. One can not but wonders—what are the compulsions that leave the government without any option but to accept Tatas' proposal?

Why Singur?

Avijit Mukherjee, the BDO of the block said—it is Singur because the official records show this area is marked as 'single-cropped', non-irrigated or 'barren'. These records were based on surveys dating back to 1990. During the last 15 years, in the proposed Tata Motors site, the peasants have got installed 35 shallow pumps, 28 of which with their own money. In addition, there are three deep-tube wells. The two rivulets, the Zulkia and the Kunti – flowing along the either sides provide a substantial irrigational facility. In the dry season these rivulets and the DVC (Damodar Valley Corporation's dams) release irrigate the fields. How can such land be called single-cropped, barren or non-irrigated? Even a lay man is aware that a single crop land in this part of Bengal means that the land has no irrigational facility; only the rain dependant cultivation is possible.

A blatant lie

The farmers made appeal before the government pointing to the mischief in Government records; they took part in demonstration against the DM to highlight the incorrect records. It was expected that the government would relent once the truth is known. But the Chief Minister made his stand clear. The Tata's have asked for that particular land, and that's final. The Government, the Industry Minister, the Land Minister only

echoed their leader's view. Even Sm Brinda Karat the non-resident Member of the Rajya Sabha from West Bengal repeated this lie in her dispatch in CPM organs and the internet. The statistics cited earlier in this dispatch quoting state government sources, the fact that the whole Singur block has an average crop density of 220% and the fact that the proposed Tata Motors site is most well irrigated and the most fertile in the block and scores of photographs and video clippings in the print and electronic media showing the fields of the area nails her lies. Here is a tale told by the Singur BDO in presence of the local Panchayet boss Ranjt Mandal recorded on 15 June—Singur is a 40 minutes' drive from the airport along the newly built Expressway via the new Vivekananda Setu under construction. So the Tatas or their top brass flying from other metros will have to waste little time to reach their destination. Whoever expected to hear such a far-fetched excuse and that too from an avowedly pro-poor government and it comes at the expense of a 15000-strong agricultural work-force!

This control of the industrialists over the government, this 'as you said sir' attitude of the government is potentially dangerous for democracy and democratic values. The question naturally arose—is the government being run by the Tatas or for that matter other industrialists and capitalists? The government's helpless and repeated admission that it has no option but to accept Tatas' proposal, and the fact that the proposal of Tata Motors small car project was not discussed, approved or not even heard of in any discussion regarding the government's industrial policy or any other forum or a constitutional body before the fateful day of swearing in of 7th LF government, hints at the danger and dark days ahead for democracy. Reagan regime in the US diverted Govt resources for the benefit of the industrialists who were facing serious challenges from Japan; Clinton's rule saw to it that the oil giants consolidate their hold on the Government and state machinery. This hold in turn drove US under Bush administration to invade and occupy Iraq or Afghanistan, violate the civil and democratic rights of the US citizens or to go against civilization, Noam Chomsky has shown in *'Propaganda and the Public Mind'*.

The issues relating to the right to livelihood or to the share of the fruits of the 'development', or the government's surrender to the industrialists, food security and a host of related issues churned the political atmosphere of the state. Singur catalysed the building up of a united opposition against all similar projects—from Nandigram and Hariipur in Midnapore to Bhangar and Baruiipur in the North 24 Parganas. A considerable section of Rights activities and social organizations sided with the people of Singur. At the start of the movement and till late October, barring a few, the intelligentsia and the Buddha sycophants took refuge under an absolute silence. The developments of the next couple of month almost completely polarized the political opinion of the parties and the individuals. Sadly, the CPI (M), to be specific the ruling clique of the CPI (M) along with a handful of powerful bureaucrats is on one side. Thus the post 18th May 2006 Singur is now a name of a completely different significance in the state, whose repercussions are now felt in the National scenario.

Some facts and figures

The WB Land & Land Reforms Minister had gone on record to say in the state assembly that about 1.20 acres of farmland has become casualty in the government's 'urbanization' and industrialisation programmes in the last five years. He declared further that in the next 5 years, the government is going to transfer another 1 lakh acre or more farmland to the industrialists and promoters – for the sake of industrialization and urbanization. He did not conceal his concern for a resultant food-crisis on the floor of the House. The state agricultural minister was of the same view. But the big brother CPM and the senior cabinet members ruled out the possibility of any food crisis. The dissenting ministers had to fall in line. They parroted the rhetoric that Bengal is self-sufficient in food and leads in agricultural production. So it's the time to use farmland for industry.

Whether West Bengal is Self-sufficient in Food Production?

As per the latest figures available from the Bureau of Applied Economics and Statistics of the West Bengal Government, the availability of food grains (considering both the domestic production and imports) is 177 kg per head per year for the period year 2001-05. According to the Planning Commission an adult requires an intake of 193 kg of food grains for subsistence. It is to be kept in mind that in those aforesaid years, there was no significant loss of food grains because of flood, draught or natural disaster. Despite this, the state faces a shortage of food grains @ 16 kg per head per year that is, approx 16 million tonnes (assuming the state population to be around 10 cores). This crisis would worsen by a further 10% if the next 5 years see shrinkage of another 1 lakh acre of farmland. This will totally upset the somewhat self sufficiency achieved in food grains and will totally jeopardize any prospect to achieve food self sufficiency and hamper

food security of the people of lower income groups and the poor. This will lengthen the lines of starvation deaths—from Amlasole to Jalangi and elsewhere. According to latest National Sample Survey data (NSS Report No. 471), 15% of the state's population can avail less than 70% of required daily calorie intake (2700 Cal per day) and 64% of them gets less than the required amount. In terms of daily intake West Bengal lags behind six states including Bihar and Orisa. According to a state government publication (*Advancement in Agriculture: History of Success—Krishir Agragati—Dharabahik Saphalyer Itibritta*) monthly per capita intake of food grains in the state fell to 13.27 Kg in 1993-94 (latest available data) from 15.25 Kg in 1972-73.

According to the findings of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Jean Ziegler, who presented his report on Extent of Chronic Hunger and Malnutrition in India before the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on 22 September, 2006, food grain availability in rural India has fall to 152 kg per capita, 23 kg less than in the 1990s. Ziegler's report was based on his visit to India from August 20 to September 2, 2005,"motivated by the fact that India has the largest number of undernourished people in the world and one of the highest levels of child malnutrition". The report, which reviews "the situation of hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity in India" and whether the theory of "hunger amidst plenty" stands, has made some startling revelations. He observed that falling agricultural wages, increasing landlessness and rising food prices have severely undermined the right to food. Over half of India's women and children are suffering from severe malnutrition and chronic undernourishment. Over 47 percent children are underweight and 46 percent stunted in their growth figures higher than most countries in poverty stricken sub-Saharan Africa. The poorest 30 percent of households eat less than 1700 kilocalories per day per person, well below the international minimum standard of 2100 kilocalories per day, even if they spend 70 percent of their income on food. (*Times of India 24 September, 2006*)

But this is what the masters of the world, the imperialists long for. Food deficiency will necessitate import and that is not so easy. The global food market is controlled by a handful of transnational food cartels. By virtue of the prevailing system of 'forward trading' these cartels are already the owners of the food grains that are to be produced in the next few years. No doubt import will depend on their sweet will and we will have no option but to agree to their terms and rates. One may not be totally wrong to read that Tata's motor car at Singur is not a sudden, isolated and ill-conceived decision, rather a part of a larger conspiracy of neocolonialism.

Have West Bengal reached ultimate level of agricultural productivity?

The pre Budget Economic Survey 2004-05 of the state and a lavishly produced booklet (*Advancement in Agriculture: History of Success—Krishir Agragati:Dharabahik Saphalyer Itibritta*) show that in per Hectare paddy yield West Bengal (2463 Kg/Hectare) lags behind four other states including Andhra (2621 Kg/Hectare) Punjab (3510 Kg/Hectare) and Haryana (2724 Kg/Hectare). In wheat per Hectare yield in WB (2755 Kg) is about half that of Punjab (4696 Kg). One of the major reasons of low productivity is lack of irrigation. About 60% of agricultural land in West Bengal is still out of reach of any irrigational facility. The above booklet admits that irrigational facilities in WB is meager in comparison with other states

The above figures alone are indicative of the falsehood of claims like WB has reached the ultimate level of food productivity or development of agriculture is complete in the state. One of the factors affecting agricultural productivity is the level of land reform. The land reform programmes in the state have been abandoned midway According to official statistics, during the 30 years of LF rule only 7% of land could be transferred to the actual peasants.

Is it not possible to build a factory at an alternative non-agricultural site in WB?

The ministers, industrialists, and their political parties keep on saying that industrialization is not possible in this state without using agricultural land. Without industrialization, development will just be a distant dream. So destruction of farmland is a must for W Bengal's progress. Do the facts say so? The latest edition (2004) of the Statistical Handbook of the Government of WB reveals the following:

Total land area excluding Kolkata Metropolitan District:	8687521 Hectares
Area not available for Cultivation	1636038 Hectares
Net Shown Area	5427672 Hectares
Current fallows	333372 Hectares
Other Uncultivable land excluding Current fallows	119146 Hectares
Forest Area	1171293 Hectares

Those who travel across the state know it well that not only Bankura, Purulia, Midnapore, but the entire North Bengal too is provided with thousands of acres of barren and uncultivable land. As per the adopted policy of the centre and what's more, the view of the five left parties expressed in their memorandum before the Centre on 6 October 2006 is that no agricultural land should be used for SEZs.

This apart, West Bengal has the distinction of its cities and urban areas being adorned by the rusting dilapidated sheds of thousands of closed factories – official figures alone put it at 65000. 40000 acres of prime industrial land is kept locked there for decades. The CPI (M) MP Santashri Chatterjee and the President of the Hooghly District CITU submitted a memorandum to the District Magistrate demanding use of such premises for setting up of new industrial units. The memorandum also mentioned that the Birlas were given 744 acres at the Hind Motors at throw away prices for setting up the Hindusthan Motors in 1948. The factory, which once employed 22,000 workers, used only 252 acres of the land given. The rest, about 500 acres was lying unused for the last 58 years. The memorandum suggested that this land can be used for industrialization. In an article in the CPI (M) daily Ganashakti, he reiterated the same demands. The government replied late next month. The state cabinet cleared the land for use by the Birlas for an IT park, thus enriching the Birla coffers by at least 1500 crores in one stroke. If the premises of closed Beni Engineering in Kolkata can be unlocked (though illegally) for real estate business, why could the 500 acres of land, kept unused for the last 58 years, at Hindmotors not be used for the purpose of a new industry?

Trade (or State?) secret – a white lie?

Even seven months after the movement started or three months after completion of 'land acquisition' process as claimed by the administration, no body knows whether the Tatas have paid the price for the land as per rules or whether the land is being forcibly 'acquired' from the poor peasants at the tax-payers expense to make a gift to the 'Left-friend' Tatas? The Land Acquisition Act 1894 and the procedures laid down to implement the act requires that the requiring authority (here the Tatas) must deposit the full cost of the land before acquisition procedures begin. After several enquires under RTI act 2005, in all the concerned Government Departments as to whether the Tatas have deposited any amount towards the cost of the land, the West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation, in its letter No Adm/141/2006/3113, dated 4 Dec., 2006 replied that '*disclosure of information sought cannot be allowed under section 8(d) of the RTI Act 2005*'. This section does not allow disclosure if the competitive position of a third party is harmed and unless it is necessary for greater public interest.

All major aspects of the proposed project have been kept under wraps. No body, even the cabinet ministers and left front partners know whether a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) had been signed, or what are the understandings or agreements between the Government and the Tatas. Senior cabinet ministers belonging to non CPI (M) parties publicly aired their grievances for keeping them in the dark. All enquiries in this regard also faced the same black stone wall of secrecy. A similar formal exercise as above to illicit information on whether any MOU was reached with the company on the project and if so, a copy of the MOU, if no, a copy or the salient points of the draft of such MOU being discussed was carried out. The only reply to these queries was that '*disclosure of information sought cannot be allowed under section 8(d) of the RTI Act 2005*'.

A similar stonewall of secrecy is built around the incentives offered to the Tatas. Newspaper reports quoting 'reliable sources' suggest that the monetary value of the incentives offered to the Tatas for their Rs 1000 Crores investment may run up to 1500 Crores, if the cost of land, infrastructure and concessions are taken into account. Perhaps it is needless to say again that the governments reply to the queries on incentives under the West Bengal Incentive Scheme 2004 (No. 134 CI/O/Incentive/17/03/1 dated 24 March, 2004) or under any other scheme/proposal claimed by the Tata Motors for the project, offered/agreed to be offered by the government to the Tata Motors for the project, proposals/claims for incentives under consideration of the WBIDC or any other Government agency, received the same reply citing section 8(d) of the RTI Act 2005'.

It is strange that the Government is making deals with a profit making concern at the cost of tax payers' expense and nobody has the right to know anything. This attitude makes mockery of all principles of transparency and the Left Fronts commitment to '*do everything by informing people beforehand and with their concurrence.*'

Fighting Unemployment?

From all available information including Tata Motors press releases, it transpires that 800-odd employments may be generated initially which may go up to 2000 if and when the company attains the full production

capacity of 5,00,000 cars per year. Even conservative estimates suggest that about 15000 people including sharecroppers, agricultural labourers, and small farmers artisans are going to be evicted from their profession. Among them are those, who do not own the agricultural land or water bodies but still make a living out of them, those who earn their living as trolley pullers, colliers, fertilizer and other agricultural input dealers and their employees etc. How creating employment for 2000 over the years by immediately ousting 15000 from their livelihood may help in fighting unemployment is anybody's guess. The tale of ancillary industries was proved to be a fairy-tale in case of Haldia. And 800 employments at the cost of 100 crores investments (plus state incentives valued at around 1500 crores) That means ten million crores investment (plus incentives from state exchequer) for 80 lakh registered unemployed. It is beyond even any lunatics imagination !

The state government has no rehabilitation policy. A study shows that only 9% of those evicted during the post 1950 period got some sort of relief, however meager may it be. No body knows how the evictees will be rehabilitated or compensated. The government dubs the whole process as 'trade secret' to seek a safe escape route. Or sometimes, pretends to be a little bit more transparent –'will be told in the appropriate time.' A common sense suggests that there are other hidden agenda behind all these exercises declaredly for the benefit of 'ignorant idiotic masses'. The spontaneous opposition to the machinations and its rapid spread show that the government has erred in assuming people's concurrence for granted.

Meanwhile 200 people staging a peaceful demonstration were wounded in the police lathicharge 25 September. Rajkumar Bhul, a 24 year old agitator succumbed to the injuries sustained during the police attack. About a hundred including 28 women were been arrested. Many were molested by the drunken police force. The prosecution admitted that barring some womenfolk who were carrying brooms in their hands as symbols for their resolve to broom out the Tatas, none have any weapon or any other thing. The seizure list mentioned seizure of 10 brooms apart from their festoon. Yet the hapless people were booked under sections of Explosive Act and on charges of attempt to murder (under sec 307 IPC). This is in line with the state government's policy of persecution of all opposition and to ensure that these poor people rot behind the bars or harassed by the police or in the courts before they could be proved innocent. Thus the government will get the precious requisite time to hand over their land to the Tatas.

In the mean time, Medha Patkar, Maheshweta Devi, Chief Justice (Retd) Mr Malay Sengupta and many others came to hear those wretched people. The almost universal reaction of all those who visited the people of the area is that the government had made a heinous crime. They had to be vocal against government's lies. Their first hand experience compelled them to take up the cause of the people of Singur. These have boosted the charged morale of Singur, their womenfolk included. It would be baffling to find how almost 100 percent women could become active participant in this movement. It is for the sociologists or the political organizers to answer. No doubt highly offensive suggestions by prominent CPM leaders like Polit Bureau nominee Benoy Konar and Nirupam Sen or local leaders like Balai Sabui to seek 'better alternative living of maid servants in the houses of babus to be have added salt to the injured pride of the women folk. Apart from that, can we ignore the yearning of a peasant mother to see her child pass the secondary examination? Can we ignore the sentiments of a mother who weaves her dreams over the land that can provide the requisite livelihood to her kids? The land was a guarantee against starvation, if they can work hard. But now overnight their dreams are shattered by the government's policy. It was only natural that they would vent their anger, hatred or resentment on the government.

The struggle in Singur has already achieved initial victories. The government has to change the map no less than thrice. The offered land price had to be increased from average 2 lakhs/acre to 8 lakhs/acre. Party whips, administrative pressures, police action, turning the area into a virtual police barrack, promise for various sops could not move the unrelenting masses and all these failed to compel about 60% of land owners to sign a 'declaration of voluntarily agreeing to land acquisition.' Under a cover of a massive police terror the lands with this season's rich paddy harvest, variety of vegetables and germinating potato seedlings were fenced off on 2 December. Prohibitory orders under Sec 144 were promulgated and ruthless terrors by police-cadre combine were unleashed to compel the farmers to sign 'declaration of voluntarily agreeing to land acquisition.' Like in Manipur or Kashmir or West Midnapore rape has been used as a weapon to terrorise the women. Sixteen year old Tapasi Malik is the first victim of such rape and murder. Even Mamata Banerjee, who is an MP and enjoys highest category security, was manhandled to a degree of outraging modesty to prevent her from proceeding to Singur. Renowned Social activist Medha Patkar was twice prevented by applying force from meeting the attacked people. A directionless government could not decide what to do after arresting her on 2 December along with this correspondent and three others and the two police vehicles carrying the detained persons were made to make rounds on highways for more

than two hours. The baffled administration had no idea about what to do and requested Medha to be a state guest, which she righteously rejected and squatted on the police jeep for the whole night, only to lead a demonstration next morning at the Chandernagore police station where the molested, wounded victims of police repression were kept detained.

To many observers, the greatest victory the Singur movement achieved is uniting people in a common issue cutting across party lines, ideology, gender and belief. The seven month long movement remained within the parameters of legal-democratic forms and in the face of massive police repression showed a rare and resolute non violent determination. During the 29 years of Left rule, Singur appears to be the stiffest challenge, almost completely polarising the entire population and isolating CPI(M), to be more specific its top coterie as the lone crusader in support of the land grab—even the smaller allies of the Left Front have not endorsed the Government's stand. The entire opposition viz., Congress, Trinamool, Marxists, Maoists, socialists all have assembled in a platform against this onslaught. On the one side, CPM, the Tatas and a few powerful local media. Behind the scenes, lie the greedy imperialists. And on the other side, there are the masses of Singur, bolstered by the presence of almost all the political parties barring CPM. After 2 December police attack on fencing off unwilling farmer's lands, Mamata Banerjee is on indefinite fast. She too appears to be transformed by Singur to a more responsible leader. To nail the government's lies owners of more than 430 acres of fenced off land submitted copies of affidavits executed before magistrates to the governor declaring that they did not give their land and are unwilling to do so. Another large section submitted that they were coerced to sign 'declaration of voluntarily agreeing to land acquisition.' which they want to withdraw.

Singur is now at a crossroads. Will it be able to set an example before the people of West Bengal or India? Singur may or may not be victorious. But it has sent its message loud and clear to the rest of the country. It is that those who consider India or West Bengal as the safe haven for the imperialists or their followers will have to think again. Singur has already created waves in each and every place where the government expressed desire to acquire agricultural land. Singur fights, she fights whether we support them or not. But the real test is before us. Can we give the same do-or-die dimension to our fight for democracy, freedom or development? Will we be able to attract all the countrymen to rally for this fight?

(Translated by Sanjeeb Acharya)

"The present crisis conditions in the world capitalist system drive the imperialists and local reactionaries to escalate oppression and exploitation and to inflict terrible suffering on the people of the world. But they also drive the broad masses of the people to resist. Thus there is a resurgence of mass struggles for national liberation, democracy and social liberation."

Prof. Jose Maria Sison.

No to Land Acquisition : People's Resistance is Escalating

*Singur was visited on 10th Decmber 2006 by **Chiroranjana Pal, Pramod** and **Anuradha Talwar** Given below is their report.*

The Reign of Terror Continues :

The farmers have still not given their land to the Government. Their crops of paddy, vegetables and potato are in the fields and they are facing harassment from the police when they go there to harvest their crops. Earthen demarcation between the fields are being demolished and police jeeps patrol the land at night. Standing crops are being destroyed. The Government is spending the tax payers' money to guard the interests of the Tatas and to destroy the food grown by the farmers.

The Government's Claim and Real Picture :

On 10th December 2006, the Singur Krishi Jami Raksha Committee had a press conference in Beraberi Purba para and presented signed letters from farmers where the farmers declared that "We Have Not And Will Not Give Our Land To Tata Motors". Details are as below :-

<i>Name of village</i>	<i>Amount of Land (in acres)</i>
Bajemelia	55.26
Khaserbheri	33.47
Joymolla	16.68
Beraberi Bazar and Malpara	16.94
Ujjal Sangha	3.37
Kolepara and Singherbheri	57.10
Beraberi purbapara	63.69
Gopalnagar	99.83
Doluipara	0.93
TOTAL	347.27

Shanti Ram Ghosh of Beraberi Mandirtala, a cheque recipient announced in the press conference that he was ready to return his cheque and wants his land back.

Defying Section 144 :

In spite of the terror unleashed in the area, people have started peaceably defying Section 144. The first occasion was on 8th December 2006, when people spontaneously shut down shops and took out a procession of about 500 people when the police forcibly took away Rabindra Bhattacharya, the local MLA and 4 others from the Bajemelliya Santoshimatata hunger strike camp. The second occasion was on 10th December 2006, when during a press conference to show land records to the press, 200 people gathered at Beraberi Purba Para and shouted slogans.

The numbers of hunger strikers are increasing in the area day by day. There are now 6 hunger strike camps instead of the three we saw earlier. Women and men of all ages are fasting. The hunger strikers include a seven and half year's old child and an eighty five years old lady.

Rabindra Bhattacharya, The local MLA is still on hunger strike in the Government district hospital at Chinchura. He is being kept alive on intravenous fluids by the Government.

SAGA OF SINGUR

PARTHASARATHI BANDYOPADHYAY AND DAYABATI RAY

ARE TATAS WELCOME IN SINGUR?

In June last, we went to Singur for 7-8 days to have a first-hand experience about the state of affairs and happenings over there. From the day one, we had noticed an implicit excitement among the peasants in the area. They were very much anxious about their future – what would await them if their home, cultivable land and livelihood would go, and the possible impact that it would have on their life and livelihood. They felt that their very existence is at stake as the possibility of losing their land is looming large. In this moment of great crisis, it appeared to us that they were unsure as to whom to trust – they were particularly apprehensive about the unknown urban folks frequenting the place for some time. When we proposed to them that we want to have a full-scale documentary on this subject, the immediate apprehension that came to their mind- are we not working for the Tatas? Though they did not offer any active resistance to our proposal, we had to run from pillar to posts for just to have a place for night halt.

At a later point of time when we met Shri Balai Sapui, the local leader of the CPI(M), he opened his dialogue with us by mentioning that peasants really welcomed the small car project in Singur as proposed by the Tatas. From the day one of our work, we came to know by heart the hollowness of this claim; this statement appeared to us as a white lie. Singur bears the live testimony, exemplified by the statements made by the leaders of the CPI(M), one after the other, in succession as to how the party had distanced itself from the ordinary rural people, though the CPI(M) derived its major strength from the rural people, which had enabled them to rule the state for so many years.

After we had been able to win the trust of the local people, we had never faced any problem in staying in the villages to continue our work on the documentary. When the local peasants realized that our principal intention was to highlight their plight, with great care they arranged for our boarding and lodging willingly and heartily. They showed us all the lands including the disputed ones; they expressed their mind clearly without inhibition so that the citizens of this state may understand fully the truth behind their side of the story.

When we reached Singur, we mainly wanted to talk to people of that area who principally belonged to the economically weaker section of the society, those belonged to the middle class and those who primarily depend on agriculture, because they form the single largest community in the area. They will be affected most if they happen to lose their agricultural land. They are the ones, who form the large chunk of support base for any political party; political parties thrive because of their support. The fate of any struggle, its present and the past are determined by their participation. Besides, we talked to the leaders of the “Save agricultural land Committee”, the local and regional leaders of the CPI(M), and with some of the rich peasants. We also recorded in our documentary, the statements made by Ms Mamata Banerjee and other state-level leaders, who were gathered in Singur in a meeting convened by the “Save Agricultural Land Committee”.

During the course of discussions and dialogues, we wanted to understand (1) the history of changes of the socio-economic conditions of the area, (2) the opinion of various stake-holders concerning the acquisition of agricultural land in the area, (3) the reaction of the civil society of Singur in these issues, (4) the stands adopted by the various political parties regarding these issues and the interrelation of these parties with the ordinary tillers in the area, (5) some of the experts’ opinion about the acquisition of the agricultural land in West Bengal. This article is prepared as an outcome of the discussions held in understanding the above-mentioned points.

SINGUR IS A WELL-DEVELOPED AGRICULTURAL REGION

The land that the Tatas wanted for their small car project is highly fertile and a multi-cropped land and no doubt, which is why it gave rise to the current debate and the opposition centering round the issue of acquisition. The leaders of the CPI(M), in interviews sought by us asserted that these lands are marshy lands, most of the lands get submerged during the monsoon, and hence the cultivation suffered a lot. Mostly boro cultivation makes these lands barely a single crop land and so on. Though one of the local panchayet leader, Shri Ranjit Mandal, owing allegiance to CPI(M) admitted that the half of the agricultural field, where the small car project of the Tata would come up, are double- and triple-crop land.

But the cultivators themselves said unequivocally that all the pieces of land in the area, acquisitioned for the Tata small car project are at least triple-cropped land; some parcels of land produce four and

sometimes even five crops in a year. The mainstay agricultural products are paddy, jute and potato. Conventional and boro varieties of paddy are grown in profusion but the production of jute has started declining slowly because the farmers do not get adequate price for the raw jute. The principal cash-crop in the area is potato. Potato in this area usually witnessed bumper crop every year- potato production is as high as 80 to 120 mond (37 kg usually makes a mond, a non-metric system, traditional measurement of weight which is still very much in vogue in rural Bengal) per bigha of land (again a traditional system of measurement of agricultural land, which is 14400 square feet area of land). The villages in the area are flourishing, thanks to the high production rate of potato and the price of these potatoes are quite paying as well; the prosperity of these villages are largely dependent upon this two factors. Besides potato, people usually grow a variety of vegetables. The growers of these vegetables themselves carry their products to the nearest urban centres and the cities; this business also fetches handsome amount of money for these families and these contributes considerably towards their liquidity. The Singur area itself has four cold-storage facilities; the biggest cold-storage facility for potato is situated at the Ratanpur crossing, which has developed into a booming market for bulk purchase of potato. Ratanpur has about 400 godowns for potato alone. In the disputed land is situated the big cold-storage for the vegetables, owned by Shri Udayan Das, son of the ex-CPI(M) MLA, Shri Biduyt Das. Udayan Das also owns a big goatary in another piece of disputed land. The cultivators of the area informed us that Udayan Das has given a filler that he is willing to part with his share of land to the Tatas, if he receives a sum of rupees 15 crore for the land.

The prosperity of cultivation largely depends on the availability of irrigation in the area. The history of system of irrigation and its expansion in this area is quite old . The disputed land to be acquired for the small car project, is bounded from the three sides by three canals – they are Kana Kunti, DaibaKhal and Julkia rivulet. The Canal Kana Kunti is connected to the DVC canal system. During the last leg of British era, this canal was developed as an irrigation canal, which was further reinforced by the DVC canal system. Within the village itself lies the big sluice gates, made up of iron at the confluence of Kana Kunti and Saraswati river, installed by the DVC. But not all the parcels of land is benefited by this canal water as the canal water does not reach all the pieces of land. Thus 4 big deep tube-wells were installed in these fields before 1977. When the Left Front government has assumed its power in West Bengal, the expansion of irrigation in this area took place principally because of the initiatives of the cultivators themselves. The disputed agricultural field eventually has 27 mini-deep tube-wells, 20 of them being owned by the private owners. Thus during the decades of 1980, all most all the parcel of land in the disputed area came under sound irrigation.

This irrigation facilities bolstered the use of chemical fertilizers buttressed by the high yielding seeds fostered growth in the agricultural products in the area. In other words, the developed irrigation system, coupled with green revolution gave rise to growth in agriculture. It is now pointless to debate as to what would the long-term consequences of this growth like, but suffice it to say that if one roams around those villages, one hardly comes across huts in those areas. Even the marginal and the small farmers enjoys the benefit of this growth, But this prosperity in this area cannot be attributed solely to the growth in agriculture. Other factors, like the proximity to urban centers, the possibility and scope of working in those urban centers are also contributing to the over all prosperity of the area. Persons residing in this area now works in the urban centers, situated nearby, thanks to their access to well-developed transport system; this is also partly responsible for the upcoming of this area. Families belonging to the upper castes and having educated youths in the family are mostly into various services, earning salaries for the family. In those disputed agricultural land is situated the largest mauza, exclusively dependent upon agriculture – Gopalnagar West. One would come across huge and well-built houses, mostly old but some are newly built as well; they belong to the upper-rung of the castes, the Bramhins and the Kayasthas. In the olden days, the Kayasthas were the landlords in the villages. These landed gentries never cultivated their lands personally, but they used to supervise their paid labours. Now a days, they do not have anyone to look after and tender their agricultural fields. No wonder, they do not derive any economic benefit of the agricultural land. Of course, they are very much eager to part with their land to the Tatas.

If you go Gopalnagar Modhyapara, you will find that the area primarily belongs to the Ghosh community, who are by caste milk-dealers and cow-tenderers and majority of them are middle peasants. They labour for their own land and reap a hefty economic benefit from agriculture. Besides agriculture, they earn a lot by selling milk in the market. A small section among them have small and petty business, but the mainstay of this community is agriculture and cultivation which squarely depends upon this parcel of highly fertile land. One of the successful entrepreneur in this community, Shri Nimal Ghosh informed us: “ You see, the land is like an able son to us. If I get adequate compensation for my departed son, I might forget the pain

of losing my son. But I am really not prepared to part with my land if the compensation (in terms of money) is not adequate.” His opinion about land has made him quite a hated person in the locality though.

The various areas in the Gopalnagar mouza are like different villages. This mouza incorporates two panchayet areas. The majority of the land for the small car projects falls within this mouza. This area is very thinly populated by the “lower-caste” agricultural labourers – middle, small and marginal peasants from other castes form the major chunk of population there. We came across one person from among the Ghosh family, who owns about 50 bighas of land, being cultivated by himself and his family. Youths from these families, belonging to the middle-castes are usually employed in the industries or merchant firms in the adjacent urban areas and in the city of Kolkata. Some of them have gone to places like Delhi or Mumbai in search for a decent job. They used to send cash in their families. These cash inputs goes into agriculture to elevate the standard of living of these families. They invest these cash input to purchase another piece of land; sometimes they reinforce their home with bricks and other materials.

The disputed land is surrounded by the mouzas like Beraberi, Bajemelia, Khaser Bheri, Singher Bheri etc. The indigenous lower caste people would comprise roughly about a quarter of the total population in these areas. Most of them are either a share-cropper or just an agricultural labour. Some of them even has a piece of land, leased out to them by landowners, which they cultivate along with the pieces of land that they have as a share-cropper. For various reasons, majority of them have not recorded their names in the Operation Barga. This area have not witnessed any strong peasant movements like the “Tebhaga” in the olden days or any other peasant movement in the recent times. This feature in this locality may have played a role in maintaining the tranquility as regards the landowner-peasant relation in the area. May be, this might be the reason as to why such a large number of cultivators have not been recorded as bargadars in this area.

The boom in the local agriculture has increased the demand of agricultural labourers in this area which the local agricultural labourers are unable to meet. When the demand reaches its peak, thousands and thousands of agricultural labourers descent into this area from other parts of the district of Hoogly and Burdwan- they are popularly known in the locality as “Garir Kishan”. They are so named because most of them reach this place by rail – the locality has two railways, one is the rail-road connecting Howrah with Tarakeswar and the other one is the Burdwan, connected to Howrah via the Chord railway track. In the agricultural season, a majority of these labourers stay back in the villages, some of them used to commute between their home and their place of work in these villages. We came to know from the local peasants that the disputed lands in the Singur area usually accommodate about 1500-2000 such seasonal labourers. The wage of these seasonal workers fluctuates according to the boom. The local workers usually earn between Rs 50-55 a day, while these seasonal labourers usually earn about Rs 40-45 a day. In the peak season, the wage usually gets increased; some of the workers, opting for contract may even earn as high as Rs 100-150 a day.

Some of the families of the landless labourers usually tender goat and cow and thereby earn their living. There are about 100-150 families who depend primarily on animal-tendering and rearing. Single women, widows are mostly dependent of selling the cow-milk, as they do not have any menfolk in their family to earn. They use the agricultural fields as a grazing ground for their animals. They have raised very pertinent questions: If the grazing land goes, how would they survive? Who would feed them?

THE MOVEMENT GATHERS MOMENTUM

The poor peasants, the share-croppers and the landless agricultural labourers of Singur had initiated the movement to save the agricultural fields in the area. When the representatives of Tata was on visit to inspect the site of their small car factory, they are the ones who gheraoed the representatives; among the persons gathered to resist the Tatas, the landless labourers and the poor farmers preponderated. One of the remarkable feature of the landless persons in this area is that they cultivate small parcels of land obtained on lease from the owners and they grow a variety of agricultural products on the said land. They either pay in cash or in kind as lease rent to the owners; they usually grow seasonal crops and pay apart of their produce in kind as lease rent. These produces form an important and integral part of their subsistence and livelihood. If the land is grabbed, they will lose the benefit and would lose an important component of their livelihood; at least that seems to be realization of a majority among them. Thus they have become desperate to save the land to protect their livelihood.

But Buddhadeb Bhattacharya and Nirupam Sen and their associates are either unable or do not want to realize this sentiment of the landless and poor peasants of Singur. They do not want to accept and rationalize the fact that the general masses of the peasants have squarely rejected the dream of

industrialisation in the state as is depicted by this duo in the ruling party. The taste of power had made them so adamant that when the representatives from the Tatas were confronted by the villagers, Shri Biman Bose had gone out of his way to shout before the media in full view of the camera that the villagers will teach these media-persons a good lesson should they venture to visit the villages next time. But the irony of fate was such that a few days after, on June 11, 2006, when the leaders of the CPI(M) wanted to have a street-corner in support of their industrialization programme, they were chased away by the villagers; some of the leaders could not even escape the wrath of the villagers. Needless to say, the street-corner had to be hastily winded up.

In an interview given to us by the CPI(M) leader, Shri Balai Sapui said that the peasants of Singur are all prepared to welcome the Tatas in their area, but the opposition political parties, especially the Trinamool Congress is the culprit behind all these chaos; they are also threatening the willing peasants. His allegation was that the comprehensive industrialization programme for the development of this area was blown out of proportion by Ms Mamata Banerjee to make it a state-wise issue. But the fact remains that it is the Left Front Government and the CPI(M), who has made this industrialization a state-wise issue in the last Assembly Election and declared that this model of industrialization is the principal means for the overall development of this state. When the final result of the last Assembly Election was declared, it was Buddhhababu himself, who declared, in front of the media-persons that the Tatas are coming to this state to install industries in this state. And the industrialists like the Tatas would join hands with the state government and this would pave the way to a big wave of industrialization in this state.

If one talks to the peasants in and around the disputed field in the Singur area, it would be aptly clear to anyone that the resistance movement that had sprouted in that area is stemming from the spontaneous emotion of the tillers. This emotion is seen to be more intense among the female folks in the peasant families than in their male counterparts. These peasant women stated in very clear terms that they would better die to protect their land than surrendering the land to the Tatas. They also said they would lay their lives to ensure that their progeny would be fed properly. One would remember that when the “tebhaga” peasant movement was in its highest crest, many peasants, both men and women were dying everyday struggling against the police and the hired goons of the gentry, in those tumultuous days of 1946, Shri Jyoti Basu made a statement in the Assembly that “so many peasants had died just to ensure something to eat!” Now his own party is masterminding the plans of grabbing lands from the peasants.

It appears that Jyoti Basu and his party was not in a position to appreciate and realize the sentiments of the struggling peasants in “Tebhaga” days, as they are unable to appreciate the same even today. During those days, they looked at the “Tebhaga” movements from a purely economic point of view, as a result the communist party was lagging far behind the actual struggle waged by the peasants. They failed to realize that the struggling peasants had turned this movement into their struggle for liberation. Today, when they are sitting in the highest pinnacle of power and all set for grabbing the lands of the peasants, (they have already done so, by grabbing close to half a million acres of land in the name of development), even to this day they look at peasant question as a problem of nothing more than livelihood question. That is why, the peasant leaders like Shri Balai Sapui can say without the battling of an eyelid that if the small car factory would come up in Singur, there will be many more residential houses for the high officials of the factory, and many female folks from the peasant families will be employed as maids in those housing complexes. And the men folks will get enough menial jobs!

The female folks of the Singur area are precisely up against this odd mentality of the leaders. Those who possesses just about 5 kathas of cultivable land, or those who just survives by selling milk in nearby places, they told us that they consider their current occupation to be dignified enough than to become a house-maid in any affluent family.

And this mismatch in the wavelength has, perhaps, created an unbridgeable gap between the leaders of the CPI(M) and the ordinary tillers in the area. As a result, the well-tested procedure of keeping mass contact by visiting every house by the activists is not bearing any fruit in Singur. If you roam around these villages in Singur, you will hardly notice any presence of the CPI(M). There are several big pockets in this Hoogly district itself where ordinary people are afraid of opening up against any misdeeds of the party, even the minor partners of the Left Front is very much afraid of opening up, let alone to spread their organization, it is rather strange that in the same district, one hardly finds a person who would speak for the CPI(M), the CPI(M) leaders are be chased away by the peasants, they are being beaten up, they cannot even organize a mere street-corner. The situation is simply unbelievable.

The pre-condition for any movement to succeed is to isolate the enemies from the masses. In the specific areas of Singur, this condition is fulfilled. That this condition is fulfilled is not because that any

conscious opposition has carefully orchestrated and campaigned against them. The peasant society, from their own consciousness and wisdom had anticipated the upcoming threat and danger and they joined hands as a community. On the other hand, before the Tatas were confronted, the campaign for the industrialisation was at its peak; compared to that, the campaign for industrialisation was a poor show. In the said area, the SUCI has some followers and something semblance of an organisation; they have started a campaign by pasting posters in the locality against this project. The Trinamul Congress joined the fray at a later stage. The Tata representatives were gheraoed by the peasants on May, 25, 2006. When Shri Nirupam Sen was addressing a gathering of his followers on May 29, 2006, about 1000 peasants were showing them black-flags in protest against this project. On June 1, 2006, about 1000 peasants were gathered and gave deputation to the BDO with their implements (hand tillers and things like that); about half of the demonstrators were women, carrying broom-sticks.

About a week later, on June 1, 2006, the peasants form the “Singur Krishi Jami Raksha Committee” (Save Agricultural Land Committee). This Committee has joint conveners. One of the conveners is Shri Becharam Manna, a well-known Trinamul activist and the other convener is Shri Sankar Jana, the local SUCI organiser. But the local peasants have repeatedly told everybody that this struggle is a struggle in which all peasants have joined hands together, irrespective of political affiliations. Even the grass-root level CPI(M) supporters are also in the movement.

We can summarize the basic trends of the movement in Singur till date as:

1. The driving force behind this movement is the middle and the poor farmers, the share-croppers and the landless families. In this movement, the whole family is participating, including the female members and children of the family. The women in the families are playing a leading role in every resistance. An adibashi youth, who came from outside to earn his wage here, said that even he is prepared to lay his life to save the piece of land which feeds him as a daily wage-earner.
2. The rich peasants, especially those who are into business or into organized sector jobs and cultivate their land by employing daily labour, those who have no relation whatsoever with their land, they are the vacillating. They do not earn much from their land and they have some eagerness to transfer their land. But they prefer to be associated for some time with this movement till they get a bargain price from the government. The local CPI(M) leadership claim that some of these rich peasants have already pledged their land for the Tata small Car project. It is very clear that the CPI(M) is proceeding to grab land in this area keeping this community as an important plank in their entire game-plan.
3. The CPI(M) is named as the “broker for the Tatas” in the locality. The peasants have no faith in any promises made by either the government by the Tatas. Their main objections are:
 - a. If they lose their land they will eventually become paupers, as the cash compensation that they would receive will be exhausted in no time. They say that “ how long can you drink water from a canter?”
 - b. This is going to destroy the local ecosystem and environment. The anti-social activity would be rising. The waste water from the factory will pollute the local sources of water as well as ground water and affect the people of the far-off places making the remaining agricultural land unfit for cultivation.
 - c. The land is an asset to the tillers which provides security to successive generations of the peasant families; land also confers a social prestige to the peasants in their local society. To them, landlessness is a curse which they loathe.
 - d. They envisage the factory will be opened in 2006 and would be closed in 2008. This is their hard-earned experience. Many a youth was employed in many small factories which are either closed or sick. They earn a decent living by cultivating their agricultural land. If they lose their land then their last resort will be wiped out.
 - e. They retort” Why rob Paul to pay Peter?”. Why is the party so bent on robbing a large community of peasants and doling out such a fertile land to an industrial house, who knows nothing but profit. This may improve the richer lot, but what about the poorer lot?

Singur is situated in just 40 km away from the city of Kolkata; it has a relatively high rate of literacy. They are quite conscious about the rise and fall of the market economy. When the CPI(M) leader Shri Binoy Konar or Shri Nirupam Sen put forward an argument that the compensation money would fetch a good bank interest which would be more than the amount that a peasant would expect from her/ his piece of land, they quipped by saying that the rate of bank interest is declining day by day. And a day might come when the customer will have to pay certain interest to the bank for safe-keeping of their money! In such a

scenario, what is in store for them in future?

But who is going to answer such questions for them anyway? Those who are residing in the apex of the pyramid of power, for them the subalterns are always expendable, to be neglected and would remain beneath their mental horizon. Their voices will remain unheard till they become organized outside the ambit of the center of power, and put a challenge to this state-centric polity that are currently in vogue. Thus the moot question is one of democracy.

THE QUESTION OF DEMOCRACY

The first condition of democracy is that a person is free to choose his life and livelihood. In the bourgeois democracy, the right to own property is respected and secured as well. But here in Singur, the state has forfeited the rights of the citizens to choose one's life and livelihood. This is being done by the state by invoking a colonial act, the Land Acquisition Act of 1894. By invoking this act, the Left Front government is snatching large tracts of land from the peasants one after another. The most draconian part of this Act is that it is silent about any compensatory measure once the land is acquisitioned. Despite several change of guards in the central government at New Delhi, none of them was ever interested in enacting a law safeguarding the rights of the oustees in the name of development and to put forward any measure of compensation and rehabilitation for them. Indian Social Institute, in a survey, estimated that between 1947 to 1990, in the alter of development of this country, no less that 21.3 million persons were evicted in the name of mining, big dam, industry and wild-life sanctuary. Half of the evicted persons were from the SC and ST communities. The responsibility of rehabilitation was brushed aside by the state and the industry houses responsible for this eviction. (1)

We may mention here that in 1985, the MP state, in 1987 the Karnataka state and in 1989 the Maharashtra state had enacted their state-specific rehabilitation Acts. Later, Andhrapradesh, Tamilnadu, Orissa and Gujarat states had come forward with ordinances or acts, declaring guidelines for rehabilitation for the oustees, the project-affected persons. But the West Bengal government is still continuing to utilize the same draconian British Act to grab lands from the peasants. They not only have no state act for rehabilitation, they do not show any interest whatsoever in declaring a policy towards rehabilitation.(2) The opposition parties in this state have never seriously questioned the efficacy of such an act and never initiated any serious movement against this aspect of the said act.

In the case of Singur, when we talked to the local leaders of the CPI(M), we came to know that the state government had never informed their local party or front leaders, neither did they inform the local panchayets anything regarding the project before the visit of the representatives of the Tatas, let alone seeking their views regarding this matter. We were told that in this state, the panchayets are functioning truly as a local autonomous body, the main instrument for decentralization of state power. But in real polity, it transpired that the local elected bodies were bypassed and decisions were taken. In reality, the meeting between the CM of West Bengal and Ratan Tata has firmly decided that the state is willing to part with any piece of land that the Tatas would like to have and in any quantity. When one of the leaders of the Save Agricultural Land Committee said that "the Tatas and Birlas are the landlords of this country and the various state governments are their servants" one cannot deny the truth behind this statement. The local CPI(M) leaders may hold their personal views in this regard, and howsoever they are rejected by the local people, they will have to abide by the dictates of the party in the name of democratic centralism.

It is very clear that when even the local leaders of the ruling parties are not consulted, there is no question that the actual stake-holders have ever been a part of any consultation process in this regard. Even after the commotion ensued regarding the visit by the Tatas, nobody, no leader of any standing ever visited the place to initiate any dialogue with the peasants. Though the local leaders of the CPI(M) informed us that they are holding dialogues with the peasants, and some of the initial confusion is no longer there. It was clear from their statements that they are primarily holding rounds of discussions with the rich peasants only, those who do not till their own land. Shri Balai Sapui, in his over-enthusiasm committed that when the big land-holders are forthcoming, the small land-holders will follow suit soon.

If one tries to judge the state of affairs there, it would not escape one's mind that it is the decision-making process of thumping the decision from above had actually aggrieved the peasants there in Singur. In Singur, the middle, small and the marginal farmers are the majority of cultivators; the autocratic decision-making process of the government had completely shut the CPI(M) leaders off from this community. Like any traditional Lord, Shri Buddhadev Bhattacharyay wants to drive his own chariot of development, disregarding the collective consciousness of the downtrodden, the marginal ones and refusing to respect their fundamental rights. How many of the downtrodden is falling behind, to be steam-rolled by his champion

chariot, he hardly has any moment to spare for them. He seems to counter every opposition to his senseless acts by the whipcord in the form of the election mandate.

The subalterns and the downtrodden people of Singur had pulled the lash of Buddhhabau's development chariot. So far, he has been able to thwart the dissenting voices both within his own party and in the Left Front by invoking his authority. He has enormous faith in his opposition party. When the Tatas are coming to this state and the political parties like Congress and Trinamool Congress will not welcome them will not happen. When people in the Rajarhat were evicted, Ms Mamata Banerjee had come down heavily on the state government. But when the real struggle began, she was no where to be seen and the local people had not found her in their side. Hence, the idea that Ms Banerjee will lead any move against the state government had vanished into thin air. The leaders of the CPI(M) are hoping a repeat performance of Rajarhat in Singur.

It is undoubtedly true that the opposition political parties like Trinamool Congress and SUCI are behind the people of Singur and that gives a strength to the resistance by the peasants. It is also to be noted that in Singur, the customary limit of the opposition parties for waging struggle against the government are no longer being respected by the movement of the people. The ordinary peasants of Singur have decided to put the opposition political parties to the pedestal of leadership, with their help they hope to address the people of the state to have their voice heard to the state itself, but on the main the peasants are in the driver's seat as of now. One can also observe the trend of defying the mandates of the leaders among the peasants. They have disrupted the street-corners, organized by the CPI(M) twice. On July 11, 2006, the female folks in the area have chased away the leaders of the CPI(M), who were busy in holding a road-side meeting. The women in the area are increasingly getting organized. One can observe a sense of desperation among them in defending their land from land grabbers. If the state decide to grab the land by force, this may lead to a direct confrontation between the state and the peasants in the area. The ordinary peasants are quite adamant in defending their land, they do not mind even blood-shed.

The turn and the form that the movement might take in the future squarely depends upon many a factor – primarily on the interrelations between the organized polity and the struggling peasants, and between the rich peasants and the prevalent mentality among the middle peasants about them. It is difficult to predict the turn of the events in this juncture.

(Courtesy: Aneek, August, 2006)

(Reference: 1 and 2. Resettlement and rehabilitation, EPW. November 12, 2005)

(The Writers are social researchers & have prepared to documentary films on Singur, called 'Abad Bhumi' (Right to Land)]

"The free development of every individual is the pre-condition of the total development."

Communist Manifesto.

Medha Patkar speaks at the end of the Public Hearing

My sisters, brothers and dear residents of Gopalnagar, Singur – I salute your valiant struggle! At this moment I remember a song in Bengali – “Fight, Fight and Fight - till you win. If you lose once-fight again, and again till you win.” Those who are present here today – viz. Smt. Mahashweta Devi – the true representative of the Adivasis and their demands, Mr. Malay Sengupta, ex-justice and member of today's public hearing, Dipankar Chakraborty – human right activist, Amitdyuti Kumar and his friends – the organisers of today's event, Rabindranath Bhattacharya – The local MLA and his friends, Trinamul Congress, Jatana-Dal(S), respected leaders of different. Political organisation, friends of CPI-ML, Comrades of APDR, friends of Jadavpur University, ladies and Agro-labours of different organisations– you all have become a part of the Singur movement. I thank you all after to-day's public hearing. We had come here with an open mind. Since morning we along with the media persons witnessed everything in open mind through the lenses of camera as well as with open eyes. The events of Singur during last few months have given rise to some basic, fundamental questions on the overall developmental programmes in the whole country. I had come here to know in person the ongoing struggles, before and after 25th September, to be specific, the history of which is being written on every land here. The News Papers here only relates the versions of Nirupam Sen and Buddhadev Bhattacharya. The people here are certainly not the anti-development rowdies. On 25th night there were no stones in their hands, no AK-47, Mamata Banerjee is only a political leader. The ground here is stony or fertile, irrigated or not? Govt. informations are wrong or correct? We wanted to verify these facts. Whether the people here are Tata's enemies? Do they want industry in the country, or not? We wanted to know that as well. How many people are here? How much land? How many labours? How many possess the documents of their land? How many farmers are without any leasehold? Ploughing for generations, purchasing lands. But still how many are not registered as yet in the Govt. book – we wanted to know. The people who are involved in the movement for years – may find a day enough to tell these facts. The judges deliver the verdict after hearing for few hours only. Leftists have been our comrades in many battles. For example, Enron. We could succeed there because of our joint struggle. You may not know – an Enron boss became mad and committed suicide with his torn clothes on the streets of Nuyork. Another one is imprisoned for 24 years. On our fight against such a mighty Enron in SEZ, Maharashtra we are fighting even today hand in hand with the leftists against their attempts to Capture land there. But when Police assaults the students of Jadavpur University and is declared innocent by the ruling front whereas the students are trapped in false cases when the land of Tea garden in Jalpaiguri and the labours daily wages are snatched away, when coal mine is wrongly set in place of electric project in Dankuni, when the workers fight against the world Bank in Asansol, when the slum dwellers are displaced from the canal side in Tollygange – we are compelled to intervene in West Bengal also. What has happened in Singur to-day, has happened in Gaziabad yesterday night after nights. Our Comrads had to go to the jail three times. Farmers are being sacrificed to-day in the whole country in the name of industrialisation! Under the leadership of Ulka Mahajan movements are organised in the villages of Maharashtra as well. Different Govts. exist in Andhra and in Chattishgarh.

Mamtaji has yet to appear in the test of fire. In Chattishgarh – Jindal purchasing land at the rate of ten thousand per acre and selling it at the rate of 1 lakh per acre with the addition of one hand pump to it! In Delhi each company is purchasing land at the rate of Rs. 130/- and selling at the rate of Rs. 13,000/-, Ambanis are divided now, but they are grabbing with both hands. In Maharashtra, they are acquiring thousands of acres – making them Special Economic Zones (SEZ). SEZ is a foreign place within our own country the concept of which makes us stand erect. SEZ is yet to be set in singur. But in Kolkata at least 6 SEZ have been sanctioned. If Tata settles in Singur – he will appeal for SEZ at that place which may be granted. A law has been formed in the country already in this regard. The language is same everywhere. Whether if is Hindi, Marathi, Chhattishgarhi, or Bengali. That is the language of globalisation and liberalisation. The language is liberal for the companies or the corporate world, but not so liberal, rather the reverse for the human beings. The deliberations by Becharam Manna and sisters during the Public hearing have exposed their internal wounds to us. We, the three judges have come to the conclusion that the advent of Tata in Singur is a terrible thing and against the public opinion. Tatas have no legal or moral sanction for the land of Singur – as far as the people of Singur are concerned. we are saying this to you as you had said it to us earlier. But, more than this saying and hearing a test of strength awaits us. Our comments to-day are not merely based on our experience of developments. This is in fact our interim

comments on the proceedings of to-day. We shall come out shortly with our written observations and shall make it public informing the Govt. as well. It's clear to us – after to-day's public hearing that none, not even the organisations know what's going to take place on the 1000 acres of land in Singur block. But we would like to ask the Govt. from this platform about their agreement with Tata. What are the details? What are the conditions? How much money is involved? Who has taken it and why? Sadly, there was none to represent the Govt. to-day. We are giving them 48 hours time. Let them answer these questions. We want to hear them. Why they were absent today? Public hearing is open to all. A PIL has been initiated in Supreme Court. We are aware of Supreme Courts' functioning. One has to knock on their doors (and shout) 'open the door' 'Give us the justice'!

The statements of little Payal or sister Brihaspati can also lead to a PIL and the Govt. should reply to it. We can say this emphatically that the land here is not stony at all. There are 15 types of crops here. Paddy, Potato, Vegetables. Terming it as stony is an insult to the land and the farmers. The people of this country will not tolerate this insult. We have seen that not only the underground water, this land is enriched with water over the ground through different canals and outlets. And, the sisters have clearly stated that they are in no mood to sell this land at any cost – be it 10 lakh, or, even 20 Lakh. Those who are not willing to part with the land please raise your hands....no even darkness can not suppress it – the majority is against donating the land. Your response is almost as good as those of the Jharkhands who says – “shall give our lives, but not lands.” I also want to tell the West Bengal Govt. That even after cultivating for 20 long years in Bihar the names are not registered. But West Bengal is not Bihar. W.B. is advanced in land reformation. We are also aware of 'operation Barga', or 'operation leasehold'. But, even after 30 years of ploughing there are instances of non-register of names. this is our experience to-day in W.B. So, our primary demand is that register all lands. Include the names of brothers and sisters as well. One more thing, the land acquisition law of 1894 of the British regime is still in vogue! Here is a document given to the centre by the leftists as regards SEZ where they have demanded reforms of the land acquisition law for SEZ. They have also asked for adequate compensation for the land losers. They have declared that the reformation of the 1894 law is a must for the justice to the land losers of SEZ. The question is then why they are subjugating the Singur residents with that obsolete law? Buddhababu, you shall have to impliment the same demand (as you have submitted to centre) for the people of Singur. They have also mentioned there the problems of Agro-labour – who are about 6000 in nos. including 2000 local. To the centre you have mentioned that without consulting the agro-labors, no land can be acquired (in SEZ.) Then what is wrong with Singur where even the village boards have not been consulted? There was a law during Rajib Gandhi's regime that not only the village Panchayats, even the village boards have the right to know all and decide. Since, Sonia Gandhi was not in politics in those days – She may not know this. But, we were there and we know it. So here the proposals have to be made in the village board to come to a decision. we may not be in the electoral politics but it's not untouchable to us. So we do realise that the land of the village, the underground water, mines, forest all belong to the village boards. Nobody is clear here about employment. Tata sometime says 300, sometime 800! But, we know what they have done in Jamshedpur, in Kalinganagar. They should also realise that they should not venture against the popular wishes. Once we have faced Kalinganagar, Let there be no more Kalinganagar in West Bengal. The sooner they understand this is good for all. You have clearly said during the hearing that you are not against industry. We have reservations against auto-industry also. Traffic Jam is so common in Kolkata now. How many more cars are required? What will happen to the pedestrians? To the environment? Females here haven't said anything against the auto-industry. You may be broad. But if it starts at a place 10 Km. away then what will happen to them? If it starts at Purulia – we shall be there also by the side of the protestors. The Adivasi land may be less harvesting there. They might cultivate for eating only, not for sale. But, they also can't be humiliated. So, wherever a company goes – as such we are against multinationals – but even for a company of this country – none can take over lands without people's consent. Here, we observe nobody is willing to take money. A few may have accepted cheque but not encashed. Anyone willing to return the cheque should be helped. We have experienced in Narmada the same thing. Anyone connected with the land, cultivating the land should have the right to return the cheque. A peculiar statement is being spread. Village is apathetic to produce, but the town is enterprising production wise. If it's true then suicide is a must for the farmers, or the Govts. should kill or abolish the villages. But, today's Public hearing has defied this logic of development. So, no suicide, no killing. Villages and the ploughing lands have to be saved. Losing the land may not lead to lose the home, but you will be forced to flee to Kolkata. May have to sweep the roads of Kolkata with the broom – your weapon to fight here! This is absolutely humiliating and no Minister has right to give this proposal. You have said, your land is your source of Development. But, the night of 25th. September. Anyone agreeing

will earn bad name, otherwise not. But, Payal said she is not weak. She is small, but hard. Listening to sister Saraswati and other sisters we understand that mothers and sisters were tortured that night. But you didn't report to the Police, didn't file FIR for which FIR should be made against your leaders. Bureaucrats, Police who have tortured the females should be punished. Without much ado I will just say that farmers and labours who are in struggle committees somewhere there name is Maharashtra, somewhere it is Singur. These struggle have to be taken to a new dimension. The things which are going on in the name of development – are disgusting and ugly. Gandhi-Marx-Ambedkar-Jaiprakash-Lohia-all say this. Everyone has the right to produce at his own place of existence, A piece of land, a village, a region – eviction of these are not the desired form of development. In reality they are the forms of destruction. Your struggles have drawn me and Mahashweta didi here. We shall come again till the Govt. Listens and offers justice. We shall struggle to win. Relentless struggle is not my aim. My objective is good harvest, good child education, land for everybody. Irrigation through smaller dams, not through big dams. But, if it doesn't happen, then no other alternative to struggle. Our commitment is for the struggle and the struggle for coming days.

(Transcribed by Samik Sarkar)
(Courtesy : Manthan Samayiki, Sept-Oct, 2006)
(Translated by Debashis Bhattacharya)

*And dream of a tomorrow
that sings the song of abundance
The spirit of the future man
I raise in every corner of this earth
With my strong fist
and the magnanimity of my mind.*

Ahsan Habib

Singur – The first feeling

What I saw, heard and understood

Dola Sen

The fertile lands of Bhargar, Singur and actually all over West Bengal is, it seems, nowadays filled with the pleading voice of the village widow in Nema Ghosh's "Chhinnamul". Is it possible for a human being to equate the natural tendency of people to stick to the land of the forefathers, the root of the peasants in their own land, with the dry future of a handful of currency notes? But West Bengal has today stepped in the direction of "industrialisation" to welcome the black chariot of "development". "Development" and "Industrialisation" needs land – only land. The fields – acres & acres of them – which give us golden harvest – are now in fear of being acquired by the Government, a Government whose "basis is in agriculture". The responsibility of globalisation cannot be shirked.

The real picture of "land reforms" by which West Bengal is "showing the way" to other states in such pride, that make one actually astonished. This land reform has given the rights of land to Bargadars in only 14.38 percent of the arable land and this is as expected helping in the increment of the numbers of landless labourers. This has led to marginalisation so that about ninety (90%) of the peasant population have become landless tillers, or marginalised small peasants. Since a large part of the agricultural labour power remain unutilised for more than one thirds (1/3) of a year, it has led to a huge loss of labour. At the same time, it is seen that more than 85% of the land has been under the ownership of the owners. We are now determined to build "the future of industry" standing "on the basis of agriculture" when it is quite obvious that land reforms need a long way to go. As the density of population is high in West Bengal, the per capita land distribution figure is low, and even less than "two bighas". In addition, the urbanisation industrialisation – development derived in the last 5 years have usurped almost 50 thousand acres of arable land per year for the last 5 years; and change of ownership of land has resulted in 24 lakhs new landless labourers in the last 15 years.

Mention, here, must be made of Sujoy Santra of Gopalnagar, Paschimpara, a landless labourer. He said, "Although I do not own land, I am a peasant throughout. Except table salt, I cultivate everything we eat. Even my cows are dependant on agriculture as they eat the hay. I cannot keep a cow even, if I cannot till the land. I have to die of starvation. We are peasants for 6 generations although we have not recorded ourselves as ryots, because we trusted our landlord. Is it a sin to trust someone? Actually we are being duped twice. House lands belonged to us in the past. It might have happened that our forefathers took loan from someone on some social occasions or for their treatment. Then they have been duped into giving a thumb impression on a piece of paper by way of which the right on the land was transferred to the landlords. This is how the landlords has acquired our lands on the pretext of repayment of loans. Now they are selling the land and making money although they have never filled the land, on the pretext that we have not recorded ourselves as ryots. And we will become "landless", although we have filled the land and actually we own this land. That is why if the Tatas come and establish factory here, it will be just an arrangement for starvation for us. Who wants to die. Hence we are fighting & fight we will."

The state is very indifferent in its attitude. They are not concerned, that it is wrong to take away fertile arable land. It's attitude regarding land acquisition is on the basis of compensation according to market price. The law is also by the side of the state. But, can the price of land be measured only by money? The law does not take into account, even the eco-system, the fertility of land, the water level underground, the biodiversity, leave alone the emotive aspects.

Gopal Manna lives beside the club, "Shakti Sangha", in Purbapara of Beraberi village. When I heard his words. I wondered that probably it is not at all possible for urban 'educated folk' like us to realise these words. He told us, "My forefather walked on these lands, how can I give away these? And land is mother to us – does anyone sell ones mother?"; tears rolled down his eyes. Govinda Patra of Uttar Bajemelia went more to the roots of the question, "This land is ours for generations. Has enemy ever sought my opinion?" Peasants consider their land as their mother. Land is his life. When he reaps the harvest after working in the field for months from dawn to dusk, it brings him his sense of pride also. This is why Solil Chowdhury in his famous song portrays that the peasant can bet his life and his honor that he will not part with the harvest of his labour. The peasantry, and the women folk of Singur has taken this oath today, and with this oath they have compelled the government teams to beat a retreat. In this context it is irrelevant to ask whether the convenors of the "KrishiJami Raksha Committee' are from SUCI or TMC. What is more important

is that the peasantry whether they are men or women, has come forward in this agitation. The question to us and all others is whether we will stand by their side or not. How can the legal logic be accepted if the real owner of the land, the person who tills the land from dawn to dusk not agree to part with the land? The logic of peoples' interest will also be irrelevant here. The law is made by the people and for the people. If the people wants the law will change. The same logic shall form the basis to answer the question – "To whom does land belong?" This is the greatest fallacy that the government will by force take away land from the people for the development of the people armed by the laws enacted by the people themselves.

Rebati Manna a peasant women of Berabari village puts it like this, "we are here to protect our motherland that is why we are only emboldened by the police atrocities." The participation of the womenfolk in Singur movement has given it a new dimension altogether.

Those who are fighting under the banner of "KrishiJami Raksha Committee" mainly comprise of middle peasants, small and marginalised peasants, ryots, poor peasant and landless labourers. The rich peasants, who do not till the land themselves or employ fillers and have their other sources of income, have only agreed to sell land in lieu of money. The enlisted ryots, are getting nothing from the sale of land, not from the government, nor from the landowners. Those who are resisting the sale of land are of the opinion that these lands can be tilled three, four or even fivetimes a year. The principal harvests are paddy-jute-potatoes, green vegetable. Both Aman and Boro – Paddys can be reaped here. That means the lands are neither marshlands nor are they single crop lands. In the ancient scrips of these lands, these are either "shali" or "shuna" lands, but all the "Shali" lands are three/four crops lands like the "Shuna" ones. They have become fertile over a long period of time. The landlessfarmers use to take small areas of land on lease to till various crops. If the land is taken away they will get nothing; neither compensation nor the promise of a job. Those families who does not have young menfolk who can work in the land, take to animal husbandry which also is dependant on land. The landless labours of Hooghly and Bardhaman, who are more than two thousand in number are also dependent on agriculture of this area, during the seasons of reaping & harvesting.

I asked a class XII student, Manash Chakraborty of Gopalnagar Madhyapara, "How many people are dependent on your land?" To my surprise he answered, "Apart from our three family members, the families of all the fifty people who work in the field are all dependent on this land."

There is a wholesale potato market in Ratanpur crossing of Singur. Apart from this there are 5 cold storages of potato in Singur including 3 in Ratanpur. The wholesale potato market has 3000 casual labourers who work for about 8 months in a year. Each of the cold storage have 30 permanent workers on an average and 25-30 casual labourers. Apart from these there are 250 casual labourers in each storage who work 10 moths for unloading and 1 ½ month for loading. If land in Singur is given to the Tatas about 1/3 of this huge workforce will lose their jobs.

The main contention of all these people who are connected to agriculture is that land holds the family through genetations, and gives social acceptance apart from safety. The money made in lieu of the land cannot sustain them in the long run. Even if they put it in banks, the continuous decrease in the rate of interest does not make this option suitable either. Neither do they trust in the promise of job in the factory in return for land because the people of West Bengal have become used to the close down of a factory every other day. They are raising other questions also. If the Tatas give job for land, that job will provide for one of the brothers or Sons of the family; how will the others survive? Furthermore the job of the next generation is not secure, but land will feed the family through generations. The state Government is providing for a training session in some institution of the Ramkrishna Mission – the form to be filled for the training contains these words at the end – No demand for job can be forwarded after the training. Mohanta Malik of Khaser-bhari has a brilliant logic. He comes from a worker family, and has himself worked in several factories dealing with casting, plastic, candles, etc. After those factories closed down, he used to work as a landless labourer, or used to work in the fisheries. Gradually he saved up and brought 2½ Bigha Land. He told me, "If we get 5 lakhs, 3 lakhs will be used up for a house and sanitation, because then we cannot live like now. We are not losing our place of residence. If there is factory here, there will be township and then the housing norms have to be changed according to urban standards. Then apart from rice, we will have to buy fuel, fish, vegetable. That alone will increase our daily expenditure by Rs. 50. Then how long can we survive with the rest two lakhs?" He also mentioned that the open green space is devoid of diseases. Factories will bring with it dust and fumes, as well as diseases. There will be unknown insects and the crop will be affected. The waste water from the factory will come down to the fields nearby and that will also not bear well for the crop. In all, the land is their saviour, their be-all. Hence they are not prepared to part with land.

That is why they are on the way to agitation, from May 2006. The agitation started with the showing of broomsticks to the representative team of the Tatas, and went on with deputation to the DM, road block, mass rallies, sit-ins meetings, showing black flags to ministers etc. It gradually gained a new height on becoming an anti-government non-co-operative movement. The people of Singur are guarding their land by making camps on their land, ignoring the government's threat to take away land by force. The administrative effort of making Singur a "Gurgaon" on the 25th of September could not in the long run terrorise the people. A spontaneous effort to save land has kept people alert day and night. Singur is now sitting on a volcano. The air of Singur is heavy with the reverberation that people will not part with their land without resistance. Use of force by the Government can make the situation dangerous.

That the peasants of Singur have taken on the Government, that they have voiced their protest has now attained more importance than the calculations of the strength of the organisation, the future plan, how many people will rally behind this agitation, how well will the people fight at the front etc. This is what is leftism! This is a struggling attitude! This is the tradition of struggle of Bengal! The indomitable attitude of the people of Singur have brought forth this long forgotten tradition.

The Congress, TMC, SUCI, CPI(M-L) in several of its groups, the Maoists and even the small partners of the left front have come forward in this spontaneous and organised agitation of the peasants. Some NGOs and other mass organisations have lent their hand too. We have found traces of moral support from the major partners of the left front also. Facing a stiff agitation the state Government has been forced to reduce the land requirement for the Tata's project. If this peasant agitation is to succeed, the above mentioned parties must support the peasants from the same platform. To divide their own force over a fine analysis of "The correct line" will not serve the purpose of anybody. Cutting across party lines and keeping aside the narrow political gains everybody should standby the "Krishi Jammi Raksha Committee".

Some of the people, be they supporters of the TMC or of the CPI(M), are saying that they will stop the acquisition of land at any cost even at the cost of their lives. But we shall remember that if the spontaneity of the people is blended with conscious planning, if the direction is clear, then only the agitation can reach its objective. This is the lesson of history.

If this can be achieved a possibility of throwing open the closed door of mass movement in West Bengal will arise. That is why the agitators of Singur today need the help of all organised and unorganised people.

(Translated by Bhaskar Chakraborty)

"Loss of job is not merely a loss of income, but essentially the loss of right to live in dignity." (The Joint Fact Finding Team of Human Right organisation and Trade Unions including CITU headed by a retired Bombay High Court Judge - on the Tata Immolation case where A Khan and A Dalvi had died)

Terror Cannot Suppress Them : People's Resistance to forced Land Acquisition In Singur

*A Team consisting of **Anuradha Talwar, Chiranranjan Paul, Adrish Das and Rejesh Datta** visited Singur on 6 December, 2006 to ascertain the present situation there. The following is their report.*

❖ Background :

In May 2006, The West Bengal Government decided to acquire 997 acres (initially 1013 acres were asked for) for the Tata Motors small car factory in Singur of Hooghly district. Almost 6,000 families including many agricultural workers and marginal peasants will lose their land and livelihoods. Though the State Government has decided to compensate the land owners, no policy has been taken for the landless agricultural workers, unrecorded *bargadars* and other rural households who are indirectly dependent for their livelihood on land and agricultural activities. Almost all the land owners had also expressed their unwillingness to give their land from the inception of the project, but these appeals have fallen on deaf ears.

On 30th November 2006, the Left Front Government clamped Section 144 on the entire Singur block and all roads leading to Singur. It thus weakened the freedom of people to protest and at the same time prevented the entry of any outside help for the people there. In this ghettoised situation it began the process of fencing land.

On 2nd December 2006, the Left Front Government in West Bengal took brutal police action against agricultural workers, sharecroppers and small peasants. On that day the Government entered the villages along with about 6,000 policemen and started fencing around people's land. This led to protests by the villagers. A large crowd of farmers and agricultural workers of "Krishi Jami Raksha Committee" (KJRC) including a good number of women gathered on the field to demonstrate peacefully against the unjust process of forced acquisition of their farmlands. Their outrage and protest action was responded by atrocious manhandling and unprecedented violation of human rights by the state Government. A large contingent of police, Combat Force and Rapid Action Force jointly attacked the villagers who were unwilling to give their farmland for Tata Motors project and brutally lathi-charged on them. Even women, children and old aged persons were not spared. The police battalions also threw rubber bullets and tear gas even inside the villages. Hundreds of peasants and their family members including numerous women were severely injured.

❖ Facts : Police Action

50 villagers including 16 women were arrested from the villages of Beraberi and Khaser Bheri. They were condemned under Section 307 of the IPC – attempt to murder. These 48 "murderers" included a 73 year old woman and two 13-14 year old girls. Their crime was that trying to peacefully resist forcible acquisition of their land. Five of those arrested are human rights or political activists from other areas.

Complaints from Khaser Bheri

Khaser Bheri was the first village that the police entered when it began its campaign to repress all peaceful protests in the area. It is the region where police crossed all the limits of violence. Here the police wildly used rubber bullets and tear gas to force the people into silence and disperse them so that forcible land acquisition could go on smoothly. Everywhere in these villages there are traces of brutal atrocity. Women were molested and pulled by their hair and have had clothes torn off. Foul language was purposely used to humiliate the women.

A 73 year old handicapped person, Sachin Das was brutally tortured at his home when he was lying down in his bed. His house was the one that has been often shown in TV reports with the police brutally using lathis on people on a roof top. On the top of their roof, police cruelly pounded Rajkumar Santra and Dukhram Dhara, two young innocent villagers, who took shelter there to escape from the torment of police. They were also arrested. Sachin Das's son Pradip Das and grandson Sanchay Das (22) were caught by the police and they are still in captivity. His daughter in Law Bharati Das (wife of Nityananda Das) was wounded on several parts of her body. Her chin was bruised due to hitting of a rubber bullet. Rita Das (wife of Sandwip Das, third son of Sachin Das) got hurt on her left foot by a rubber bullet thrown by the police when she was feeding her child. Police broke tiles of their roofs, doors, glasses of windows, furniture; TV set and even demolished their latrine.

Labkumar Patra, a 12 year old boy, is now living alone in a ruined house as police arrested his parents

(Arabinda Patra and Laxmi Patra) and elder brother Dinanath (19). Police entered their house breaking the doors by a crowbar and threw away utensils from their rooms after taking their meal.

Complaints from Beraberi Purbapara

Maya das (17 Years), daughter of Sharat Chandra Das residing at Purbapara showed her left foot severely burnt by tear gas shell. She told that most of the male residents were absconded for last three days. She also alleged that the police assaulted village girls and women and misbehaved with them. Rupa Koley, daughter of Balai Koley, a village girl of Beraberi, asserted that the male police forcibly entered into rooms of the village houses and thrashed the women. Police trespassed into her room and beat her up. She exhibited her shirt that had been torn by the police. She also got injury on her left arm near armpit.

Subhash Das (son of Sri. Mohanta Chandra Das), a young peasant of Purbapara, Beraberi, said that he was severely wounded by lathi charge. On the day of violence, he went to the field to reap his harvested paddy. Suddenly, he saw a huge police battalion with lathi and rubber bullet guns hounding the peasants who were peacefully demonstrating on the field. The policemen jumped upon the unarmed peasants including a number of women and started to beat them up vehemently. Subhash ran away from the field along with other villagers and they entered into the village to escape from the police. The police also came into the village chasing the peasants. It was at this time that Subhash Das was lathi charged and wounded. He alleges that they flung tear gas shells inside the village and shot rubber bullets to the villagers.

The villagers of Beraberi have shown a number of rubber bullets and empty tear gas shells thrown by the police aiming at the village houses. Rukmini Das, a middle aged housewife, showed a heap of stalks of jute-plant burnt into ashes due to fire caught by tear gas shell. Madhab Das, son of Nalin Chandra Das of Beraberi alleged that the police also spoiled the crops.

Mangala Bag, wife of Haradhan Bag, said that the police battalion is carrying out night patrol in the villages and knocking on their doors to scare them. Her husband and son (Nishikanta Bag) are still absconding.

Ashto Manna and Maya Das alleged that some ruling party cadres who were in disguise putting on police uniform and covering their face with black clothes assailed the villagers. Those local cadres also assisted the policemen to identify the houses of the activists of Krishi Jami Raksha Committee.

Prasenjit Das, one of the leaders of KJRC, strongly denied the defense given by the government that some "outsiders" created the disorder and aggressively attacked the police with acid bulbs and sharp weapons. Prasenjit stated that all the arrested persons are local people and all of them were unarmed. He said that terrified by the state violence the inhabitants of the locality are now always keeping their voter identity cards with them.

❖ Facts : Acquisition of land

We interviewed 45 people in all in Beraberi Purbapara, Khaser Bheri and Dobadi and three hunger strike camps. None of these people have given their land to the Government nor are they willing to give it. Some of them are unrecorded *Bargadars* or agricultural workers who have lost all means of livelihood and have no hope of compensation.

We were provided with written statements that could be collected from 300 families in two days.

These families own 184 acres of land and all these families have said that they have not and do not want to sell their land to the Government. This is 20% of the Project Area. These families are from Beraberi, Gopalnagar, Alipur, Rupnarayanpur, Madhubati and Baurbheri villages. We were unable to reach many of the other villages, including Joy Mullah and Bajemeliya. Prasenjit Das, one of the leaders of KJRC, stated that despite the tension and pressure on the people atrocity till now the Government could not get hold of about 450 acres land from the peasants.

There are 170-175 households in Purbapara of Beraberi mouja and only 12-15 of them have given up their lands. The rest do not support the project nor have they given their land. In Khaser Bheri, only 32 families have given their land and 110 families do not support the project.

Mangala Bagh of Beraberi Purbapara mourned that her four bighas of land has been grabbed by the state and she was unable to collect her harvested paddy from the field. In many households poor peasants are suffering from food crisis as they have not been able to get their paddy home due to the terror in the area.

Ananta Majhi son of Late Haradhan Majhi is an unrecorded *Bargadar* of Harimohan Botabyal. His elder

brother Kalipada Majhi is also an unrecorded *Bargadar*. They have lost work because the landowners have sold the land without them getting any compensation. There are 25 unrecorded *bargadars* in his village all of whom are in the same miserable state of being faced with starvation.

Rabin Das, Kalyani Das, Balai Koley, Shyamal Moitra, Bhim Moitra, and others who are poor landless agricultural workers of Beraberi, expressed their agony that they would be starving as they are going to lose their jobs. In Dobadi village of Beraberi, there are around 85 landless agricultural labourers households, who will also be victimized by this land acquisition.

Many of those whom we spoke to complained about not being able to harvest the vegetable crop that was ready or would be ready in a few days. Extensive potatoes planting has also been done in the fenced off area and farmers (for example, Kamalkanta Khara from Bajemeliya one of the hunger strikers) also spoke about having bought huge stocks of potato seed and fertilizer that were now lying unused at their homes.

Those we spoke to also said that they were not against industrialization, but they were opposing the use of multicropped land for industry. They suggested that one kilometer from the present area in Talerbheri and Korerbheri and other neighbouring Moujas there was mono cropped land that could be used. They also suggested that Dankuni land about 15 kms away could also be used.

❖ **Facts : The present Situation**

At present, the situation in Singur is very grave. Wooden posts have been erected around the entire land earmarked for the car factory and steel nets are being fixed to the poles. The whole area has been covered by a strong security. Huge police forces have been employed in the villages. A number of temporary police camps have been set up in Jay Mullah, Beraberi, Bajemeliya, Khaser Bheri moujas and beside Drugapur Expressway to thwart the peasants from entering into the forcibly acquired land.

Day and night, the state police force and combat forces of the Government are terrifying the poor villagers. The peasants are also being harassed when they enter the fenced off land to take their harvested paddy. Panchu Manna an agricultural worker of Purbapara stated that on the day we visited the village, the police had snatched away his puffed rice when he was eating it. 6 people were also detained by the police that day when they had gone to the fenced area to get their harvested paddy.

The prohibitory order under section 144 of the CRPC is still in force there. Frighteningly, not only the police, but a large number of ruling party cadres are continuing a reign of terror in the affected villages.

❖ **Facts : People's Resistance**

The peasant families who have not agreed to give up their lands for Tata Motors project hoisted black flags on the roofs of their houses protesting against the police atrocity and forcible eviction on the day we visited the village.

15 activists have been sitting in 3 different camps on a peaceful hunger strike for the past 65 hours in protest against the forcible occupation of their land. Those on hunger strike include the local MLA, Rabindranath Bhattacharya and 3 women who are more than 70 years old. They are demanding an immediate stop of land acquisition process and withdrawal of section 144 from Singur and unconditional release of the confined activists.

We deeply believe in the capacity of democracy to surmount any trials that may lie ahead, provided only that we practice it in our daily lives.

David E. Lilienthal

Fact Finding Report of 2nd Dec. 2006

Manabadhikar Suraksha Mancha (masum)

Now, Singur, an obscure place in District: Hooghly, West Bengal hijacked the National limelight for the resistance shown by the agrarian populace of the place against forceful land grabbing of the State administration. The local people had been building up the resistance since long in the area where a TATA group decided to establish a motor vehicle factory in the acquired land in Singur. The local resisting force got some intellectuals and student activists by their side for this cause. They were camping in Beraberi, Ghaser Veri and nearby villages for resisting forcible acquiring of their own land, many areas of which are fertile and multi crop producing lands. The noted social activist, Ms. Medha Patkar was also present to show her solidarity with the movement and a public tribunal was organized few days back and she took active participation in it.

The State Government deployed a large number of police contingent and Rapid Action Force (RAF), near about 5000, over there, and is continuing the force deployment in the area. The government already promulgated the prohibitory order u/s 144 of Criminal Procedure Code (Cr.P.C.) in Singur. When the government officials started barbing the land on 2nd November 2006 at about 10 a.m., the local villagers tried to resist the attempt of the government by mobilizing the masses. In due course of time, violence broke out and police force and RAF resorted to widespread lathi-charge and firing tear-gas shells and rubber bullets. It has been reported that the police entered in to the adjoining villages and mercilessly beat and physically assaulted the villagers indiscriminately showing no respect to the women, old people and children. Number of people got severe injuries due to police brutality. The police entered in to the houses and ventured into the roof top and beat up unarmed peaceful people with batons causing bloodsheds.

Singur is in highlight already due to "Leftist" government's transition by calling multinational TATA group for constructing their car factory over fertile land. The opposition political groups inside and outside the legislative house and several socio-political groups in street, had been protesting this action of the government of acquiring land from the peasants who were not at all willing to part with their land under any situation. The marginalized agrarian community largely with the protesting group, but the state government has decided to acquire the said land by any means even by applying crude physical force and state violence and terror.

In course of acquiring of land forcefully the police arrested nearly more than 60 people comprising women and even children on 2.12.2006. Among them, Jhuma Patra, daughter of Mr. Ashok Patra of village Ghaser Veri, Singur, 12 years old and a student of class V in Naraharipara Primary School and Soma Dhara Daughter of Sanyasi Dhara of same village, a minor were also arrested. The fact finding team of Masum visited the detainees at Chandannagar Police Station. Altogether 18 women were detained in Chandannagar Police Station by the police authority under two police cases being Singur Police Case nos 150 & 151 dated 2.12.2006. Both the cases the complainant was Officer-in-Charge of Singur Police Station, Mr. Priya Brata Baxi. In case no. 150, according to police version, 38 persons were arrested and among them 4 were admitted to government hospital. The police initiated the case under sections 147/148/149/186/188/447/332/333/353/325/307 of Indian Penal Code (IPC) & 9(b) (2) of Indian Explosive Act (I.E. Act) with 9 W.B.M.P.O. Act. In the Case No. 151, ten people were injured and one police personnel also received injury. This case was registered under sections 147/148/149/188/323/353/307 of IPC and 9(b)(2) Of I.E. Act.

The Fact Finding Team of Masum visited Chinchura Hospital, Chinchura Police Station and Chandannagar police station. During the visit, the team met arrested persons and the injured persons in police custody for getting the truth. According to the arrestees, they were unarmed and peaceful during the arrests. At the time of arrest no memo of arrest or inspection memo to the injured was ever prepared by the arresting police in compliance of the mandatory directions of Supreme Court in D.K. Basu judgment reported in AIR 1999 SC 610. The police personnel were fully armed and during the arrest and had severely manhandled and brutally beaten the protesters. The Fact Finding team also visited Chinsura General Hospital, where four of them were detained with severe injuries. One of them was Dilip Das who bled profusely for hours without any medical assistance and got eight stitches in his scalp after many hours of his arrest.

In the meantime, Ms. Medha Patkar was arrested with seven other companions and she was manhandled during her arrest and verbal abuse was made by the police personnel, there were no arrangement of adequate police forces to effect the arrest. Later her companions, Mr. Dipankar Chakraborty, Mr. Sumit Chowdhury and others were released on furnishing personal release bonds (PR Bond) at Chinsura Police

Station. But Ms. Medha was whisked away in a police car and the car was moved towards Kolkata, where she was in the car whole night. The police announced that she was not arrested. Restricting the movement of a free citizen is an arrest and the police of Singur P.S. informed her that she was arrested. Her detention and restricting her free movement was out and out illegal act of the police who got enough patronization from the administration and government to defeat the rule of law in order to achieve the narrow end of the administration and virtually putting the entire democratic system into a ludicrous and farcical one. It was utter violation spirit of Indian Constitution particularly Art 19 and 21. At Chandannagar Police Station at 10 pm, the fact finding team found 18 women lying in the front office. Names of the arrestees were :-

1. Rangta Munshi, 2. Gargi Sengupta, 3. Swapna Banerjee, 4. Chaitali Bhattacharjee, 5. Dipali Moitra, 6. Sankari Koley, 7. Champa Poila, 8. Padma Dey, 9. Tapasi Das, 10. Sakuntala Das, 11. Shyamali Das, 12. Sabitri Patra, 13. Sabitri Das, 14. Soma Dhara, 15. Lakshmi Patra, 16. Jhuma Patra, 17. Sandhya Patra, 18. Pratima Dey

Sl. No. 14 Soma Dhara daughter of Sanyasi Dhara of Singur aged about 14 years and Sl. No. 16 Jhuma Daughter of Alok Patra, a student of class five of Narasinghapur School were amongst the arrestees lying in the floor of office of Chandannagar PS. When asked the duty police officer and Officer-in-Charge of said Chandannagar PS said that under the order of senior officers, all these persons were kept in detention at this PS though all the arrested people are not connected with any offence of Chandannagar area. Though in Chiinsura, the District Head Quarter, there was a women cell of police, but they did not put the female prisoners there. While talking with the female prisoners, they jointly told the Fact Finding team, that they were mercilessly beaten by the police and police used abusive language. They leveled serious allegations that many of the female arrestees were manhandled molested and sexually abused by the male men in uniform of police. The women prisoners asked the team to supply one bottle of drinking water as they could not drink the water supplied by police because the bottle was so dirty that it was unfit for human consumption. Not a single Memo of arrest was prepared against them.

Later, on 3/12/2006 in the morning hours, the police could secure the release of two minor girls, namely Miss Soma & Miss Jhuma under their set up legal practioners on PR Bond (Personal Release Bond) in a case under section 151 of Cr.P.C. The rest of the female arrestees were produced before the court of Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate of Chandannagar and they were given into judicial remand till 8th December 2006.

Our Fact Finding team also visited District Hospital at Chinsura. The team met : 1. Mr. Dilip Das – 44 years, 2. Mr. Mrityunjoy Patra – 52 years, 3. Mr. Tapan Batabyal – 53 years. 4. Mr. Bilas Sarkar – 26 years.

All were kept in prison ward with armed police guard in the hospital. The team managed to talk with the under trial prisoners there. The team found Mr. Dilip Das with bandage over his head and the injury with 8 stitches; he was lying in the bed in critical condition. He informed us that the police inflicted injury on his head and even after receiving serious bleeding injury over his head at about 11 am, police did not take him to any doctor for treatment. Putting him in a police car he was brought at Chinsura Hospital at about 1.30 pm alongwith other co-injured arrested persons. Only after about two and half hours in police custody he got first aid. Profuse bleeding from his injured head took place by this time, as stated other inmates of that ward.

One police officer came to this prison ward and threatened all these four people to sign in the respective Memo of Arrest but they refused because some paragraphs were kept blank in the memo, mainly the time of arrest.

When the team talked with Mr. Mrityunjoy Patra, he showed his injured right leg and his back. Mr. Tapan Batabyal lying in a bed with big haematoma both right and left legs. Mr. Bilas Sarkar, one energetic youth with long hair showed his injured left shoulder, lacerated injuries and swelling over on his different parts of the body.

Our Fact Finding team then rushed to Chinsura police Station where we found all total 10 people, all are the villagers of Beraberi, PS – Singur, were kept in the lock-up. Their names were–

1. Mr. Shyamal Ghosh s/o Sibram Ghosh
2. Mr. Uday Ghosh s/o Madan Mohan Ghosh
3. Mr. Birat Malik s/o Late Gokul Malik
4. Mr. Tushar Kanti Karmakar s/o Late jugal Kishore Karmakar
5. Mr Prabir Ghosh s/o Manik Ch. Ghosh
6. Mr. Swapan Santra s/o Balai Chandra Santra
7. Mr. Amal Das s/o Narendra Nath Das
8. Mr. Sanat Sheet s/o Bhadreswar Sheet
9. Mr. Swarup Patra s/o Baidyanath Patra
10. Naba Kumar Bag s/o Gokul Chandra Bag

All those Under Trial Prisoners showed injury marks over their body caused by lathi (baton) charge. They were arrested at about 4pm at Singur and put in Chuchura lock-up after 8 pm. About four hours they were forced to sit in a prison van.

Scanning the entire incident at Singur on 2.12.2006 that shook and shocked the conscience of the democratic people, it can be safely said that the human rights of the people were grossly violated. The police administration swung into barbaric violent actions ignoring and blatantly violating legal procedures and constitutional rights of the people with direct encouragement and support from the highest administration. The police have set the democratic system into an arrogant desire of the tyranny. By this process, all legal procedures and rule of law were put into the state of mockery.

The date and time of arrest was not shown correctly to avoid of recording illegal detention. We can not say that it is the plan/fault of Singur police officials only, because district and state level high police officials are in close touch with the every tit-bits of police action. The police had shown no respect to the life and property of the people of the country. The entire picture demonstrated as if the police had been fighting in a foreign land against the enemy.

It is the scheme of the police regulation that the police must behave with the people with human face. Rudeness, harshness and brutality are forbidden under regulation no. 33 of Police Regulations of Bengal 1943.

The mandatory directions of the Supreme Court in D.K. Basu judgment (AIR 1997 SC 610) have been shown scant respect by the state police force. All the arrestees were produced before ACJM court at Chandannagar on 3.12.2006. We are sorry to observe that while dealing with Singur episode, the criminal justice administration showed partisan stand to save the violators in iniform.

The children were arrested and kept in police lock up with other inmates and they were released on the next day on furnishing personal bond under total violations of the procedure of Juvenile Justice Act.

The police exerted excessive brutal force in a revengeful manner on the peasants and villagers, action of which is the wildest nightmare in any civilised society. From the behaviour of the police and the government aftermath, it is not at all evident that a democratically elected system is on the run; instead it looks like a regime run by a tyrannic monarchy. Police, civil administration act like henchmen of TATA group. Even in conducting arrest the police have not followed the provisions enumerated under sections 46(2)/130(3) of Cr.P.C. The citizens of a free country like India have constitutional right to assemble peacefully and express their views and opinions on any subject and right to agitate peacefully.

By this process, the judiciary dealing with the police cases arising out of Singur incident has been threatening to become a mere executive state agency forgetting its pivotal role at the time of crisis, to be unbiased, neutral and justice oriented; the attending judicial Magistrate toed the line of the police and without applying judicial mind ordered the custody of all arrested persons including the innocent women only considering the nomenclature of the penal code on the face of the complaint. The judiciary has failed to live up when it was the most urgent demand of the situation and turned its head away when the law of the land was flouted and abused nakedly by the State administration and the police.

Several International Covenants and International Laws have been shown scant regard by the Left ruled State administration and the police. To be specific, we can draw United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development (1986) where it has been unambiguously narated the definition of Development in Article1(2) of the declaration implies: The human right to development also implies the full realisation of the right of peoples to self-determination, which includes, subject to the relevant provisions of both International covenants on human rights, *the exercise of their inalienable right to full sovereignty over all their natural wealth and resources* and the UN Declaration on the Right to Development (1986) – Article 2(1) – *The human person is the central subject of development and should be the active participant and beneficiary of the right to development.*

It never ever looked like the government for a bit of moment paused and considered the human person has any value in its agenda. Gun tottering, lathi wielding 6000 strong armed forces have made Singur a battle field where a villager has no value.

Regardless of what happened at Singur on 2.12.2006, it is not clear actually what the government is really going to do. There is no transparency in taking the land by the government, at what price the government is giving land to the industrialists, what should be the actual valuation of the so called acquired land, what will be fate of the peasants who are solely dependant of the agricultural activity, how the unwilling peasants to give up land will be dealt with, nothing is clear. If anything is done, it has to be done peacefully and with transparency keeping the rights and the interest of the peasants intact.

SINGUR 'TRADE SECRET' REVEALED

Rs 160-crore bonanza for Tatas

Manas Ghosh

KOLKATA, Jan. 19: Neither Bengal Chief Minister Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee nor the chairman of the Tata group Mr Ratan Tata has agreed to divulge the terms and conditions under which Tata Motors Limited (TML) has decided to set up a factory at Singur for manufacturing small cars to be sold for Rs. 1 lakh. The Chief Minister and his industries minister Mr Nirupam Sen have both said on record that “these are trade secrets”. Indeed and undoubtedly they are. The Chief minister is scared that making the terms public would amount to opening a Pandora's box.

Because both Mr. Bhattacharjee and Mr. Sen are “committed to provide” for the Singur small-car project “upfront infrastructural assistance” possibly worth over Rs. 160 crore. The amount is equivalent to the 16 per cent excise exemption that TML would have got if it had set up its small car plant in Uttaranchal ~ a state that enjoys zero excise duty benefit ~ instead of in West Bengal. This commitment for “significant support in the form of upfront infrastructural assistance” was made by Mr Bhattacharjee “to make the TML investment in West Bengal attractive.”

A virtual gift of 650 acres of prime land to Tata Housing Development Company (THDC) in Rajarhat New Town and in the adjoining Bhangar Rajarhat Area Development Authority for building an IT and residential township along with WBIDC as a partner is also part of Mr. Bhattacharjee's “commitment” to provide “upfront infrastructural assistance” for the TML-Singur project. The “gift” has been made with the idea that the profit that THDC and WBIDC would make here will be used for subsidising the manufacturing cost of the first series of the Rs one lakh cars to be made by TML at Singur. The Tatas had sought this “gift” so as to enable themselves to provide a cross-subsidy for keeping the cost of their first series of 100,000 cars within the Rs 1 lakh price target. This “gift”, incidentally, is over and above the Rs. 140 crore that Mr. Bhattacharjee has already committed from the state exchequer to pay compensation to about 12,000 farmers whose 1000 acres of highly fertile multicrop land have been acquired for the car project.

The chief minister's “commitment to provide upfront infrastructural assistance” is part of the deal he made with Mr Tata to bag the small-car project for West Bengal ~ the official document saying so is in possession of the statesman and reproduced with this report (see box). The letter dated 10 October last year written by Dr. Sabyasachi Sen, principal secretary of West Bengal's commerce and industries department, to the Housing and Infrastructure Development Corporation (Hidco), spills the beans. It reveals how the chief Minister's “commitment to provide support in the form of upfront infrastructural assistance” for TML's Singur project will be honoured.

Right at the outset, Dr. Sen states that the “overall financial situation” of the Left Front Government would not allow it to draw huge funds from the exchequer for providing “infrastructural assistance” to the TML project. Seeing budgetary support for the purpose will be out of the question as this would attract legislative scrutiny and censure by the CAG because providing exclusive infrastructure assistance to any private company's project is not part of the Left Front Government's stated industrial policy. Making a complete departure from this policy to benefit a particular private player would not only be construed as unethical but would also be cited as discriminatory by other companies that would demand similar “infrastructural assistance” for their projects in the state. Dr. Sen's letter states : “In order to bring TML investment in (to) West Bengal we had to face competition from other states, in particular, Uttaranchal which enjoys zero excise duty benefit. For a car proposed to be priced at Rs 1 lakh, the exemption of 16 per cent excise duty makes a major difference. Therefore, in order to make the investment in West Bengal attractive to TML, the state Government has to offer significant support in the form of upfront infrastructural assistance.”

Dr. Sen then goes on to state how money is to be found for providing this “support”. “We have received a proposal from Tata Housing Development company, another Tata group company, for development of an IT township in West Bengal in partnership with WBIDC. The agreement proposed to be executed between THDC and WBIDC envisages that the revenue earned by WBIDC from this project will enable it to fulfil its commitment for the TML project. The IT township project, spread over 600 acres, is proposed to be located

within Rajarhat PS outside the boundary of Rajarhat New Town. However, for this project to provide adequate revenue to THDC, they (Tatas) have requested for allotment of 50 acres of land within Rajarhat New Town.

“Thus the composite IT-cum-residential project to be implemented by THDC comprising 50 acres in Rajarhat New Town and 600 acres in the Bhangar Rajarhat Area Development Authority will enable this project to offer sufficient returns to WBIDC. This in turn will enable WBIDC to meet its commitment of infrastructural assistance to the TML project without having to resort to government budgetary support.” In other words, both THDC and WBIDC are being given prime land in Rajarhat and BRADA areas with the specific purpose of helping them make enough money there, and providing the promised “upfront infrastructural assistance” for the Singur small-car project. This would go a long way in subsidising TML's



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No. 647:

Dated: 12-10-2006

Sir,

You are aware that recently the State Government has entered into an agreement with Tata Motors Limited (TML) to set up an automobile manufacturing unit in West Bengal. In the last Ten years there has been a significant growth in the automobile industry in India. However, this growth has been confined to Northern, Western and Southern India and unfortunately there has been no growth in West Bengal at all. At the same time the growth of automobile industry has very significant impact of the development of ancillary industries components manufacturing, automobile related service industry etc.

Because of these factors the State Government has been trying to invite automobile manufacturers to come to West Bengal. Due to these offers we have been able to persuade TML to invest in West Bengal. TML have proposed to set up a factory to produce their new small car. In order to bring this investment in West Bengal we had to face competition from other states in particular, Uttaranchal which enjoys zero excise duty benefit in a car proposed to be priced Rs 1 lakh the exemption of the 16% excise duty makes a major difference. Therefore in order to make the investment in West Bengal attractive to TML the State Government has to offer significant support in the form of upfront infrastructural assistance.

However keeping in view the overall financial situation in the State it is felt that such infrastructural assistance should be provided without having to draw fund from the State Government.

We have received a proposal from THDC, another tata Group Company for development of IT township in West Bengal in partnership with WBIDC. The agreement proposed to be executed between THDC and WBIDC. envisages that the revenue earned by WBIDC from this project will enable it to fulfill its commitments for the TML project. The IT township project is proposed to be located within Rajarhat P.S. outside the boundary of Rajarhat New Town. However for the project to provide adequate revenue to THDC, they have requested for allotment of 50 acres of land within Rajarhat New Town. Thus, the composite IT cum-residential project to be implemented by THDC comprising of 50 acres in Rajarhat New Town and 500 acres in the BRADA will enable the project to offer sufficient return to WBIDC which in turn, will enable WBIDC to meet its commitment of infrastructural assistance to the TML project without having to resort to budgetary support.

You may also recall that this was discussed in the last meeting of the standing Committee of the Cabinet on industry. It is required that in the light of the above circumstances, 50 acres of land be allotted to THDC by HIDCO on the following terms.

1. 20 acres for commercial purpose and 30 acres for residential purpose altogether in one chunk.
2. The price of the commercial land will be Rs. 3 crores per acre and this price of the residential land will be Rs 2.50 crores per acre.
3. Building plan etc will be in accordance with the Rajarhat New Town Building Rules.
4. Possession of the land would be given by HIDCO in December, 2006

Yours faithfully,
(Sabyasachi Sen)

manufacturing costs at Singur. All of this was discussed and approved by the standing committee of the Cabinet on industry of which the chief minister, the industries minister and finance Minister Mr Asim Dasgupta are members.

The Committee had directed Hidco, which is executing the Rajarhat New Town project, to allot THDC 20 acres of prime commercial land for building an IT hub and an adjacent 30 acres for residential purposes.

The price of commercial land was fixed at Rs 3 crore per acre and the Cabinet fixed a special concessional price of Rs 2.50 crore per acre for the residential land. The standing committee overruled objections that a self-financial government company like Hidco, which runs without budgetary support and is still in its infancy, could hardly afford this loss. The Committee pointed out that this “little sacrifice” on Hidco's part was necessary to get the TML project going at Singur. It didn't matter if THDC and WBIDC made gains at Hidco's expense. No amount of Argument could convince committee members that providing concessions to a giant real estate and building company like THDC (which has built huge estates and developed properties for L&T, Lupin Laboratories and Phillips in Mumbai) was an unsound proposition.

Also, the standing committee refused to divulge the price fixed for 600 acres to be allotted to THDC in BRADA area for building another IT-cum-residential complex. Objections regarding WBIDC utilising profit earned in Rajarhat and BRADA areas for providing “upfront infrastructural assistance” in Singur were also raised. This was because TML's proposed Singur car project is not a joint venture and WBIDC is not a partner in it. TML is an independent private company responsible only to its shareholders and WBIDC is not among its shareholders. In fact, WBIDC's involvement in the Singur project was restricted only to make available land to TML to avoid the costlier route of land acquisition for a private company as provided under chapter 7 of Land Acquisition Act of 1894. And there was no government policy allowing WBIDC to utilise its profits to help TML's Singur project get off the ground.

“Of the over 1600 acres land to be given to the Tatas in Singur, Rajarhat and in BRADA areas, only 300 to 350 acres at Singur will be needed for the car factory,” said a senior state government official. **“The rest will be utilised for real estate purposes and earning a high profit by the Tatas.** This is not acceptable to many of us. This is not industrialisation. So many open-ended commitments have been made by the chief minister that the whole deal smacks of sleaze and skullduggery.”

(Acknowledgement : The Statesman dated 20th January, 2007)

The greater must rule lesser. But it must so rule them as not to contradict the fundamental principles that are common to both.

William Pitt

Brinda Karat's Untruths

Paschim Banga Khet Majoor Samity

“Untruth” means lies. So who are these people whom Ms Karat is accusing of being liars? Leaving aside the TMC who are the traditional enemies of the CPM, these liars include both the RSP and the CPI, Left Front partners who have repeatedly expressed their disapproval of the way in which the Singur issue has been handled, the police atrocities and the lack of transparency; Medha Patkar, her comrade of many struggles; Mahasweta Devi an 81 years old woman who has spent her life writing about the struggles of the oppressed; Justice Moloy Sengupta a retired Chief Justice and many civil society organizations whose reports have been used below ... The list could go on and on. Most significantly this list also includes all the newspaper reports and TV images that we have been seeing over the past 7 months since this struggle started on May 25th 2006. Last, but not least, it also includes the people of Singur who have been saying a loud NO to the Tatas project over and over again.

But let us come to Brinda Karat's untruths.

Brinda's Untruth 1 : Of the 997 acres required, the Government has received consent letters from landowners for 952 acres.

Facts : As early as 17 July 2006 the members of the Singur Krishi Jami Raksha Committee (SKJRC) provided the Government with letters from owners and sharecroppers of about 950 acres of land who refused to give their land for the Tata Motors Project. Since then, some absentee landlords have given their letters of consent. Due to various pressures, some of the farmers decided to give their land. A sample survey done by Samhati Udyog in November 2006 showed that of the 335 land holders that they interviewed, and who owned 261.49 acres, only 20 were willing to or had already handed over their land to the Government. 315 households owning 237.19 acres had refused to give their land. Those willing to hand over their land gave reasons as “family pressure/other business/can't fight CPI(M) and Tatas/single-crop land.”

On 6-12-06 the SKJRC provided us with signed letters from 300 farmers who have given the details of their land holdings amounting to 184 acrs and have declared that “we have not and will not give our land to Tata Motors.” These letters and the land record details can be given whenever anyone wants to look at them. The SKJRC has collected such letters from owners of over 400 acres.

A great deal of claims and counter claims are being made about consent letters. The best thing would be for the Government to publicly make available the list of those who have actually given their land. On 12th December when Brinda Karat was in Kolkata, only 42 farmers said they had given consent. According to the Dainik Statesman (13th December 2006), when the CPI(M)'s Hooghly District Secretary, Shri Balaram Sapui was questioned at the site of Brinda Karat's meeting about why only 42 farmers had signed the letter, he stated that the list of the other farmers who had given consent was publicly displayed at the Singur Block Office. When we asked the BDO for this list the next day, he said no list was available with him.

Brinda's Untruth 2 : This is the one government that has had numerous meetings with the affected people and called all party meetings several times to discuss the details of the project, the nature of land being taken over, and the compensation package.

Facts : Undemocratic and forcible land acquisition is the most deplorable feature of the Singur Project. The West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation status report itself makes this amply clear. In a column marked “Outcome” the report clearly states that no decision transpired at any of the 9 meetings with the local people. There is no other evidence given in this report of popular consent for the project. Similarly, the Government report mentions that there was strong local resistance to the project and that “entry to the land to explore the terrain and to ascertain the ground conditions by WBIDC could not be done till early December”. In spite of such clear evidence of resistance and local discontent the Government went ahead with acquisition after declaring Section 144 and using a huge police force to quell the peaceful resistance of the people.

From newspaper reports it is clear that the people of Singur resisted the Tata Motors project from 25th May 2006, The first day the Tata Motors team went to inspect the site, the team was gheraoed and had to be rescued by the police. A peaceful movement was started after that. Later on rallies were organised by SKJRC to the BDO (1st July) and DM office (13th July), a road blockade (24th July), boycott of Government's

hearing (22nd August), lying down on the road by the village women to prevent delivery of notice by the Government (1-2 September). On the day when commencement of payment began (25th September), 7000 people gathered at the block office and were assaulted in the middle of the night after lights were put off deliberately by the police and party cadres. 40 people were injured and 1 person (Rajkumar Bhul) died. Blockades by all major political parties followed (26th and 27th September). Further agitations were organized all through October and November by the SKJRC and major political parties, but there has been no stop to the process in spite of a worsening political situation. Discussion and dialogue have been totally absent from the entire process.

Brinda's Untruth 3 : It is well recognised that West Bengal under the Left has ensured registration of the majority of sharecroppers through a bitter struggle. In Singur, all the 275 sharecroppers will get 25 percent of what landowners will get; and 170 more sharecroppers who are not registered have applied for compensation, which is under consideration.

Facts : Nagarik Manch in a response to the WBIDC Status Report says that the status report puts the total number of bargadars as 407 (recorded and unrecorded). "As per Government standards, in undivided Bengal and, later, in West Bengal, right from the days of the Land Revenue Commission, under the chairmanship of Sir Francis Floud, 1940, it is accepted that in any area, over and above the recorded landowners, there would be bargadars, and their number would be at least 20% of the number of landowners. "The WBIDC status report gives a total of 12000 landowners, so according to Nagarik Manch there should have been 'at least' 2400 recorded and unrecorded bargadars. Similarly, Samhati Udyog's report claims that there are at least 1200 unrecorded bargadars in the area. The Government is therefore definitely depriving this section. The truth of the matter is that the need was for an accurate survey of actual land use and ownership before Singur was started, but in its haste to pander to the whims of the Tatas, the Government plunged headlong into acquisition without bothering to see who might be deprived.

Brinda's Untruth 4 : ...the vast majority of workers in the area earn their income through non-agricultural work. Government records for the five areas where land is being taken put the number of workers involved in non-agricultural work at around 7,700, including 1,000 women. Another 700 are involved in some type of household industry. Not surprisingly, the number of agricultural workers, around 1,230, is much less; and most of them have to do other work to ensure a minimum income.

Facts : There seems to be some mistake in the figures being quoted by Brinda Karat. The total number of main workers in the five mouzas where acquisition is taking place is 7710. These include 1320 cultivators and 1224 agricultural workers or 33% of the working population which is directly dependent on agriculture. However, in an area as rich as Singur even the others (691 in household industries and 4475 in other occupations) would include those whose work is dependent on the agricultural production in the area. In a flourishing agricultural area, the income of shopkeepers and others around depends on the well being of those directly in cultivation. The Samhati Udyog survey done in November estimates that there are 450-500 rickshaw pullers who transport vegetables, 150 vegetable vendors, 200 households engaged in animal husbandry etc. They also mention about 1000 wage labourers, called *garir kishen* who come to work everyday by train from Bardhaman, Bankura and Hooghly, and about 800 agricultural workers who come from Jharkhand as seasonal migrants. The cold storage at Ratanpur nearby which gets its goods from these areas also employs 5000 migrant labourers.

The truth is that it is assumed that it is only industry that has ancillaries. The fact that agriculture also creates ripple effects and ancillaries and that flourishing agriculture can also lead to a rich and developed life is something that seems to be a truth which this Government once propagated and now seems to have forgotten.

Brinda's Untruth 5 : The Government has ensured alternative work for them. Already in that area, over 7,500 person-days of employment have been generated in the last few weeks. Employment for local workers will also be created in canal renovation, road widening, fence and building construction, and other activity.

Facts : A village right next to the project site (Dobandi) has 63 agricultural worker families. all of them used to work in the fenced off area. They claim that they would have received work for two months on a continuous basis during the upcoming potato season, but are now facing starvation. None of them have been employed in the fencing work, where most workers have been brought from outside the immediate vicinity of the forcibly acquired land. Out migration was practically unknown in the area, but now all these agricultural workers will be forced to leave their homes in search of work. Also, all agricultural workers who used to come to this area on a regular work from nearby districts and Jharkhand will also lose their work.

Brinda's Untruth 6 : The Left Front Government is the only one in the country that has initiated different types of training programmes for landless workers and land losers, 1,800 of whom have already registered in different programmes. The effort is to ensure that alternative work and livelihood is ensured.

Facts : Nagarik Mancha states that the farmers in Singur are skilled at agriculture and other land-related activities. "having targeted to 'de-skill' them, having made them virtually 'unemployable', a lot is being made subsequently about imparting training. Figures in the Government report show that only 0.7% (179 of the 20000) rendered jobless are receiving training for future employment at Tata factory or in the 'probable' ancillaries." Even if Ms Karat's figure of 1800 receiving training is correct, then the percentage of those receiving training becomes 9%. The advertisements of the organisations imparting these training quite understandably declare that there could be no job guarantee.

Brinda's Untruth 7 : According to Government records, approximately 90 per cent of the land is single crop.

Facts : The Government is relying on outdated land records for these figures, Nagarik Mancha's report says that "The last land-use map available with the Government of West Bengal was drawn during the '70's. At that time the classification was based on the intensity of agriculture considering this area to be 'rain-fed'. Since then the WB Government has set up four deep tube wells and renovated three DVC fed canals in this area. Productivity has increased manifold paving the way for 27 privately owned mini deep tube wells and hundreds of diesel/kerosene run mini pump sets for lifting water from channels. The 'rain-fed' land has become 'irrigated land'. Presently there are 42 power-tillers in the area. Could all these be there if this area was a predominantly mono-crop and partially double-crop land? ... Now which is a 'fact' – what the map drawn in 70's says or what exists in 2006 on the ground level?"

Brinda's Untruth 8 : Land has been changing hands faster in Singur than in any other part of West Bengal. Over the last year or so, there have been 572 private land transactions of approximately 300 acres of land, at one-third the rate given as compensation in the Singur project. This is the opposite of what is happening in other States, where land is being acquired from the peasantry at less than the market price.

Facts : The compensation given by the Government for Sali land as per the WBIDC report is Rs. 8.60 lakhs per acre and Rs. 12.76 lakhs per acre for Suna land. The land documents in the same mouzas however show that market land prices are higher. For example Prasenjit Das has 12 cottahs (0.6 acres) of Sali land in Gopalnagar mouza, which is just outside the project. The land titles show that he has purchased this land for Rs. 5 lakhs and that the Government valuation and registration fees for this land are also the same. This would amount to Rs. 25 lakhs per acre only for the land costs while the Government award, which includes solatium, interest, a bonus for consent and crop compensation is only Rs. 8.60 lakhs. The Government is acquiring land for the benefit of the Tatas at one third the market price – exactly what is happening in all other states!

Brinda's Untruth 9 : According to Census data, the share of fallow land, wasteland, pastures and so on is only 1 per cent in West Bengal compared with the national average of 17.6 per cent.

Facts : Even if this is correct there are differences within West Bengal. Hooghly district is the district with highest crop intensity in West Bengal and with a huge population pressure. Why use this land? Why not ask the Tatas to go to Purulia district where 20% of the land is non-cultivable? Why not, as Kamal Kanta Khara, a hunger striker from the SKJRC suggested, go to mono cropped land in Talerbheri and Korerbheri and other neighbouring Mouzas that are about 1-2 kilometres from the present site? Why not go to Dankuni an industrial area that is about 15 kms away? Or to the dozens of alternative sites mentioned by Mahasweta Devi and APDR?

Brinda's Untruth 10 : The report of the NGO 'fact-finding' team cannot name a single child thrown in a water body nor one woman who was sexually abused. If there was brutal beating and repression, surely there would have been scores of people with fractured limbs and broken heads who would have no doubt been paraded before the media as proof...Bombs were thrown at the police, which chased the crowd into the village, lathi-charged, and tear-gassed them.

Facts : As Brinda Karat herself admits, the police chased the crowd into the village, lathi charged and tear gassed them. What was the police doing inside a village with has not had any history of violence? and where are the policemen who were injured by bombs? Why has the Government not "paraded them before the media as proof"?

On 6th December, when we visited the affected villages, a number of women complained about sexual

molestation, use of foul language and harassment by the police on 2nd December 2006. The women said it was male police who came into their houses, chasing them from the fields for a distance as long as 750 metres for Khaser Bheri and about 1.5 kilometres for Beraberi Purba Para, the two villages that faced the maximum police brutality. Their intention was very clearly not to deal with a law and order problem, but to beat the people into submission. The women recognized some of the police as being local party supporters dressed as police men. They were even able to name a few of these people.

The complainants on the 6th include Rupa Koley who showed us her shirt that was torn by the police and wounds on her upper left arm; Bharati Das of Khaser Bheri, who also met Nilotpall Basu at Delhi on 6th December, with fractured ribs and a smashed hand; Rita Das' (Khaser Bheri) whose left foot was smashed by a rubber bullet; Maya das (Bera Beri) whose foot was burnt by a tear gas shell.

MASUM's factfinding report on the 2nd itself mentions several other ways in which the police broke the law – custody memos were not given, two minor girls were arrested and kept with adults in the lock up, the women's cell was not used etc. They also spoke to men who had been arrested and were in the District hospital. These include Dilip Das 44 years old who had a head wound that bled profusely for three hours before treatment and required eight stitches; Mritunjoy Patra, 55 years old with an injured right leg; Tapan Batabyal, 53 years old with hematoma in both legs; Bilas Sarkar 26 years with injured left shoulder, lacerated injuries and swelling due to blows in many parts of his body. 10 other undertrial prisoners in the police lock up also showed injury marks.

In West Bengal we are used to the CPM and the Government functioning in collusion. Seldom does the CPM criticize the Government and the Government always protects the CPM's interests. We had expected the CPM outside West Bengal to be more objective in its dealings. However we seem to have been mistaken. PS Grewal of the Delhi CPM State Committee has been circulating a Government report to defend his party's position. And Brinda Karat has relied on the same report by the perpetrators of an injustice to justify the injustice. We invite her to visit Singur to see the truth for herself.

Democracies face considerable challenges : from ethnic, religious, and other divisions; from unemployment and economic recession or upheaval; from the loss of power to international institutions and processes; from a wide spread feeling among people of powerlessness over their own lives. The importance of these problems, has to be recognised for the survival of democracy in the contemporary World.

David Beetham, Kevin Boyle

A REJOINDER

Friends,

Pasted below is a letter received by Nagarik Mancha from **P.M.S. Grewal, Secretary, Delhi State Committee, Communist Party of India (Marxist)**.

This mail had also been sent to hundreds of other individuals and organisations. We are also attaching the attachment mentioned in the letter.

Further we are pasting our response to the letter and the Status report. We have already sent this response to those who received this email along with us.

Warmly

Naba Dutta

General Secretary

Nagarik Mancha

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Dear Friends,

Please find in attachment a factsheet on the Tata Motors project in Singur compiled by the West Bengal Government. We are not averse to any debate over the issue. However, arguments against the project should be based upon facts.

A vicious propaganda has been unleashed against the LF Government in West Bengal and the CPI (M) regarding police atrocities in Singur. We are utterly amazed to find that allegations of police excesses are being made when not even one case of hospitalisation due to serious injuries have been reported so far. Police action on democratically protesting people is always unfortunate. However exaggerated claims of atrocities in incidents which have happened in front of the entire national media does not add to the credibility of those who are opposing the Project.

Please go through the factsheet and see for yourself whether the LF Government deserves the criticisms which some of our friends in the ultra-Left are making.

With Warm Regards,

P.M.S. Grewal

Secretary

Delhi State Committee

Communist Party of India (Marxist)

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Friends

This has reference to an email which mentions about a "factsheet on the Tata Motors Project in Singur compiled by the West Bengal Government" being circulated on its behalf as an attachment by one PMS Grewal, Secretary, Delhi State Committee CPI(M).

We have some reservations, to say the least, about the content and purport of the said "factsheet". We are mentioning just a few of them restricting ourselves to the said factsheet.

1. The last land-use map available with the Government of West Bengal was drawn during the '70's. At that time the classification was based on the intensity of agriculture considering this area to be 'rain-fed'. Since then the WB Government has set up four deep tubewells and renovated three DVC fed canals in this area. Productivity has increased manifold paving the way for 27 privately owned mini deep tubewells and hundreds of diesel/kerosene run mini pumpsets for lifting water from channels. The 'rain-fed' land has become 'irrigated land'. Presently there are 42 powertillers in the area. Could all these be there if this area was a predominately mono-crop and partially double-crop land? The Left Front can indeed stake partial claims of success for such a positive transformation of rural economy and even the villagers do not deny it totally. Now which is a 'fact' – what the map drawn in 70's says or what exists in 2006 on the ground level?
2. The farmers are skilled at agriculture and other land-related activities. Having targeted to 'de-skill' them, having made them virtually 'unemployable', a lot is being made subsequently about imparting training. In fact six of the 14 pages of the said factsheet has been devoted to trainings and trainees. Figures show that 0.7% (179 of the 20000) rendered jobless are receiving training for future employment

at Tata factory or in the 'probable' ancillaries. The advertisements of the organisations imparting these training quietly understandably declare that there could be no job guarantee. Now does the 'fact' seem to speak for itself, even if we accept that the number of 'trained' persons will increase over time? Could there really be a realistic assurance of jobs? Were they really in need of jobs in the first place? A Left front leader has gone on record stating that people undergoing training would earn 20 times more than at present! Could the word 'eyewash' have any relevance in the scheme of things?

3. The factsheet claims that there are 237 recorded bargadars "according to the Collector" and that as per "local enquiry", the total number of unrecorded bargadars is 170. Hence according to the Government, the total number of bargadars is 407. As per Government standards, in undivided Bengal and, later, in West Bengal, right from the days of the Land Revenue Commission, under the chairmanship of Sir Francis Floud, 1940, it is accepted that in any area, over and above the recorded landowners, there would be bargadars, and their number would be at least 20% of the number of landowners. As per the factsheet, there are 9020 landowners "to whom disbursement has been made" and 3000 "persons (landowners) yet to receive payment". So for a total of 12000 landowners there should have been 'at least' 2400 recorded and unrecorded bargadars instead of 407 as stated above.
4. Facts, or rather the lack of it, shows that this Government in its commitment towards its irreversible allegiance to capital, market and globalisation has decided to wish away ground level reality – since nothing else seems to matter excepting its 'challenge' to go ahead with the project. There are several thousand families whose prime bread earners depend on this parcel of land for their livelihood. The landless labourers; the seasonal tribal migrant agricultural labourers from Bankura and Purulia; the van operators and transporters; the traders who buy-carry-sell agro products to distant wholesale markets; the artisans and craftsmen; and others involved in various occupations earning while providing various services to the community. Compensation can partially offset the cost of land of the land owners but who can compensate for the loss of livelihood? This is a matter of fact which perhaps leaves very little room even for an argumentative loyalist.
5. There are a huge number of 'facts' which this factsheet does not talk about. Though this factsheet has been introduced in the email as the 'factsheet on the Tata Motors project in Singur compiled by the West Bengal Government' there is not a single mention made in the factsheet of 'Tata' or 'Motors' leave alone Tata Motors! Some of the many facts which we humbly state should have been mentioned in this factsheet are as follows :
 - (a) What does the Tata pay for the land which is costing the West Bengal Government and its tax paying citizens Rs. 131.49 crores?
 - (b) What are the 'holidays', waivers, indirect subsidies and so on offered to the Tata by LF Government?
 - (c) If comparable car manufacturers can do with 300-400 acres of non agricultural land in other States of India, why is Tata being given 997 acres of first class agricultural farmland?
 - (d) Does the State really need an automobile hub which will presumably materialise once Tata sets up base at Singur and has there been any study to ascertain what impact it might have in the future?
 - (e) Did Tata ask for Singur or was it offered to it? On what basis was the land with an average cropping intensity of 3 or above chosen for an automobile factory at the first place? Which were the other four sites reportedly shown to the Tata Group?
6. The Notice under Section 4(1) of Land Acquisition Act 1894 issued between 19 and 24 July 2006 is the only relevant gazette notification available on the Hooghly District Official Website (www.hooghly.nic.in). It states that "land as mentioned in schedule below is likely to be needed to be taken by Government/ Government Undertaking/Development Authorities, **at the public expense for a public purpose, viz., employment generation and socio economic development of the area by setting up TATA Small Car Project**" (emphasis added). This implies that Tata is setting up its car factory to generate employment for skilled farmers and socio economic development of an already thriving agricultural community. Tata will 'also' make small cars, which we hope will not 'eat' grass in this topsy turvy paradigm of development! Now, the 'public expense for public purpose' is ultimately aimed at handing over 997.1 acres of land to the Tata. As per 1984 amendments the land could have been directly handed over to the Tata, but in that case they would have to deposit 80% of the amount payable as compensation in advance and enter into an MOU which had to be

made public as per law. That would 'unnecessarily' pressurise the Tata group and would not allow for any "trade secrets" as stated by a senior Minister. So in walks WBIDC, the face saver. This might have been mentioned in the Notice under Section 6 of Land Acquisition Act 1894 issued between 29th August 2006 and 31st August 2006. But no one has seen this Notice under Section 6 or for that matter any subsequent Notices leading up to the declaration of the 'award'. No gazette notification as yet. The Hooghly District Official Website (www.hooghly.nic.in) has been last updated on 27th August 2006. So much for the right to information.

7. The factsheet states that "from the very beginning of the process of Land acquisition WBIDC (West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation) was engaged with the idea that the compensation payable to the landowners and bargadars need to be commensurate with the market value of land and its present usage pattern of the land "which" necessitated reconnaissance of the land". However "entry to the land to explore the terrain and to ascertain the ground condition by WBIDC team could not be ensured till early December" 2006. This indeed is a total giveaway! The Government issues notice of land acquisition and hands over the land to WBIDC which takes possession in order to formally hand it over to Tata Motors. But ... the WBIDC FIRST disburses Rs. 76.64 crores (that is 58.3% of the net payable amount) for 635 acres (that is 63.7% of the proposed area) to 9020 persons (That is 75% of the total landowners). THEN, with the active participation of 15000 to 20000 police personnel including Black Commando, Rapid Action Force, Combat Force and regular police force from various Districts, and in the presence of the District Administration, and the support of State Government machinery, it cordons off the area on and from 1 December. ONLY THEN was it ensured that WBIDC could carry out necessary reconnaissance to ascertain "present usage pattern" and to "explore the terrain" and "ascertain the ground condition". What for? The cart is already put before the horse?

We would like to state that the disinformation campaign of the West Bengal Government is also making people like PMS Grewal, Secretary, Delhi State Committee, CPI(M) biased. We too are utterly amazed to find that mere misinformation, deliberately disseminated, is influencing and confusing comparatively pro-people leftist forces. It is unfortunate given the number of peoples movements they are genuinely siding with the rest of the country. Phrases like "vicious propaganda", "Allegations of police excesses" and "exaggerated claims of excesses" in the cover letter goes to show what ideological blinkers are all about – may be the red flags from Delhi would have waved at Singur if the Left Front was not in power in this State.

We request you to circulate this mail to those who have received the earlier mail from your end.

Soliciting fraternal support for the people of Singur,

In solidarity

Naba Dutta

General Secretary

Nagarik Mancha

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Room 7, Block-B, First Floor,

Kolkata-700 085

Ph : 033-23731921

"Modernisation means rationalisation, which means reducing jobs, which means unemployment in a country where millions are already without work....The success it brings is at the cost of misery it forces on others. Your country is passing through this phase....and by choice."

Guntur Grass

STATEMENT FROM A DELEGATION OF TRADE UNIONS ON SINGUR

A fact finding team of 4 trade union leaders visited Singur on 15th December 2006 to document for themselves the true scenario. The team was led by Comrade V.B. Cherian from Kerala, former All India Secretary of the CITU and presently Vice President of New Trade Union Initiative (NTUI) and President of Cochin Port Employees' Union. Other members of the team were Chandan Sanyal, General Secretary of National Federation of Sales Representative's Union and Vice President of New Trade Union Initiative, Bibhas Bose [All India Council of Central Trade Unions (AICCTU)] and Ashish Kusum Ghosh, Executive Member of All West Bengal Sales Representative Union.

The land acquisition at Singur for a Tata Motors project has become the centre of controversy within West Bengal. In order to understand the impact of this entire process on workers in Singur, we, the undersigned have visited Singur on 15th December 2006 at the request of the Paschim Banga Khet Majoor Samity. We have met the people there and have also examined many publicly available reports (including the West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation Status Report). Amongst the people we met were Shankar Jana, Joint Convenor of the Singur Krishi Jami Raksha Committee, Prasenjit Das, Manik Das, Raju Santra, Sanjay Das and other leaders and members of the same committee. We also met women who have been victims of the police onslaught on 2nd December 2006, including Savitri Patra and Abha Patra of Bajemelliya, Bharati Das of Khaser Bheri, Ashtha Rani Koley and Suprita Das of Bera Beri Purba Para. We also met Shyama Patra, Kashinath Patra, Prasanta Das, Chandi Patra, and Bimala Khamru of Dobandi village to especially focus of the impact on agricultural workers.

Our preliminary findings are as follows :-

1. The narration of the women showed that unnecessary force had been employed on 2nd December 2006 by a huge police force, when they were peacefully protesting against the acquisition of the land. Homes had been entered into forcibly; women had been beaten up and manhandled by male police. Many of the women still had signs of physical injury. We also examined Raju Santra and Sanjoy Das who displayed signs of very bad laceration on their backs due to police violence. Payal Bagh, a two year old child against whom false murder charges were allegedly filed on 25th September 2006 was also brought before us. Women also complained that their menfolk were being harassed even today when they visit the fenced off area to recover their harvested crops. They alleged that a case has been filed against Mahananda Khara and 9 others four days ago for going to the land. They also alleged that the police has been deliberately destroying their standing crops in the fenced off area, while those given duty are looting their vegetables. Those guarding the fence are also burning their paddy in bonfires to keep themselves warm at night.
2. The people informed us that they had been opposing the project from the first day that they found out about it, but that their pleas had fallen on deaf ears. We were informed that owners of 417 acres had given letters to say that they had not and would not give land for the Tatas project. The people were also concerned that the development of the Tatas project and other ancillaries would affect the productivity of the land that has not been included in the project, as was their experience with the huge floodlights of a petrol pump that was leading to and increase in pests in the neighbouring fields. They were also concerned that the setting up of Tatas and ancillaries would mean further acquisition of land in the future and would lead to a total destruction of the flourishing agriculture in the region. We also observed that, in defiance of Section 144, about 500 people were sitting on a one day hunger strike in the field of the Gopalnagar Barohath Kalitola as a protest against the forcible acquisition of land for the project. we found that people had no facts about the project, the terms on which the land was being given to the Tatas, the MOU etc. The Government also claims to have received consent for 950 acres of land from the owners but no such list seems to be publicly available.
3. The area seemed visually an agriculturally rich area. The villages also seemed well off. We were informed that the area was a rain fed region in the 1970s but with the positive intervention of the Left Front Government, irrigation has led to multicropping and a huge increase in productivity. 4 Govenment deep tube wells have been installed, two systems of canal irrigation from DVC are there from which lift irrigation is done, 23 privately owned mini deep tube wells are also there. Of the 997 acres that have been taken for the project, apart from the paddy crop, about 600 acres are used for potato and Vegetables. At least 3-4 crops are grown there every year. The area supplies potatoes to Ratanpur market where 350 wholesalers are there. There are also 5 cold storages in the area, who

received some of their supplies of potatoes from this region. Farmers of the region seemed very satisfied with their crop yields and the income that they received from agriculture.

4. We were informed that 5000-7000 agricultural workers from neighbouring districts come to Singur, Kamarkundu and Madhusudhanpur stations everyday to work in the forcibly occupied land and other neighbouring areas. The potato whole sale stores and cold storages provide employment to more than 5000 people. The area provides work to agricultural workers for 10 months in a year due to multi-cropping. Just next to the project site is Dobandi village, which has 66 families, all of whom are landless agricultural workers. These families used to work either as agricultural workers in the fenced off land or would take in small amounts of land on lease. We found that all these families are now without work and some of them (e.g. Bimala Khamuru) are on the verge of starvation. None of them have received work in the fencing of the project, which is, according to the West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation (WBIDC) Status report, one of the ways in which they are providing employment to agricultural workers. In addition, none of them have been registered in any of the training programmes that are being conducted for rehabilitation of the displaced. They informed us that they will now have to go to other areas in search of work, while earlier it was their area which provided work to so many. We also visited the Singur training centre at Bajemelliya which has been set up for training of the displaced. It did not seem to have the capacity to absorb the huge number that will be rendered unemployed. Also, according to the WBIDC report, training is being provided to only 179 people, while 12000 people have been affected. This amounts to 0.7% of those rendered unemployed in the immediate project area. No consideration has been given anywhere to those who migrate into the area for work, or to those who are working in ancillaries of agriculture (e.g. cold storages, potato market, transportation and selling of vegetables, animal husbandry etc.). The Tata Motors project and ancillaries will not create enough work to absorb all those rendered unemployed, leaving aside the fact that the kinds of skills required by these industries are foreign to the farmers and workers in the area.

Our Conclusions

1. Brute force of the police has been used to terrorise people in the area from 25th September 2006 onwards. This terror reached a peak on 2nd December 2006. The terror is continuing even today especially when it comes to the forcibly fenced off area.
2. The people of the affected villages are not in favour of the project, their consent has not been received by the West Bengal Government and the Tata Motors Project has been forced on them. There is also no transparency on the matter on the part of the Government.
3. The area has a well developed economy which depends on flourishing agriculture, and the Left Front has played an active role in developing agriculture in the region. Establishment of the Tata Motors project by the Left Front in this area will only reverse the gains that have been made economically in the last thirty-four years here.
4. On the question of employment and labour rights, we conclude that this project is leading to destruction of employment, rather than creation. Agricultural workers, the poorest and most exploited amongst the agricultural work force are especially being rendered unemployed, and no proper provisions have been made for the migrant and local agricultural workers who depend on this area for work. If the same project was taken up in an agriculturally depressed area on fallow land, it would have led to cumulative positive effects for the employment and economy of such an area.
5. In the last fifteen years we have experienced that workers, with implicit and sometimes active support from the government, have been retrenched, casualised, and rendered vulnerable in various ways. Labour rights are being eroded in industry. We found an echo of the same in Singur where people who are economically stable and eking out a decent living for themselves are being rendered jobless and destitute and that too with the help of the brute force of the police.

WE RECOMMEND

West Bengal Government must stop all coercive methods to force on the people of Singur the decisions and policies of the Government and allow democratic consultation to resolve the issue. In particular, remove the police from Singur area and lift ban on assembly and allow democratic dissent.

Insecure *Bargadars*, agricultural workers and all working people dependent on the land for their livelihood should be consulted and agreement should be reached with representative organisations and become a condition precedent before any plan for land acquisition is affected.

Date : 16 December 2006

Singur in the eye of a Trade Union Worker

Chandan Sanyal

When the blue print of the Imperial capitalist onslaught for the future was in the making during the Uruguay round of globalisation, I doubt, whether we, the industrial organised trade union workers could fully anticipate the ensuing dangers. I think 'realisation' or 'persuasion' would be a more appropriate word as compared to 'anticipation.' The so-called unity of the Trade-Unions of our country had already disappeared before the 'Drum beats' of the globalisation had rung. Apart from the narrow partisan politics, caste based divisions had also taken place in the Trade Unions and acknowledged in different corners of the country. On the other hand, in the post independent era the gap between the workers who could achieve something and those who could not – had really increased. As such the slogan 'workers of the world unite' has been limited to its use in the meetings and rallies only in stead of being implimented in reality. Pompous organisation of workers' Assembly in Delhi or Industrial Strike Country wide failed to deliver any prompt or lasting effect. Divisive weakness has spread out everywhere, in Govt. or private, organised or unorganised, big small, industrial or service sectors equally. Weak and detached from each other. The tragedy is more than us it's the vested interests who were thoroughly aware about this. They could jolly well understand that the workers of the organised sector have lost the independent democratic power beyond the party dictats. And, the rest who still possess the same are not organised. So it was the unhindered triumph of the onslaught by the world capital.

In fact, my experience as a member of a trade union delegation team to Singur to gain the first hand experience of the forceful eviction from the fertile agro-land-has made me more repentant less encouraged. I was stunned to observe the resistance of hundreds and thousands of agro-labours against the state and party power. If we, the workers could demonstrate a fraction of it in the field, against the eviction from lives and livelihoods in the name of so-called development, I am sure the progress of the globalisation chariot would not have become so smooth. The onslaught in the industrial sector had occurred about 15 years back than the same onslaught in Singur to-day. We could hardly realise the grave impacts of the words like privatisation, disinvestment, globalisation, industrial reconstruction etc. Even, to-day, when the sword of the labour law-reforms are hanging on our heads, when the hidden agendas of disinvestment are lying in wait—are we fully aware of the depth of the darkness in store for us?

In the absence of total unity of the workers, the roots of the poison-tree of the globalised development on the cracked lands of disunity has reached the base of the protest-culture of the working class. The political atmosphere has acted as the fertilizer on the roots. As such, joblessness of the workers in the name of so-called development was taken for granted. The idea floated that mergers in the name of restructuring and the job-loss due to monopoly of the takeovers are indispensable. And the disinvestment policy led inactive, idle role of the states and the Governments was being considered a natural one. The largest public sector pharma industry had undergone undeclared closure before our very eyes, driving out a big force of 13½ thousand of workers. Bengal Immunity and Co. – another big public sector pharma unit of West Bengal managed by CITU had undergone a silent death – causing irreparable loss to the people. Glaxo-Burroughs-Smith Kline – Three true multi nationals have merged together like Pfizer and Parke-Davis; Nicholas-Rhone-Poulenc, Roche Bochringer-Sarabhai; Sandoz-Ciba-Geigy – Aventis; Wockhard-Merind etc. All reconstructions took place in the globalised decontrol system in nineties – with the same objective of dismantling of high-tech, well-equipped factories and contractual production through small scale loan licensed producers to earn higher profits, forcing the regular employees out through VRS etc. as well as earning enormous profit through selling off the existing company assets and through real-estate business. Companies like Boots, Abbot etc. who could not make an alliance are acting in the same way. In all these companies the flags of development are flying high through shopping malls, multiplexes and real-estates on the vast lands of their factories.

These examples of the Pharma industry is not complete. Nor it is necessary to draw them here in the subject of Singur. Only this will be sufficient to remind that in the globalisation pot-any rice from any industry on testing will give the same dismal picture. Particularly, the famous consumer industries, textile industry – none is an exception from this confirmed model. That the open competition means regular job shrinkage of the workers, the globalised development means eviction from bread and earning took about 10-15 years to realise this and the capitalist multinational monopolised bonds have become solid and firm by this time with the blessings of centre as well as states, irrespective of the fact whether they are left or right. As such, the ruling class themselves have shouldered the responsibility of propagating the theory of

development of capital. Hence, the party affiliated trade unions promotes the policy of dying before death. The powerful lobby that advocates protests as useless, they are victorious during the last decade of twentieth century and first five years of 21st Century. Instead of unnecessary protests the working class have been negatively influenced in favour of leaving the field with a grant of cash-benefiting the industrialists immensely. Buddhhababu's statements on Singur is borrowed from his predecessor advocates of capital. For fifteen years we have heard of takeovers of industry – jobless will not become a subject of negotiation, compensation may be one with the union. Buddhhababu has only extended this in case of take over of land. Even the system of 'Sati' which was banned by Sir Willium Bentink in 1829 – has come back in a different form in public or private industries alike – in the name of voluntary retirement. To allow open and free investment of surplus capital by the capitalists, to cut the smaller competitors to pieces, to ensure enormous profits – the 'Sati' labours are bringing back the 'Sati' traditions through voluntary retirements – which they romantically term in English as 'Golden Handshake'!

We know, the High Court/Supreme Court Judges will keep mum on the allegations of forceful take overs – if they can show on papers that the take over of the multicrop land was voluntary. Therefore – I could visualise the reflection of the industrial scenario on the agro land of Singur. Same pressures and threats for voluntary donations, same hypocrisy on the numbers of voluntary donors, same allurements and threat after extension of the time limit. Our globalisation oriented industrial experience has been exactly same in Singur only astonishing aspect is the change of characters of the pedlars of free capital here. Difference in the role played by the leftists elsewhere – is too imminent and contradictory.

At the very outset I have mentioned that as a defeated worker of a different field – I have been greatly enthused by the exemplary opposition by the agro workers of Singur against the state sponsored terrorism for the appeasement of capital in the Pretext of a pseudo development under a wrong industrial policy. Their courage of standing firm in struggle with unwavering mental strength will definitely be a source of inspiration to the trade union workers. The assembly of people irrespective of party-politics on the platform of Krishi Jami Raksha Committee against the capitalist onslaught will be equally inspiring – as also the uncompromising Mamata Banerjee's firmness in her life and death struggle. The participation of a vast section of the intellectuals – who were otherwise silent till the other day is no less encouraging. The sincere involvement of great social leaders like Medha Patkar and Mahasweta Devi in the struggle of Singur is moving to say the least.

But this feeling is overshadowed by the pains of repentance when I think of first fifteen years of globalisation which turned industries after industries jobless, when the things were taken for granted by the political propagandas making the pseudo oppositions of the workers' movement compromising and submissive. Why did we fail to impart the firmness and courage of the Singur agro-labours at that time? I wish, we could declare then and there that – "your models of development are not meant for us. We do not consider your way of producing the luxurions commodities as the face of development. We won't compromise in the industries. We won't sacrifice our achievements at any cost. Obstruction and Resistance is our slogan." May be it would have checked the vanity of the crooks in slaughtering crores of workers!

(Translated by Debashis Bhattacharya)

"There is no time to lose. The horrifying suicides ironically in the green revolution areas have exposed the ugly side of development portrayed as Bengal shining. They are only the tip of the Iceberg – the agony of hunger and starvation, the rampant diseases and child malnutrition goes unreported. The rulers resort to the fascist tactics to deflect attention from acute inequality (1 : 10000)."

Hind Motor experience vis-a-vis Industrialisation in Singur – A Few Questions

Govinda Chakraborty

Hindustan Motors Ltd. is one of those industries which were established as a result of post independence need for industrial development with the help of eminent entrepreneurs. With the initiative of Dr. Bidhan Ch. Roy, the then CM of Bengal, Mr. B.M. Birla was allotted 750 acres of land between Uttarpara and Konnagar for developing automobile and heavy industry. But, only half of the land could be utilised so far during last 55 years. Failing to utilise half of the land – they are now making efforts to sale it – with the full consent of the State Govt.

Within the utilised Premises the Birlas had made two Foundrys, one Heavy Engineering Workshop, one Machine shop, one Factory for building Engines, Two Press shops, one Forging shop one plant for assembling the car. Apart from these a hospital, two schools, a large colony of labours, a play ground, a lake, temple and a park also does exist.

Since its inception in 1942, step by step 741 acres of land was taken over. This was troublesome for the share-croppers. Birlas didn't have any problem to purchase the lands-belonged to the Zamindars and that was the major portion. But the cultivation dependent small farmers as well as the share croppers opposed the move and took part in protest movements. They were afraid of losing their livelihoods with the advent of the industry. In the later stage the fear came to be true when they were evicted from the land and became paupers.

We, who work in Hindmotor and live in the very heart of Hooghly District where in Singur the small farmers and the share croppers mainly are facing the same fate. The Tata Industry won't allow them to live.

But, the greater pertinent question is what for the Tatas will need as much as 1000 acres of land? The Hindmotor experience may be an answer to this question. Birlas established in Hindmotor nine Full-fledged factories along with no. of small ancillary workshops and other necessary things – just on 350 acres of land. Tata's proposal is to establish just one assembly plant and that too in a much modernised way than the Birlas! Maximum they should require 100 acrs for the purpose. Let's remember that so many factories were made on 350 acres in Hindmotor in a rather unplanned way!

So, the question is if the Tatas can make the proposed automobile factory on 100 acres of land – what they are going to do with the rest 900 acres? Hindmotor replies that also. There the acquired land practically at the rate of water will now be sold at the rate of Gold. The owners will earn hundreds of crores of rupees through this speculation and gamble. Birlas have employed HDFC to find out a fitting partner for the Real Estate Development business. Govt. is also not lagging behind in this game of speculative market. As per a news item for the free land of 200 acres given by the then Govt. the present State Govt. will receive 10 crores of rupees as against the minimum market rate of 40 crores of rupees!

Presently Hindmotor is gasping due to want of investment. An investment of mere 100 Cr. rupees can make it turn around. One foundry and the heavy Engineering Factory have already been sold out, but not a single pie from that money has been invested in Hindmotor. But the Birlas are building new industries in Indore, Chennai, Husoor– by removing the capital from Hindmotor. The Chances of reinvestment from the sale of the surplus lands are also remote. On the contrary definite possibilities of this capital being smuggled out to other states – does exist!

In fact, this is also an enigma that how far the Govt. supports encourage the industrialists! The then Congress Govt. helped the Birla's with the land. And the present LF Govt. has cleverly compelled the labours to work here at half of the salaries – as compared to other auto mobile industries in India. Birlas got the monopoly of the auto industry, courtesy, the central Govt. In 1955, in order to develop the automobile industry, six car producers were given the green signal of which Hindmotor is just one. Side by side there were restrictions on the car imports as well. As a result, Hindmotor could monopolise among the early car producers. But, with all these facilities – it's gasping to-day. Its pulling on by depriving the labours.

As such the demand for 1000 acres of land by the Tatas in Singur definitely raise questions. Even, Jyoti Basu expressed doubts. Also, the possibilities of the farmers becoming paupers are not wholly unfounded. In general many of the land owners do not wholly depend on their lands only. That is why a sizeable percentage are selling their lands. It doesn't signify anything. Should it not be asked to-day the possible role of the vast fertile un-utilised land of Hindmotor in the overall food production of the state? Similarly, the Tatas may also keep a sizeable portion of 1000 acre of land unutilised for years for future speculative dealing. How far that will affect the state food production – is, perhaps, a million dollar question.

**(Courtesy : Manthan Samayiki, Sept-Oct, 2006)
(Translated by Debasish Bhattacharya)**

The call of Kanoria Jute Sangrami Shramik Union

SUPPORT THE ATTACKED FARMERS IN SINGUR, SAVE THE AGROLAND AND AGRO LABOURS. RAISE YOUR VOICE WITH THE DEMAND TO BUILD UP NEW INDUSTRIES ON THE LAND OF CLOSED INDUSTRIES

Friends!

The farmers in Singur are under relentless attack to-day. The society of farmers of West-Bengal are also under attack. The poor, landless agrolabors and the share croppers are perhaps under severe attack. The lands which were used to produce golden crops are being handed over forcefully to the national and multinational monopolists with the help of Police, Raf. Police camps are being set in. Rajarhat is already occupied. The poor farmers have become daily labors and paupers there. Thousand and thousands of acres of land are being taken over in Midnapore, Howrah, Hooghly, 24 Parganas (N+S). Eviction of farmers have become a regular affair.

By destroying the conventional industries and their lakhs of labours, by trampling down the prospective future of Jute, Tea, Engineering and other industries, by shattering and crippling the labor movements – the State Govt. here under the leadership of Buddha-Nirupam-Binoy Konar have undertaken the path of neo-liberalisation which has ultimately culminated into backward steps through capturing of Agro-lands.

Once through mass movements the lands were taken over from the land-lords and big farmers and were distributed among the poor, landless farmers. And, to-day, sacrificing the interests of those poor farmers, leaseholders, agro-labors, their lands are being handed over to Tata – Salim – Ambanis! The Govt. has become a tout for big lands. there is a mad rush for the take overs of agro-lands. The farmers of Singur are on protests against this under the leadership of Singur agro-lands defence committee. Different political, social, civic and mass organisations have stood by the protesting farmers. The people of singur are being prepared for a face to face showdown. There have been a lot of exchanges on the question of development, industrialisation and the balance of agriculture and industry as well as on the agro-industrial policy. Let the debate go on. But the chief of the Govt, the chief constituent and their mass organisations are showing obstinacy on the Singur issue-hushing up their own internal debates. They are not in a mood to review and reconsider anything.

A massive mass movement only can be a deterring factor against the forceful implimentation of the anti-farmer and anti-human policies of this clever, dubious Govt. leadership. The question is which should be the demands to deter the Govt? The farmers in Singur may remain firm in not handing over the lands-and-counter demand from the Govt. to take over the lands of the closed industries for Tata-automobiles and others. In that case a programme may be udertaken to repay all pending dues with inerests to the labors of the closed industies and to provide jobs in the new industry for the willing labors.

We can understand this simple truth from the worker's view-point. Workers will definitely agree to this proposal if their interests are looked after. This will act as the base of a bond between the workers and the farmers. The Kanoria movement has taught us that if the demands are justified, if people understand the form and the tricks of the movement – then the movement becomes indomitable and undefeatable. Life is bigger than anything, including the law. Govt. should be made to understand the point. As it is Govt. does understand language of the movement. They should be unambiguously told to pack off from singur. Pack off the police camps. Come to the alternate proposal. Otherwise, all your endeavours to remain in power will become futile, and the combined strength of the workers and the farmers will make you powerless within no time.

The people of Singur including the family of farmers are going all out in protests now. Police, cadres, fear-psychosis, false promises shall not deter them. It may be counter productive also. The Govt. has to give up obstinacy. Till the time is there for them to move away from the path of unnecessary blood shed. Let them withdraw the police camp and quiten down the conditions. Let them sit down with the agitators and decide a perfect place for Tata. In stead of staring at 'Trinamul' let them acknowledge the singur movement as the peasants' movement. Let them withold the land take over programme and come to the terms with the movement for the good of all.

This is the road to extinguish the fire lit by the Govt. In Singur. Hands will be burnt if one wants to play with this fire. We are in favour of a peaceful resolution through discussions with respect.

We want to be at the side of the attacked farmers in singur. we want that the obstinate Govt. should bow down. It's the protesting farmers who will decide the fate of Singur. In reality, it's on their hands that the future of all oppressed people depend now.

07-11-06

With revolutionery greetings,
Liakat Ali Khan (Secretary)

(Translated by Debashis Bhattacharya)

CENTRE OF INDIAN TRADE UNIONS
HOOGHLY DISTRICT COMMITTEE
85/3, G. T. ROAD, (WEST),
SERAMPORE, HOOGHLY, PH. 2622-2466

Ref. No.

Date : 14.6.2006

To
District Magistrate
Hooghly,
Chinsurah, Hooghly.

Dear Sir,

On behalf of CITU, Hooghly District Committee, We do wait upon you to place the following facts for your kind and necessary action.

1. That the policy of industrialisation by the Govt. of West Bengal has raised high hopes among the people of all walks of life. That it is a pleasure to add, our district has also been included in the industrial scenario of the state
2. That we are also pleased to note that TATA Group has taken up a good venture to set up a Motor Car unit in our district for which people of the Singur locality have come forward with offer of land.
3. That while appreciating the role of the Govt. in setting up new industrial units we feel that due to closure/lock-out and other reasons in various industrial units in our district, there remain vast tract of land which may be utilized for setting up new industrial units.
4. That in the back ground of industrial development in our district we do mention some of the facts which may enable the Govt. to set up some new industrial units.
 - (a) Hindusthan Motors Ltd. as you know is situated in an area of 744 acres of land. 2/3rd portion of the said land has not been utilized for expansion of the unit. Out of the said land 250 acres were released by the Govt. of West Bengal free of cost and the balance portion was sold to the management at a cheaper price. Unfortunately, inspite of the constructive proposal put forward by our affiliated union, the management has not taken any positive step either to expand the unit or to set up any auxiliary unit. They are planning to sale out the land for real estate and has been trying to seek the permission of the Government. We hope that the Govt. will not accord any permission for sale of this land and will make all out endeavour to set up new units taking into consideration of the market potentiality.
 - (b) Following closure of Rampuria, Bengal Fine & Bangalaxmi Cotton Mills run by the National Textile Corporation, there is possibility to utilize a vast land measuring about 30 acres. The matter may be taken up with the Govt. of India.
 - (c) (i) East End Paper with 17 acres of land reported to have been purchased by a party.
(ii) United Vegetables Manufacturing Ltd. situated at Rishra with 18.90 acres land. Shree Engg. situated at Rishra having 7 acres of land, J.K. Steel, Rishra having 30 acres of land. The above units have not made the statutory payment to the workers. In Govinda Steel, the management has resorted to real estate business.
 - (d) Madular Food Park with an area of 25 acres of land has been formally inaugurated but we are yet to know its present status.
 - (e) There are few closed units in Konnagar area Seraikella Glass Works, Fort Willams, Rallis India, Sri Durga Cotton etc. have been closed for a pretty long time. While some progress has been made in the case of Sri Durga, nothing is in sight about any other closed units.
 - (f) In the Delhi Road area, a good portion of land has been allotted for setting up new industrial units. A thorough enquiry is called for whether these lands have been **really utilised.**

That we may add that the facts stated above are neither comprehensive nor detailed. However, this may help the district administration to initiate some action which may bring about a **good result.**

In fine, in the larger interest of the people, we assure you of our best cooperation.

Thanking you

(SANTASRI CHATTERJEE)
President

(DILIP CHATTERJEE)
Genl. Secretary

ISHTAHAR – (1)

Condemn the barbaric police assault on the peaceful farmers' movement in Singur for the appeasement of Tata.

Friends!

On the late night of 25th September, 2006, a large Police force attacked mercilessly the farmers of Singur who were protesting against the whimsical take over of their dear lands – seriously injuring a large no. of common men including females, old and young and the reporters. For exposing the barbarism of Police force 43 movementers were arrested under nonbailable offence. Ridiculously a 3 years old child is one of them! Most of the arrested persons were severely injured by the stick, of the police. They were not given any medical help in the police custody, not offered food or drinking water. That is the height of the compassion of Buddha and his police force! It became evident once again that Buddha Babu's LF Govt. is only concerned for the interest of national and foreign monopolists-including Tata – Salim – Jindal etc. We condemn the heinous act and the shameful attitude. The W.B. Govt. is becoming increasingly offensive on the lives and livelihoods of common people, on their rights, on their movements for the protection of bread, livelihood and dignity. They are all out to stop anykind of protest through state sponsored terrorism – trampling down all democratic norms. Ironically, the so-called democratic LF Govt. are prohibiting all kinds of peaceful democratic protestations against barbarism of the police like rallies meeting etc!

We are condemning this despotic act of LF Govt. in Singur. We also demand the unconditional release of protestors, the removal of the police force as also the withdrawal of police terrorism. We hereby call upon the entire democratic struggling people of the country to support the protestors in Singur for the sake of entire farmer community and in broader sphere for the sake of all residents of West Bengal.

26-09-06

With revolutionery greetings,
Sanghati Udyog

ISHTAHAR – (2)

An open letter by the Writers – Artistes – Intellectuals to the Chief Minister and the Governor

[In protest against the disgusting incident of tortures of the 'left' Police force on the late night of 25th September, 2006 at Singur and also in protest against the death of the first shahid, namely, Rajkumar Bul in the defence movement of lands at Singur]

“I was left with only two bighas of land having lost the rest in debt; the Babu said– ‘do you hear me Upen! I shall purchase that land” Rabindranath. In 1949, Guinram—a warrior of the peasant's movement became a martyr when police opened fire on the Tebhaga movement. The place : Barakamalapur (Singur). Mangalacharan Chattopadhyaya, the poet then wrote–” whom do you scare? and, show red eyes? We have come from Barakamalapur, we the night fasting female members of the families, we come through the clay roads soaked in blood of Guinram, we want the answer, Don't think that you have shut up our month for ever!” It is on this protest that Manik Bandoopadhyaya gave birth to his eternal story named “Chhoto Bakulpurer Yatri”. The Mass Singer Benoy Roy sang– ‘the martyr of Kamalapur calls you/please come you all/the martyr Suren of Budhakhali looks at you/the mother Ahallya of Chandanpiri/last rites couldn't be offered to these murdered/this is intolerable in the farmers' huts/this onslaught of the man eaters force/ is intolerable?–”

Salil Chowdhury called for the struggle – “you all come together O brothers and friends. Let's harvest our Paddy crops fearlessly/let's build our own farmyards/let's sharpen the sickle/o songs of Ram and Rahim/Protect your own.../the pet elephant of the red monkey is a great oppressor/they have broken our homes/killed our mothers, brothers and sisters in hundreds and thousands/that Kamalapur Bara/Kakdwip-Dongajora/let's make our own fate/the time has arrived/come and join hands–”

–The last rites have been performed by the so-called cultured Communist Chief-Minister of West Bengal

– who defied the contributions of Tagore, Manik Bandopadhyaya, Benoy Roy, Salil Chowdhury, Mangala Charan and embraced Tata-Salim to built a new culture of ruining the farmers by selling the unreal dream of industrialisation! We hereby publish this open letter signed by writers-artists and intellectuals in protest against this injustice. We want the good sense of the Chief Minister and the Governor to Prevail.

The Signatories : Tarun Sanyal, Santosh Bhattacharya, Chiro Dutta, Kanchan Kumar, Gautam Bhadra, Pratul Mukhopadhyaya, Maitreyee Chattopadhyaya, Sujato Bhadra, Nirmal Bramhachari, Sunanda Sanyal, Shuvendu Dasgupta, Jugal Kishor Raibir, Sujoy Basu, Dr. Sanmatha Ghosh, Sushil Panja, Sudipta Sen, Raja Sarkhel, Amar Laha, Manik Samajdar, Deepika Mukhopadhyaya, Gautam Sen, Sukhendu Bhattacharya, Madhab Bandopadhyaya, Nema Ghosh, Paramesh Acharya, Jayanta Sen, Arun Bhattacharya, Sushanto Chattopadhyaya, Nirmal Saha, Asim Giri, Ratan Sengupta, Supriyo Bagchi, Tarashankar Dutta, Prodipta Dasgupta, Kalyan Guha, Srijon Sen, Keshob Mukhopadhyaya, Mithu Mukherjee, Sandhya Bhattacharya, Sushanto Sarkar, Ashish Mukherjee, Rajesh Jaiswal, Prabir Sen, Prodip Chatterjee, Sutapa Bandopadhyaya, Bidhan Saha, Biprodas Ghosal, Bhabesh Ch. Jana, Mohabat Hossain, Madhusudan Pal, Rabindranath Mukherjee, Pronob Nayak, Nirmalya Bandopadhyaya, Amit Dyuti Kumar, Dipak Piplai, Surojit Chakraborty, Siddheswar Ghosh, Bidyut Bhowmick, Sadhan Basu, Sukdev Chattopadhyaya, Pranob, Santosh Mukherjee, Biswajit Sentupta, etc.

Let's conclude with the following rhyme : “we are the farmers, we are the countrymen, our job is to cultivate, Mantri Maharaj – you have to move according to our terms!”

ISHTAHAR – (3)

Call of the All Bengal Farmers and Agro-labours Struggling Committee : Make the mass-stay programme effective

28th November, Tuesday 2006 : Esplanade, Kolkata

Friends!

Zamindars used to evict their sub-ordinate citizens by the stick-wielders. Similarly CPM Govt. is engaged in statewide eviction of farmrs-agro-labours-share croppers by the police-administration-party cadres. The three harvest lands of Singur-Katwa-Kharagpur, the guava and Lichi gardens of Baruipur, the ancestral lands of Fulbari, the thousands of acres of land of Haldia-Nandigram-nothing is being spared. The state Govt. assures employment with industrialisation. But, in reality they are building shopping mals, Big Bazars, Real Estate Parks and Luxury gardens for the riches the things which are practically not connected with the industrial developments. Even if one or two industries creep up somewhere they will be out and out capital intensive where the question of employment for the evicted farmers or agro-labours will never arise. It's not that we do not know the efficiency of the state Govt. here in providing industrial employments. During their tenure of 30 years there have been more than 29000 closures of Big-medium small sector of factories. More than 13 lakh job losses have taken place. With this record in the back drop-how do they want us to believe in the proposed wonders of development!

Is there any dearth of land for any genuine purpose of setting up of industries? The lands under closed factories, the Khaslands with the Govt., waste lands with infrastructural advantage in different district places are in plenty. Why they are not being considered for industrial purposes? In reality, the monopolists-both national as well as foreign-have a craze for the lands around Kolkata and the big cities with the hidden intentions for real estate business to earn enormous profits. Is it industrialisation?

And, secrecy is the key word for everything they do. People are being kept in the dark deliberately about the terms and conditions of the agreements with Tata – Salem – Ambanis. It is rumoured that the price of the land in Singur will be borne by the Govt. and not by Tatas! Over and above, almost free water and electricity, relieve of tax etc. Why the public tax-paid money are being pocketed by the Tatas-courtesy Buddhbabu and coterie – is a question worth while to ask. Another question worth remembering is that when in Gurgaon – The Maruti Udyog can manufacture 6 lakhs of cars of 18 varieties in only 297 acres of land why the hell the Tatas need 1000 acres of land in Singur for the manufacture of the so-called motor cars? There must be something up their ‘sleeves. In this way through secret dealings thousands of acres of fertile lands are being offered to Salim – Ambanis – DLF and others elsewhere in the state.

As regards their story of compensation the people of Rajarhat, Bhangar, Kulpi know how hollow it is! Very meagre compensation, that too many haven't received at all. The owner of lands of three harvests have actually become a pauper now.

This is the future they have planned for the farmers – agro-labors and share-croppers! The expenses for cultivation is on the increase, no profit for the crops no work for the agro-labors – on the whole the villages of Bengal are dipped in problems and troubles at present and are becoming more and more prone to suicidal attempts. And, thereafter the massive eviction of the poor farmers and agro-labors prompted by the overenthusiasm of the State Govt. to act as the boot lickers of the monopoly capital – would definitely lead to a dangerous and critical situation.

This has to be resisted at any cost. We have to build up a massive turbulent struggle for resistance-the path of which is already being shown by the farmers community in Singur. Let us all now strengthen their hands and spread the movement in every corner of our villages. The mass dharna programme of 28th November – has to be a success. Let us give a befitting lesson to the State Govt. by declaring that we are ready to sacrifice lives, but not our fertile, lands for Tata – Salim – Ambani etc.'

With revolutionery greetings,
Shankar Ghosh (Secretary)

ISHTAHAR – (4)

Lessons of the Mass Movement– ‘Send back Tata – Buddha’

The way the people of Singur have kept the fire of the land saving movement lighted up through series of mass uprising right from the day when they blocked the Tata convoy with the black flag demonstration – have inspired and prompted number of socially conscious people from all over the country to join the movement and we are none of the exceptions. And this august assembly of human beings have made ‘Singur’ a national issue like the Kalinganagar in Orissa or Bajhera-Khurd of Uttar Pradesh. But special characteristics have placed Singur ahead of others to some extent. Elsewhere the movements shaped up only after the lands were acquired. But, in case of Singur – the mass movement have started from the early days – when the Tatas arrived to inspect the land. That's why Singur naturally has emerged as ‘Symbol’ of protest to the people of India. The recent endeavour through a public hearing under the leadership of a national leader like Medha Patkar at Singur has added a new dimension to the movement. along with Medha Patkar there were Mahashweta Devi, the writer, Maloy Sengupta, the justice, Ulka Mahajan the convener of Maharashtra land saving movement and the leader like Dipankar Chakraborty and others. During the public hearing Mahashweta Devi, Medha Patkar, Ulka Mahajan and others have parted certain vital informations in the meeting of Bajemalia apart from demanding ‘Silent Return’ of the Tatas from singur. The agitators of Singur, the farmers, the share croppers, the agro labors – all should remember them the movement in Singur is in advanced state awaiting a final settlement any moment. As such, to see the end of it – the residents of Singur has to keep their minds-eyes-ears open and realise – they themselves are the last word of this movement.

In the public meeting of Bajemalia, Medha and Ulka have informed about the double standard of the political parties, on one hand they support the Singur movement but elsewhere as a ruling party they are desperate to snatch the lands of the farmers. they refered to the role of Congress in Maharashtra. Ulka Mahajan emphatically said that as the left front here have become a tout of the Tatas, in the same way the congress is a tout of the reliance in Maharashtra. The role of BJP (N.D.A.) is same in Rajasthan. The BJP Govt. in Rajasthan murdered in a cold blood a youth just within one month of the murder of Rajkumar Bul, the first martyr of Singur movement. Similarly, in Kalinganagar in Orissa, 12 adivasis died in January, 2006 in police firing – Protesting against the land acquisition by the same Tatas. And this cruelty was organised by the BJD Govt. a constituent of NDA. Whole Bengal protested against this mass-killing, but the NDA partners of the State Kept mum. The dubious role of CPM in attacking the farmers in West Bengal on one hand and organising movement against land take overs in other states like Maharashtra or Rajasthan cannot suppress the same of NDA partners or Congress party elsewhere. Reality tells us that all ruling parties are all out to snatch away the land othe farmers by acting as the touts of the capitalists wherever they are in ruling. Congress in Maharashtra, BJD in Orissa, BJP in Rajasthan, Mulayam or Samajwadi

Party in U.P., Left front in West Bengal – Tripura – Kerala. From that point of view Singur is not an exception, on the contrary it's a victim of the policy of false developments and killing of farmers. And, in order to distract the attention, the LF Govt. is out to propagandize the Singur movement as an anti LF movement of TMC. As such the agitators of Singur have to oppose Orissa, Maharashtra and U.P. along with Singur to establish the credentials that the Singur movement is not merely an anti LF TMC movement. That it's an organised mass movement against the ruthless land acquisition. Of course our intention is not to drive out the dubious UPA/NDA partners from Singur movement. It's just the reverse. We Congratulate and welcome even those who have joined hands with the Singur movement, despite the fact that their own Govts. playing the same role in other states!

We are an all India student organisation. As the students of Jadavpur, Kolkata, Kalyani, Rabindra Bharati University's, Presidency College and Bagula College and other institutions have joined the Singur movement to take a lesson from your mass movements. Earlier we have learned from Kalinganagar, Orissa. We are learning from Bajhera-Khurd of UP as well as from Maharashtra. And, our objective is to build an organised mass movement against Centre's anti-farmer policies being inspired and taking lessons from these movements. That is why we want to equally stand beside the victims of 25th September, night at the hands of RAF, police and CPM cadets as well as against the Barbarism in Maharashtra, U.P. or Orissa. We want and fervently hope that the countrywide protestors will join hands against the deceptive way of snatching away the agro-lands in the name of industrialisation, a hoax under the common slogan that 'Beware, the Collaborators of the capitalists!'

04-11-06

With revolutionery greetings,
All India Student's Association (AISA)

ISHTAHAR – (5)

Proposal of Joint State Convention against the industrialisation at the perils of Agro-lands

18th August – Students Hall, Kolkata

By flying the flags of so-called 'Social development through industrialisation' the left front Govt. under the CPM leadership in West Bengal are pronouncing promises of developments of state and employment of youths through industrialisation which has to be built not in the air, but on the fertile agrolands! As such behind the tall talks of industrialisation, without conducting any survey – they are presenting thousands of acres of fertile agro-lands to national and multinational monopolists practically at the rate of water. The Salim Group of Indonesia, the convict of murdering lakhs and lakhs of communists with the practicalism that 'Capital has no colour!' – has been invited here on red carpet by the left front Govt. and has been presented with 40 thousand acres of land. In Singur the Tatas are receiving one thousand acres of land. People are on the streets in protests.

Today's State convention express deep concern and strongly condemn the act. We firmly believe that these steps are totally in keeping with the imperial globalisation and liberalisation. This ruthless industrialisation of the LF Govt. is leading to the loss of land of thousands of farmers and loss of leasehold by thousands of share croppers. But, in this destructive act the most attacked are the agro-labors, landless and poor farmers and other village labors-as they are not only losing their employment opportunities, they are also absent in the list of L.F. Govt's extreme marginal characters for compensation.

West Bengal need labour-intensive industries Agro-based industries, cottage industry and handicrafts as well as development of small and medium industries and their modernisation. But what they are pursuing in reality are capital intensive high techno-based industries, retail agro-marketing by the national and international monopolists like Ambanis or Metro cash and carry. This type of industrialisation will have little scope of employment no doubt.

As such there is a yearly loss of about 50 thousands acres of land in West Bengal whereas this kind of industrialisation is further steadily reducing the agro-lands – which will make the food security which is already absent to many-will become further acute and complex.

They could have used the 40 thousand acres of land remaining with the closed industries, or, the

infertile lands or the waste lands of the State for their purpose of industrialisation. But, the state is moving in the opposite direction on the lands of factories – real estate business is in full flow, whereas, the fertile agro lands are being grabbed for urbanisation. Side by side the Govt. is telling the cock and bull story of turning around of the waste lands of agro lands!

In this circumstances, suddenly TMC, Congress or BJP are on the fields to save the Agro-lands! At the centre, or, in other states they are busy in implimenting the same programmes. Hence, we have to be cautious against these mask of agro-lovers!

A statewide strong mass movement has to be built here targetting the left front Govt.

Against the so-called models of development of these gloomy advocates of an economy – akin to letting the mother's land – it's necessary :

- that the positive protesting strengths of the state should join hands.
- to oppose the industrial model of the left front Govt. from a progressive, true left point of view.
- to organise a statewide massive mass movement.
- to stop the handover of agro lands to capital.
- to evolve a pro-people programme in West Bengal.

Today's state convention call for all positive protesting strength to work to achieve the above mentioned objectives.

This state convention is also giving call to the struggling people of West Bengal, specially to the urban and rural labour, agro labors, landless poor farmers to shake off the dependence on Govt. and administration and work for fulfilling the demands through self dependent unity oriented mass struggles.

CPI (ML), CPI (ML) Liberation, CPI (ML) New Democracy

(All the Istahars are translated by *Debashis Bhattacharya*)

“Power may justly be compared to a great river; while kept within its bounds, it is both beautiful and useful, but when it overflows it's banks, it is then too impetuous to be stemmed; it bears down all before it, and, brings destruction and desolation wherever it comes, Liberty, the only bulwark, against lawless power, which, in all ages, has sacrificed to its wild lust and boundless ambition the blood of the best men that ever lived.”

Andrew Hamilton

OPINION-1

The Movement is bound to succeed

Haradhan Roy

The leadership of movement may not be in a position always to predict about the future nitty-gritty of the movement, about the possible form or shape which it might take, or, about the people's course in a spontaneous movement. But, nevertheless, we can unhesitatingly predict that the future of the Singur Movement is really bright. This reminds us about the food movement during 1966. Today in West-Bengal on one side are a few obstinate ones in CPM, whereas on the otherside there are the rest of all. This is the most important thing in the movement of 'Save-Agro-Land' in Singur. That is why the victory is definite. The farmers of this place will go far and be a guiding force to the struggling people of West Bengal. To be specific, there are materials of the '66 food movement within the Singur Movement. That is why – I could not help joining these people defying age and distance.

(Incidentally, it's under the leadership of Haradhan Roy that the anti-eviction committee composed of different persons and organisations of Asansol are playing active supportive role in favour of the Singur land saving movements.)



OPINION-2

The Movement will Surely Succeed

Becharam Manna

In the recent past we never had such a valiant movement in West-Bengal. They may thunder in papers and television, but they won't dare to take over the land from the farmers with the help of stick or bullets. They are trying to win over by pressurising and threatening through relatives, police, by withdrawing agro-loans, by interrupting the flow of seeds and fertilisers, by breaking the deep tube wells and making the farmers nervous. Even then the majority have not surrendered so-far.

Left front partners like CPI, RSP etc. may not come out openly, but in their heart of heart they are also against the move and in favour of saving the lands. They don't want Tatas to build up their industry on fertile agro-land. We think this is our moral victory only.

Even, Buddhababu has admitted that the farmers are suffering for the land acquisition.

It is here in Singur – The historical traditional root of Tebhaga Movement in places like BaraKamalapur lies. The farmers of this place are fighting with that tradition in the background. The peasant's movement, therefore, it's not new to this place. It is in continuity.

The speciality of the movement that it's being continued in a peaceful non-violent way. The farmers are neither getting trapped in provocation, nor, are they giving rise to any provocation. So, for want of any rash disturbances on the part of the agitators – the administration is not getting the opportunity to jump on them. And, that has led to a winning possibility in the movement.

Another characteristic of the movement is the following of the leadership. At times of danger, it's not any political party, but the leadership of the 'Save Agro Land's' committee whose opinions are being unhesitatingly honoured by the farmers and they are moving unitedly. No individual slogan, nor, any party banner are there in the programmes.

So-far it has been a peaceful protest. But, the day when administration will undertake the measuring work and the fencing, a collision of farmers with the police will be inevitable that day. Once, the administration was driven out when they came for the same purpose. A real fight is awaited on that day.



Singur is a Symbol of Struggle to-day

Paltu Sen

To-day Singur has become the most and longest discussed subject in West Bengal. It has given rise to certain questions. Number of organisations have joined this movement. Eventhough the purpose may not be same for all, but the movement has real good prospect.

“Agriculture is our base and the industry – the future–” this slogan is not Left Front's own programme. At the dictates of WTO, the Central Govt. as well as different other states – have undertaken the same programme.

How far the “development” will be there – with the acquisition of 1 lakh acre of Agro-lands? Development means better state of conditions than to-day, isn't it? Then where is the basic industry? Where is the labor-intensive industry?” Apart from the foreign industry is there any industry to-day based on our own indigenous technology?

The Left Front itself has stood against this type of industry for long. Now, turning around for 180 degree they proclaim that ‘capital has no colour’! They are after big capital. Any capital for that matter,

The industrial castle will be built not on air, but on the fertile agro-lands eventhough there are enough of lands of closed industry, as well as the waste lands.

Whatever self-sufficiency in food is there will be sacrificed. We shall have to become dependent on foreigners for food and agriculture.

In fact, the word – Globalisation, has just one meaning. That is to reorganise Production. That's why the third world is under such an attack. Prices of the commodities are rising very high. And, so, not only the farmers, even the common people will face enormous problems with the loss of farming land. That's the reason for which ‘Singur’ has become symbolic.

Even the CPM supporters have taken part in the Singur movement. The participation of the females are really spontaneous. This struggle is bringing about a change in the political equation of West Bengal. Since, last about 7 months people are taking part in different programmes in different ways. This movement, therefore, is special.

The experience of Hindmotor tell us that within a land of 244 acres the factory, sheds for different workshops, labors' colony, school, health centre etc. – all exist. Then what for 1000 acres? About 30 thousand people of Singur will lose their jobs in exchange of this 1000 acres. Who will arrange for their bread and shelter? Is it not the responsibility of the Govt.?

In fact, the solution lies in the neo-democratic revolutionery path only. All are united to-day on the issue that till the police camp is lifted till the cases are not withdrawn, till the potatos are not ploughed – the movement will go on. And, moving on this line – the movement is trying to reach a different state qualitatively.

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A SPECEIAL OPINION

Land belongs to him who has a capital

Once the leftist slogan was – ‘Land belongs to the owner of plough’. To-day the charm of the globalisation flute has prompted the very same leftists to declare that ‘land belongs to the capital owner’ only. Those who once demanded farmers' rights on the land, are all out to-day to snatch away the right to appease the capitalists!

Even a child understands that the welfare of the state is not on the agenda of the industrialists and capitalists. They are coming in groups for their own interests with the profit motives. They are

greedy about the lands because in to-days' World land is costlier than gold. And, at a time when other avenues of investment are limited, the business of land is really pleasing, safe and secured.

And, their demands for the land are also whimsical. The State Govt. are ever ready to cater to their demands what-so-ever, without going into the details of the projects, the industry wise needs and ignoring the regional priorities. They are only concerned with the investment sum, not, with the human needs or welfare.

And, to occupy the lands they are using unfair tricks, and threats creating fear-psychosis. Sometime they are glorifying the farmers' greatness to part with their ancestral lands, sometime threatening to use force in case the land is not willingly surrendered. Sometime the false assurance is there that they will spare the fertile lands, sometime – after selling out cheaply a fertile land they hypocritically declare that as a waste land or grassy land.

In their endeavour for this hasty acquisition they are armed with the 'land acquisition act' of 1894 – an unfortunate legacy of colonial outlook. The Act says that mere monetary compensation is enough for an acquisition, State's responsibility is limited to the compensation only. Rest every other land related matters like situational reality, ancestral thread, devotion to the land are neglected or ignored in the said act. Also, the fertility of the land, the underground water, surrounding greeneries, Natural varieties etc. have not been taken into account. Land rate can never be fixed as a market rate.

The simple mathematics of the left front ministers point out that the bank interests of the compensation amount will be higher than their earning through the land. Hence, it is profitable for them to sale their landed property. It's true that simple mathematics may not always lead to simple anomalies! But in their accounts these ministers-engrossed in the developmental work – have left out the vast majority of the Agro-labors! The land owners may, for argument's sake, make a decent earning through land selling, but what happens to the agro labors, daily labors or share croppers who will simply starve? They don't get even a 'zero' in their simple accounts! 'Market' is truly concerned with the land owners, banks, industrialists. Who bothers whether the poor farmers starve, or, not! Even though it's this section who have voted them to the writers!

In their search for the lands, the West Bengal Govt. themselves have become a land dealer. The rate at which the lands are being purchased from the farmers under notice is much lesser than the selling price to the industrialists. Industrialists are never being allowed to directly negotiate with the farmers. Only because the Govt. is a broker of the land now and there is huge profit in these deals. That's why the West Bengal Govt. itself is in the real estate business like that of Orissa or Jharkhand Govts. Surprisingly they declare during handing over the sick organisation, viz., Great Eastern – that the Govt. is not for business and profit. Of course, it's different during the land deals!

**(Courtesy : the publication of *Ekhon Sanghati*
What is the direction of Development in West Bengal-2)**

“It is economically most efficient for the rich countries to dispose off their toxic wastes in poor countries, because poor people have both shorter life spans and less earning potential than wealthy people.”

Lawrence Summer (Chief Economist, World Bank)

THE REPORT OF THE PUBLIC HEARING AND FURTHER INVESTIGATION ON THE STRUGGLE BY THE PEOPLE OF SINGUR

□ The Background

Singur, the area with thickly populated farmer communities, is not more than just 40 kms away from Kolkata, the capital of the Left Front ruled-state, West Bengal. As in any other rural part of India, no doubt the habitats which are generations old have a diversity of occupations pursued by the populations: agriculturalists-landholders farmers and farm labourers, artisans as well as small traders and other self-employed as well as the migrant and resident labourers.

As in the rural hinterland of all cities, especially the large metropolis across the country, here too waves of change had occupied space – social, economic and geographical – with the resources of the region having been redistributed, land-use pattern changed over years and decades. Not only did this happen through voluntary mobility of the people for jobs and opportunities in and near Kolkata, but also due to the land acquired or purchased by the State for various public projects as also by the private investors taking over the land for non-agricultural business. As long as the processes of change were acceptable to the people, in spite of economic and social compulsions, inequality within the pull to push from outside, there was no serious conflict over the scenario of transformation at a pace, manageable for the most.

The conflict over the land take-over in Singur region by the State Government of West Bengal when the Chief Minister of the just-elected 7th Left Front Government, Shri Buddhadev Bhattacharya, declared in May, 2006, that at least 1000 acres of land in the villages – Gopalnagar, Beraberi, Bajemelia, Khaser Bheri and Singher Bheri – was to be acquired under the British-made Land Acquisition Act (1894) within months for a cheap automobile factory by the Tatas.

The news from Singur and Kolkata informed every one that the local farmers and workers, especially women, had decided to protest and not to give their land, but to drive away the corporate men while keeping away the officials. Dharnas to rallies, open strikes to home-based fasts and various forms of struggles were resorted to by the local would-be-affected people with the various human rights defenders and peoples' organizations for democratic development as well as the small and large political parties especially the Trinamool Congress and the Socialist Unity Centre (SUC), joining them and representing them in and outside the democratic forum of the state assembly. Tata's officials during their visit to the area were chased away. Yet the swords remained hanged on their heads; the conflict getting worsened and not resolved.

It was in this context, when there was determinations to go ahead expressed by both the parties, that the Singur-based mass organizations of the affected, Krishi Bhumi Bachao Committee and other democratic organizations like the long-serving Association for the Protection of Democratic Rights (APDR) decided to organize a Public Hearing in Singur area and invited us to be the members of the Panel. A number of other organizations endorsed the hearing which took place at village Gopalnagar on October 27, 2006. We accepted the invitation promptly with an intention to investigate into the vision and issues raised by the farmers here in Singur, the ideological arguments made in the public debate over present form of industrialization to SEZs in the country and if possible, help resolve the conflict.

□ The Hearing

We, the members of the panel, met to receive the first briefing on the objectives and modus operandi of the Public Hearing from the host organizers which were discussed further and the following questions were spelt out for the enquiry to seek answers for :

1. What is the socio-economic profile of the Singur block in general and the villages/communities to be affected/ displaced due to Tata Motors in particular?
2. What is Tata Motor project – production plan economics, its proposal to as well as Memorandum of Understanding or other contracts/agreements with the West Bengal Government?
3. What has been the process of planning the project – how far transparent, participatory and was the consent of the affected persons sought?
4. What is the perception of the common people – farmers, labourers and others to be affected, of the Tata Project, the States' role and the process till date, including land acquisition?
5. Has there been State Repression during the peoples' struggle and how far was it justified?

6. Can the Project bring in better life to the people of Singur? What is their share in the benefits? What is the land-use policy and the rehabilitation policy and plan that is officially declared?
7. How does the Left Front Government and the parties view the Project and the peoples' struggle? What is the politics involved in the struggle and the State's response?
8. What are the implications of Singur Project and the struggle for future industrialization in West Bengal and elsewhere?
9. What could be the next step?

The Public Hearing was organized on October 27, 2006, in an open square ground in the village Gopalnagar where a large crowd of the Project affected women and men were gathered along with a few hundred activities belong to a wider spectrum of peoples' organizations. Chairs were kept reserved for the invitees from the west Bengal government, including the Chief Minister, and the ministers for Industries, Agriculture, Land reforms as well as the senior officials. None of them turned up and the Chairs remained vacant throughout the Hearing.

With a welcome and background presentation by Mr. Amitdyuti Kumar, a senior activist of APDR and Sanhati Uduyog, one of the supporters of Krishi Jami Bachao Committee, described the aims and objective of the Hearing and its modus operandi. The floor was then opened to the local residents. The presentation began with a comprehensive deposition by Mr. Becha Ram Manna, one of the leader of the organisation Krishi Jami Bachao Committee, the organisation at the forefront of the movement. The local residents spoke with great articulation, vivid description, determination and a vision, but also with anguish and pain. Others included landholders, joint landholders, recorded sharecroppers (bargadars), unregistered bargadars, agricultural labourers and other self-employed. Some senior activists, eminent educationists and advocates joined them.

The facts which came out include the following :

1. There are more than 10,000 families who live on the 1000 acres of land and other natural resources to be acquisitioned and destroyed for the upcoming Tata Motors (small, cheap car production) Project. They include about 6000 landholders, registered share-croppers, unregistered sharecroppers. Others residing in the area since generations are landless labourers, artisans, small traders. There are thousands of regular, seasonal migrant workers who too live on the same resources.
2. The land records and the records of rights, including related to mutation for the area are not updated since years. A few cases : Even when legally land can be acquired by the State for the private industry, procedure of sale of land 20 and more years ago, not recorded in the name of purchasers (creating complication in land acquisition process and stalling payment of compensation).
3. The land to be affected is the prime agricultural land with multiple cropping, growing paddy, jute and rich and varied vegetables which is the sources of livelihood for those thousands of families.
4. The government's claim of the land being a waste land, is utterly false as wasteland constitutes a very small portion.
5. Being closer to the capital, Kolkata, families also have an access to the temporary or permanent jobs and work opportunities there but the main/life support for almost all of the persons, is the land which is being sought for the industry.
6. Land Acquisition Act, 1894, has not been a fully legal process no detailed information on the Project is disclosed, establishing it to be public purpose. Many, almost 54-50% of landholders have not accepted the notices, nor given consent till date.
7. As per the recent notification dated March 6, 2006 by the Land and Land Reforms Department, Government of West Bengal has made a legal provision for the fastest possible acquisition in the shortest of time, and the same seems to be the overall approach in the case of Singur.
8. The procedure under the LA Act and the above notification also is not followed fully and fairly, e.g., No proper publication of Section 4 notification in the village communities nor any public hearing was held, no "complete land acquisition proposal" as per the notification is made available.
9. The compensation offered is only of cash, as there is no State-level rehabilitation policy in the State of West Bengal. The compensation appears to be a large sum (Rs. 12 lakh/acre), but it is still lower than the market rate for Singur land which is Rs. 40,000 per kotta, i.e., Rs. 24 lakh/ acre.

10. Except absentee landlords, who are not more than 30%, most of the other landholders (consisting about 50% of the total persons) are opposed to land acquisition as their rich, bountiful natural resource, i.e., livelihood, cannot be replaced or compensated, they believe, knowing the desperate situation of those displaced due to projects in the past.
11. The local people are furious by the fact that the decision was never taken with them, nor are they informed about the Project, its need, its cost and benefits, the Memorandum of Understanding or agruments, the impacts – social and environmental.
12. The demands for information and documents made by the local farmer-leaders as well as an organization, such as APDR, through formal letters are not responded to, in spite of the Right to Information Act, 2005, which is a clean violation of law.
13. The people strongly believe that a car Project or any industry cannot come up at the cost of destroying the agricultural land, common peoples' livelihoods and conceive as an onslaught on the farmers, who are already indebted and committing suicides, not in Singur, but in other parts of the country.
14. The Project cannot be of a priority above the agriculture, and industry has to necessarily come on the wasteland or already acquired yet unused land. They referred to the options to Singur land suggested by many including the wasteland in and around Singur, the unused land of Hindusthan Motors (Birla Enterprise), established in 1942, who was allotted 741 acres of land acquired then, but could use only 391 acres. At least 350 acres of land thus would be available and sufficient for the main factory, which is estimated to require 100 to 500 acres of land, if all the infrastructure, including official quarters etc., is minimized and not provided at the same site. Other options can be in other districts such as Purulia, but whereto care to find land without people to be displaced or with their consent should be considered. The Tatas or any corporate, people believe, have become closer allies of the government of West Bengal, which is no more transparent and accountable to people especially the toilers in farming and fisheries.
15. The secretive deal, its in the news and was reiterated by the people is a result of exchange of support, especially financial, between the state government and the Tatas. The change of the face, seen by the closed stand taken and expressed by Shri Buddhadev Bhattacharya was condemned and challenged.
16. The people were especially disturbed over the unwarranted repression on September 25, 2006, when lathis were charged on the peasants and labourers protesting peacefully, who were in gherao of the officials but had not taken to any violence. They were openly condemning the LF government for killing of Raj Kumar Bhul, who died the day after the attack. False cases filed against the people who faced attack themselves, were challenged.
17. The villagers and the supporters were upset with the false charges and accusation by the police administration against innocent women and men and even a two and a half year old child which they want to question.
18. The land in the five affected villages, Gopalnagar, Bajemelia, Beraberi, Khaser Bheri and Singher Bheri was aquired forcefully.
19. A member of the Beraberi Gram Panchayet, Shri Dudh Kumar Dhara, criticized the fact that there was no process of consultation nor is the Panchayet informed about the details of the Project by the planners. He was in anguish while saying that almost total of 827 bighas land in his mouja, Beraberi, is to be acquisitioned, leaving out only 5 acres which will lead to destitution and violation of human rights. He claimed there was no mention of land transfer recorded in the record of rights over last 30 years and hence acquisition process was flawed; even cheques accepted by many absentee landlords could not be encashed without updation. People expressed shock over plan to destroy the agricultural land falling in the common area of Damodar Valley Corporation property.
20. Some of the deponents know that the LF takes a different position in other states while compels the farmers to fight in the West Bengal where they are in power.
21. People are very clear that farmers, labourers, artisans cannot be absorbed in the Tata Motors as is confirmed through the official statements.

THE OFFICIAL VIEWPOINT

Since no representative of the government, neither CM, nor any minister or even a bureaucrat out of the invitees participated known to be fully involved in and committed to be in the public hearing, it was necessary that we heard one of them responsible and recorded the same. We could not get an appointment

with the CM but we could meet Mr. Nirupam Sen the minister for Industries,:

We could have two hours long dialogue with him and his senior officials at the west Bengal Industries Development Corporation. He did give us a gist of the Project's salient features and claimed the following among other things,

- a. It's a trade secret, the Minister had publicly opined before our meeting. To us he argued it was not possible to disclose all the documents even when we referred to RTI Act, 2005. He agreed to give whatever is possible but in reality he did not till date.
- b. We have compared the land requirement with other auto factories and the area in Singur is the optimum!
- c. We have left out some land to reduce displacement.
- d. We have no rehab package ready now but we are planning.....Discussing and bargaining with Tatas.
- e. There is no state-level rehab policy which I can share now.
- f. We know that the land is not a waste land as shown in the old records, most of it multiple crop land. We have a list of people to be trained for the factory, whom the Tata will absorb in the course but there can be no written guarantee.
- g. The resistance is not real. Almost all have given consent, acquisition is completed and crores of rupees worth cheques distributed. Payment is on along with updating of land records. Some payment is pending because of complains regarding mutations.
- h. The outsiders are creating trouble. On September 25, 2006 there was no lathi charge, rather an attack by people who detained officers for hours and hence action became inevitable. Will not to use police force, since people are willing and happy with the given price.
- i. We too know what poverty is and need industries, for GDP, growth and jobs. People cannot survive on agriculture alone.
- j. If we do not agree to Tatas choice of land, they will go away to other state. We cannot afford it. We offered Kharagpur land but they rejected. They wanted land with ready infrastructure as economics of a cheap car factory is worked out by them they needed it closer to Kolkata. There was no alternative.
- k. We have worked hard on this and we cannot leave this project. Our CM is for it.
- l. We are in a globalised, liberalized economy. Things have changed and we have to adjust.

We also tried to seek various statements, written and public by the LF leaders. Some of the CPI(M) leaders referred to the article by Binoy Konar in peoples' democracy. The same needs to be analysed at length as it is shocking for many of us. The compromise with the capitalists, in line Lenin's post-revolution New Economic Policy that it suggests to be appropriate, can be debated at an ideological forum and not included in this report.

The CM, during the telephonic conversation was of the opinion that the care and the interest of the people should be left to him and his government. That he knows what poverty and human rights are. That he has obtained consent and that only 1% of the oustees are resisting, the struggle is political as also for press publicity and hence he has nothing to respond. The police force and the section 144 is fully justified and was claimed when TMC and CPI(M) were wanting to hold rallies on the same day, Nov. 30, 2006. There is no atrocities by the police but the agitators were encircled by the Naxalites.

The summary of other documents which show inconsistency and contradiction is as follows :

1. The Sanyukt Kishan Sabha (RSP front) resolved at Kanpur (Oct 15, 2006) said : "different state Govt.. are out to acquire multicrop land to allow the big corporates Some among the lefts attempts to toe the line of industrial development as envisaged by the protagonists of neoliberalism tending to destabilize agricultural situation.

2. The Left parties, including all LF partners in a note to the UPA (Oct 2006) seek a review of the SEZ act and all for corrective steps such as (a) no transfer of land ownership to private developers but should be given on lease. (b) SEZ should be built on non-agricultural land. (c) in press note, Sept. 26, 2006, it is said that the land acquisition Act should be amended suitably and apart from farmers, agricultural labourers should be considered as displaced people.

Unfortunately none of this is followed in the case of Singur Project.

THE LATEST :

The state Government of West Bengal has remained arrogant (unsupportive?) and adamant over the issue of opening up the Singur region and forcible occupation of the farmland for Tata Motors. It's also obvious from the attitude and actions of the government – From CM to the administration and police – that

they are, by denying the due democratic space to the peaceful villagers and activists, pushing the struggle towards a violent path. Having witnessed the various actors, the statements by the Left front partners and the warlike scenario in the field, we feel pained and shocked to realize that in the Left-Front-led state too, there is an utter lack of respect and recognition for the rights of the labouring people, the struggle by the farmers and labourers. Refusing to open up the Singur area even to the peaceful, non-violent activists, the Government activist, the Government of West Bengal seems to continue its “Operation Eviction” at the land to be “conquered” for Tatas, with huge police force still camping in the villages. Party cadres of the CPI(M) joining them in identifying, chasing and harassing the villagers unwilling to give away their land destroying the vegetable crop in the field and the police engaging in atrocities – entering houses, driving people out, lathicharging anyone who resists the repression. The Government claims that fencing would be completed soon and within a week's time, the land will be handed over to Tatas, projecting it as its victory.

But all this is not without a strong protest, widespread resistance and a serious challenge posed to the Buddhadev Bhattacharya' Government. We, two of the panel members, witnessed this on the day (December 2, 2006) after having reached Singur smoothly in a private car, inspite of the police barricades and peoples' blockade (organized by the TMC, Congress and other local organization) from place to place. The people in Singur we met on December 2, 2006, included women, young and aged, who had faced teargas, rubber-bullets, beatings with lathis, police entering their homes, burning some paddy, some fuel-wood stored, breaking tiles and damaging of house materials as also molestation. Still in torn clothes, most of them came out of their houses with children and the aged, walked with us from Beraberi to Khaser Bhari to point out to the large number (at least 150) of policemen still in the “Operation Driveout” in Khaser Bhari. They were accompanied by men who were obviously upset and angry over the incidence of abusing their wives and mothers, molestations and repression the vehicles as those carrying party cadres, whom they referred to as “no 2 persons”. All these farmers-burgadars were still not for giving away their two to four cropping, irrigated holdings as their only source of livelihood. Forgetting what they had themselves faced, they wanted us to act and stop the on going attack in village Khaser Bhari, and take due action on the arrest of the innocent farmers and labours, women, men and a few children. At least sixty of them were arrested on the same day, December 2 and the group included 70 to 80 years old persons, all from the affected families with only 4 to 6 activist women, belonging to Nari Nirjatan Pratirodh Mancha (Forum Against Oppression of Women), APDR and others. All the 18 women in the Chandannagar police custody when we met the next day were charged under 12 sections, including 307 & 143, 147, 153. Many who could talk to us in the Magistrate's Court, Chandannagar, narrated the incidence of arrest from their houses, when they were cooking food, or engaged in house chores. Other were trying to protest the police entry, questioning them in loud voice, raising slogans and challenging forcible acquisition and occupation through fencing of their land. The mass protest that took place at the Chandannagar police station on December 3, 2006, brought out the fact that common people as well as intellectuals are anguished and openly condemn the atrocities and terror unleashed on the Singur farmers and labourers. The moment we entered Khaser Bhari, we saw the two vehicles on the highway leaving the village behind. Deciding to catch at least one of the senior officers, we too had to almost run behind them, when as a natural response, at least 100 women and men too joined us. By the time we could catch hold of Priyakanta Bakshi, Officer-in-Charge, Singur police station, police had stopped women, much behind, from joining us and later we saw a large number of Rapid Action Force cadres in black uniform coming out of Beraberi and pushing them with lathis, if not beating, as it was difficult to see the action. Men continued to walk with us, expressing some anger and some trying to pacify them. One stone suddenly was pelted from behind, hit a police man and we turned to see and stop it, shouting to everyone. No other stone came in, yet within next 10 minutes, we saw a few armed policemen running to a farmerwearing a lungi with open chest, far away in the field and they started brutally beating him on legs, dragging him, compelling to walk. The scene, caught by all the media-persons was unbearable and hence we ran towards the site, could stop the beating but not the arrest of the farmers. Within minutes, all villagers having been separated from us, were gheraoed by tens of police and arrested us without mentioning sections under which the arrest was made. Driving us all the way to Howrah, keeping us in the jeep or waiting for 3 full hours, with at least 8 vehicles full of police officers and others they declared Medha Patkar as the State Guest, while we refused to accept the offer. Those arrested included a senior journalist from Tehelka, Aditi Chowdhuri and they stayed in the jeep overnight, insisting that the arrested who are falsely accused in fabricated cases should be released. The other members of the team, Dipankar Chakraborty, Amitdyuti Kumar and Sumit Chowdhuri were arrested and separated from the other two and taken to Chinsurah PS. They were subsequently released at the night on PR Bond. The next day, a team with Medha Patkar, reached Chandannagore police station in

support of the agitators in custody and help protest rally and public meeting, attended and addressed by Amitdyuti Kumar of APDR, Pranab Banerjee and others of NAPM, Saktiman Ghosh of Hawkers' Sangram Committee, women activists of Paschim Banga Khet Mazdoor Samity, along with local leaders of SUCI, Trinamul Congress and others. All the accused were released on bail, on December 7, 2006.

- Much before, from November 29 till December 1, 2006, there were incidents of serious highhandedness and brutal repression.
- On the November 29, 2006 when outsiders identified as CPI(M) cadres came in support of fencing with the police, the farmers who continued to work in the farms that were being fenced, were attacked.
- A large rally and gathering by the CPI(M) was allowed on the day in Singur.
- CPI(M) cadres as well as large number of police including RAF cadres, marched through the streets of the affected villages, obviously to intimidate and scare people.
- On November 30, 2006, a rally planned by the Krishi Jami Bachao Committee and all organizations and parties in the struggle, was not just stopped but people proceeding in jathas were harassed and even lathi-charged. Ms Mamata Banerjee was arrested and reportedly, mishandled. Section 144 was clamped in the area through notification which is not just absurd but legally unjustifiable. The last few sentences suggest that anyone can be stopped from going to Singur alleging malicious reasons. The same is being used to stop entry of a selected activists-supporters, even the local people's gathering in the affected area and mass action. As the Chief Minister of the state put it in a telephonic conversation, this became inevitable since both CPI(M) and the TMC were insisting on holding a rally on the same day, i.e., on November 30. This is baseless. It may be noted that CPI(M) had held a rally on the previous day, i.e., November 29 itself which did not face any state interference.

Four persons in the hospital including one activist Bilash Sarkar with a fractured hand and a 12 year old child Jhumpa Patra, D/o Ashoke Patra, Khaser Bhari, who was injured, do not even have their names in the FIR filed by the police.

All this and much more made it clear that Singur people needed supporters to reach out which the administration has issued notification dated undersection 144, which has such fraudulent justification and direction that is used to prevent the activists including Medha Patkar, a member of the panel. This happened twice again, on December 4 and 5, 2006, by a large contingent of police in vehicles gheraoing them even when it was made clear to the police that they did not intend to break the section 144, and made on foot in a batch of 2 or 3 persons. The reason for the arrest which was like an encounter with a terrorist, given by officers : (a) "You are a celebrity and you would gather a crowd in the Section 144 region." (b) "your mere presence instigates people", (c) "It's for your safety and security", (d) "There are violent elements hiding in the region who would take advantage of your presence". In spite of being in custody, at a Coal India guest house in Dankuni, it was neither declared as arrest nor a detention! The overall illegality was challenged in the High Court to get a straight order declaring her as free person with right to move anywhere.

If could not, however, give us a guarantee and opportunity to reach Singur. The Chief Minister mentioned it before the Press in the Writers' Building as reported in the Times of India that she would be free to go anywhere, including Singur but denied it later during his conversation with me.

Singur, till date, stands isolated and cut off from the rest of the world, especially socially conscious and active persons as experienced also by a group of lawyers who attempted to reach there, even through media is not altogether stopped from going therein. The news pouring out from the region that MS Asha Patra, a domestic servant who travels to Dankuni regularly, reported that a few hundred police entering her house and damaging her property while she was engaged in cooking.

More information is that all the local leaders of the struggle, belonging to various social and political groups and movements. Trinamool Congress, SUCI and non-party organizations, of the Krishi Jami Bachao Committee, the local alliance of the peoples' struggle, are compelled to remain underground. At least 1000 policemen and police women continue to camp and remain present while fencing by hired workers, mostly outsiders is on. The Government of West Bengal has announced that 70% of fencing work is over and land will be handed over to Tatas within next eight days.

The peoples' resistance and stance remains the same as reported earlier. There is no queue for collecting cheques nor submission for sacrifice of land as witnessed by those who are watching the local scenario. The people may not be on the street, in view of repression, terror and intimidation but are clear about their vision. This is clear from the local and other women and men and landholders protests; The fasting persons included Rabindranath Bhattacharyay, The local MLA, known locally as mastermashai, which

started on December 4, 2006, at village Khaser Bhari (i) hoisting black flags on a few hundred houses in all 5 villages, as a protest against land acquisition and atrocities, (ii) signature campaign and memoranda/ affidavits on oath by farmers (landholders).

The struggle in support, outside Singur has intensified and spread enormously. V. P. Singh condemned the atrocities on farmers and forcible occupation similar to those in U.P., college teachers and students from Jadavpur University, Presidency College and other academic institutions with a history of social commitment and revolutionary spirit have held large public meetings but are also participating in the actions all around; a few incidences of breaking the shareholders of Tatas, burning Tata products also indicate the anger expressed by a few and the likely unfortunate turn of events. As regards Singur. A wider alliance of 19 and more organizations and a few opposition parties, including Trinamul Congress, JD(U), Samajbadi Party, has taken a lead in various spontaneous and planned programmes including blockades, "bandhs" and a long term, indefinite sit-in with a fast by six representatives of various people's organizations, such as Sanhati Udyog, APDR, Pashim Banga Khet Mazoor Samity, NAPM, CPI(M-L), Kanoria Jute Mills Workers' Union, HM Sangrami Shramik Karmachari Union including MS Mamata Banerjee is on. They were forcibly picked up on December 7, 2006, but their place is taken over by other local persons and at least 20 persons, it is understood, are fasting as of now.

There are spontaneous protests coming up and Singur is an issue of concern, an action by various organizations in Delhi, Mumbai and elsewhere with pro-left eminent persons like Arundhati Ray, Swami Agnivesh, Sumit Chakraborty, Advocate Prasant Bhusan, Aruna Ray, SP Shukla and others reacting to the Rightist stance of compromise with the capitalist and violation of human and democratic rights by the Left, is an unprecedented situation. Along with JNU student's union, AISA, NAPM, Delhi Forum and other organizations, a protest sit-in took place at CPM headquarters at New Delhi and a dialogue was held with the politbureau member, Nilotpal Basu and others, but with not much outcome in the impasse. Will this lead to a sincere debate on "the Secular Agenda" beyond the rhetorical party manifestos and Common minimum Programme of the alliance politics.

The politico-economic context :

It is clear that Tata Motors is only one of the corporate projects to come up in West Bengal. Beyond the industrialization in the past, this state too is on the fast track, seeking foreign direct investment, holding extensive dialogue with the Indian and foreign industrialist-investors and facilitating, to say the least acquisition and related displacement of villages-farmers to fishworkers. While 50,000 plus industries which were closed or sick in the state, not due to the trade union activities as is sometimes claimed by the ministers but, at lack of investment of money, new technology and managerial as well as market strategies, the workers are in the struggle too. Kanoria Jute and Bawreah Cotton Mills have seen the long agitation to which there has been no great response. Land under these lie unused and employees are impoverished as jobless.

The state also is in dire need of taking the next (second) step of granting land rights to the recorded burgadars or share croppers without which the Operation Burga is incomplete; after which cooperative ventures in agriculture and agro-industries could have absorbed landless and peasants in the supporting industrialization.

There is still 40% of the state's population to be made literate, 48% of children suffering from malnutrition and lakhs of youths registered in the employment exchange to be provided with jobs. One cannot accept without convincing plans and with negative past experience that these farmers to be evicted from farms and natural resource-based livelihood would be absorbed in the Tata Motors or which ever industry that would come up on their land, without they being recognized, respected and treated as the real investors. The experience of the adivasis displaced by Tata's project in Haldia Municipal corporation Area, District Midnapur, or Jharkhand and Bihar, also does not give any ray of hope.

The planners' view that the natural resources which are not a property but life-support can be simply taken over with money thrown into their face as the only means of compensation is no more accepted to most of the farmers. In Singur too, The resident-owner-cultivators are clearly distinguished in their position of no displacement or minimum displacement expressed through no acceptance of section 4 of Land Acquisition notices till date. It's thus a false claim by the government of West Bengal that almost all the farmers owning 957 acres of 997 acres have given consent to parting away with the land for offered cash (Rs. 12 lakh per acre). The compensation offered as per unofficially reliable sources, is 6 lakhs to 8 lakhs per acre, which is half of the open market value which would come to Rs. 12 to 24 lakh per acre. The lowest value is for the shali land which is higher than the highlands. The sale statistics coming from recorded

value of sale is always known to be unrealistic and underestimated.

But the question is not of money, its of livelihoods, right to life and right to cultural diversity too. In stead of getting thrown into the slums on the periphery of urban areas, if farmers prefer to continue in the agricultural activities. they cannot and should not be forcibly made to get off their present socio-cultural-economic natural environment. Even if houses are not acquisitioned, those losing land, other occupants would certainly be compelled to migrate out of their home and natural environment.

That rehabilitation, an aspect on which the government offers to hold a dialogue, is seen as an unattainable task and unjustifiable impact, imposed without option assessment and impact-assessment both is certainly not the first and the foremost aspect. The National Rehabilitation Policy of 2003 also states as its first objective : To minimize displacement. This too is nowhere in sight as far as Singur's Tata Project is considered.

The debate on Tata project has now become public. There are clear questions raised about the magnitude of land required for Tata Motors. This may be almost equal to some other national and internatinal automobile projects but there is also Pune, Maharastra, unit of Tata, manufacturing cars, trucks etc, standing on 510 acre (Ravindra Kumar, The Statesman, Kolkata edition, December 5, 2006) and its obvious that all the acquisition for industries in the state IDG as well as SEZ is of much more land than needed for the core units and include infrastructure with the residence of officials, independent water and power project too. A luxury and comfortably enjoyed by the corporates there is at the inhuman cost of the nature and people, the communities. Even the British Act of 1894 (Land Acquisition) stipulates as one of the reasons for raising objections to the land acquisition the fact that more land than necessary is being acquired. But who cares? When there is no hearing given to the individuals who are affected under section 5(A), the questions are raised not at the legal but public forum by the displaced as in the case of Singur struggle.

Tatas have not responded to the options offered openly as the state is representing them, anyway. It is clear from our dialogue with the Industries Minister Shri Nirupam Sen, however, that Tatas refused to accept an offer of and at Kharagpur for the same purpose and preferred only Singur as the site closest to the megapolis of Kolkata with a ready infrastructure, including Durgapur Expressway. Can this be acceptable? As in SEZs too, the chosen land, the magnitude and everything including the Rehab Package as Mr. Nirupam Sen admitted, is to be bargained with Tata and cannot be that of the state. This is awful and clearly speaks of the absence of level-playing field, the inequitous status granted favouring the investors of money, not the investors of natural resources. The market forces derecognise the latter, no doubt, but when the Welfare State too does this, what remains of the Constitution, written in the name of the people of India, one may ask.

The secrecy through which pours out a few facts, even inconsistent out of the iron curtain, in relation to the Singur Project, is also serious. Coming from the LF Government, it ridicules the rhetorical claims by all political parties in their election manifesto of being for transparency and accountability. This is proved from the total lack of response to our letter, to the ministry for Industries, seeking information and documents as panel members, even after his oral promise to furnish some of the documents. APDR, an experienced human rights organization also has had a perturbing experience in this regard. Nothing more than what is told to us by the Industry Minister, told to the press and public and the submissions by the people reported here is known about the Project, claimed to be a "Public Purpose". **The issues that arise in the above context thus are as follows :**

1. The development planning process, if it is democratic and towards fulfilment of public purpose, cannot be carried out, justified without peoples' participation, which has to begin with the community rights to its resources and flowing from the same, right to planning the choice of technology, priorities in development projects and cost-benefit-based plans to harness the resources.
2. When large number of farmers and sharecroppers, labourers in Singur have not given consent to project, which is proven from the data and list of affidavits, enclosed herewith, the force of police to party, used brutally, is an unconstitutional and inhuman way to push the project.
3. A battle that has been on between the administration and the people in the field is a clear indication of no consent granted by a large number of the oustees, proving the official to be falsehood.
4. There is no proper Gram Sabha held as per the 74th amendment of the constitution and hence the democratic rights stand violated.
5. The public purpose to the public benefit, beginning with the directly affected in the case of Tata Motor is far from roved.
6. The land acquired is mostly irrigated with canals and river Kana, prime agricultural land with all

advantages, which people do not permit to and the state too should not destroy. DVC Project benefits should not go waste and the water resources should be further harnessed.

7. The Corporates cannot be allowed to profit at the cost of agriculture and living communities.
8. It is not proved that Singur is the best option to minimize the social and environmental impact following the National Rehabilitation Policy 2003.
9. The police brutality to intimidation tactics continue and so does the struggle. This war must come to an end and not be intensified with the party cadres brought in and indicated by none else than a Minister himself.
10. There should be no violence on the part of the state, the people must continue to struggle peacefully with Singur as a part of the country be opened to all supporters and visitors immediately.
11. The fasting persons as well as the peoples' movements should held dialogue with, creating a cordial atmosphere by withdrawing the police force and apparently false cases.
12. The dialogues must be not only on the issues on human rights and civil liberties, but peoples' right to resources and planning. It must begin with the project and displacement and include economic aspects too.
 - a. We appeal to the Left Front Government to take a pro-people position, save farm land and farmers as also the democracy.
 - b. Industrialisation must only be complementary and supplementary to agriculture and not take a toll of the agro-economy, providing the food security to all and livelihood support to above 60% of our population.
 - c. The constitution and the legal authorities including NHRC intervene at the earliest to stop human right violation before the human rights day, i.e., December 10, 2006.
 - d. Tatas must opt for another land, giving a part of his huge profits for the people.
 - e. The Left Front with All Allied Parties must take a consistent position in all states on transfer of Agricultural land in any project and in SEZs.
 - f. The LF must take this opportunity to initiate a public debate on the issues raised by Singur struggle and facilitate a National Policy on Development Planning Urgently.

Shrimati Mahasweta Devi
Shri Dipankar Chakraborty

Justice (Retd.) Malay Sengupta
Ms Medha Patkar

Dated : December 8, 2006

(Helped in translation by *Manisha Bandyopadhyay*)

Tremble all ye oppressors of the world! Take warning all ye supporters of slavish governments and slavish hierarchies! Call no more (absurdly and wickedly) reformation innovation. You cannot now hold the world in darkness. Struggle no longer against increasing light and liberality. Restore to mankind their rights; and consent to the correction of abuses, before they and you are destroyed together.

Doctor Richard Price (Hailing the French Revolution)

A PRIMA FACIE CITIZENS' CHARGESHEET AGAINST THE WEST BENGAL GOVERNMENT PERTAINING TO ITS POLICIES RELATED TO AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRY AND DEVELOPMENT.

[For initiating a discussion at the Citizens'/Convention on 3 November 2006, Friday, 4 pm at Juba Kendra, Moulali, Kolkata.]

We, the citizens, are of the opinion that the West Bengal Government is committing a series of offences related to development issues. We are enlisting some of these acquisitions related to these offences, in order to try the Government in the Citizens' Court.

CHARGE-1

The West Bengal Government is acquiring agricultural land for private owned industry, mine, housing, services and for setting up Special Economic Zones. The Government is doing this as per land acquisition laws and it is then handing them over to private sector organisations. Land is being acquired on the plea that as per law the Government can do this in 'public interest'. The Government is not explaining as to how building factories, mine, housing etc. by the upper class owners, on the land of the poor tillers, can be deemed to be in 'public interest'. The Government does not have any written land acquisition policy. There is no such policy explaining whose land will be acquired, what sort of land will be acquired, why the land will be acquired, who will be given the land. However, deprived of any scope to discuss the matter, the citizens observe that whoever asks for land for whatever reasons is being provided land of their choice – irrespective of the protests of the original land owners.

We, the citizens, are asking for a land acquisition policy in writing from the West Bengal Government.

CHARGE-2

The other facet of the said policy on land relates to ascertaining the real value and usefulness of land. A piece of land yields food grains and raw materials for industries and is also the source of fodder for cattle – at present and in the future. A piece of land is a receptacle of living organisms. Various plants and organisms occupy the same piece of land and this biodiversity is invaluable for human life, for nature and for our environment. A piece of land is not only a receptacle of land but also of water, which is an invaluable natural resource. A piece of land acts as a pasture for grazing cattle. Cattle are an important facet of the rural economy. Land is the main source of income for the rural populace. The livelihood of land owners tilling their own land, agricultural labourers, sharecroppers, rural based workers involved in processing, storing, marketing and transporting of food is land dependant. The land acts as the storehouse of folk-knowledge based medicine collection and raw materials for the rural artisans. The poor gather and collect food, firewood, organic fertiliser, building/repairing material for their houses and implements of daily household use.

Acquisition of land and the consequent change in land-use alarms us.

The Government does not have any declared policy in this regard. Food security, water security, conservation of nature, preservation of environmental balance, security of the livelihood of the rural people should be considered.

We urge upon the State Government for a written land related policy, which will not only deal with land acquisition but also address issues related to land use and land conservation.

CHARGE-3

There are a large number of closed factories in West Bengal. The West Bengal Government does not have any policy related to the land locked-up in these closed industrial units. This land had been given to various industrialists to set up factories in the past. This land cannot be used for any other purpose, but residential complexes and shopping malls are coming up on such land.

Government had given the land on lease to factory owners. When such factories do not exist the land is supposed to come back to the Government. Such land is not being offered for setting up of new factories. These are either remaining unused or residential apartments are being built on them. Instead the Government is giving agricultural land for setting up factories. Land use maps of various locations as per Town and Country Planning Act, have been prepared but the Government has not made it public. If published it

would be evident that land for setting up industries are available.

The absence of Government policy as regards industrial land is disconcerting and disturbing.

We call upon the Government to come clean with a written policy concerning land locked-up in closed factories.

CHARGE-4

West Bengal Government is with great interest, ushering foreign and national capital investment in industry, mines, building satellite townships, service sector and agro-business. Whereas the Government is signing agreements with the investors, the terms of contract are not being made public. The citizens have the right to know the details of such agreements between the Government and the private investors as per the Right To Information Act. The Government is legally bound to make public the contents of such agreements. By not doing so the Government is undemocratically violating its own law. The significance of not making known the conditions of the contract, we apprehend, is that there could be certain clauses, which are detrimental to the interests of the citizens. The question of subsidy could be an example. It is understood that these investors are being invited to invest in the State by promising subsidy on various accounts. For example tax relief, free electricity connections, discount on electricity tariffs, free water connection and usage etc. These subsidies will be provided from the ordinary taxpayers money and/or loans. It is known from Government sources that the State has to take fresh loans in order to pay the interest of the loans it has taken in the past. Such critical debt servicing conditions are typical of a debt trap. After leading the state into a debt trap, the Government is giving agricultural land and taxpayer's money as subsidy to private investors so that they can be assured of personal profit.

We are asking the Government to disclose the terms and conditions of the agreements it has signed with all the investors as per the Right To Information Act.

CHARGE-5

In order to solicit eagerly in favour of investment in West Bengal the State Government, we apprehend, are declaring relief to the investor who will not have to abide by the labour laws. It is heard that contract labour will be allowed at the proposed TATA Motors unit. Labour Laws will not be implemented in Special Economic Zones.

The basis of such apprehension was evident in cases of locked out and closed industries in which the Government sided with the employers and not with the workers. Workers were denied their legitimate dues. The State Government did nothing to protect their interest.

We urge the Government of West Bengal to formulate a policy in writing regarding labour employment in all such proposed industrial units, which has the support of the Government. Moreover we want the Government to reveal, as per the Right To Information Act., text of all the labour related agreements with private investors.

CHARGE-6

In support of its effort to bring in investment the West Bengal Government cites two reasons – application of modern technology and create employment. These two factors are inversely related. More modern the technology, the lesser is the requirement of labour.

The industrialist in order to maximise profit would like to keep costs low. To do it the labour cost catches early attention. To reduce labour cost means replacing labour by using technology. Modern technology works in this direction. The Government has given this right to the investor by allowing the use of technology.

We are also concerned about how much friendly some of the technology used in industry is towards the environment. It is the responsibility of the Government to implement proper norms to protect the environment when certain types of technology are being used in a project. We are not too certain whether the Government is playing the right role in this direction, given the over-enthusiastic response it is showing to bring in fresh investment.

In the interest of creating fresh employment, existing workers and the environment, we urge the Government to come out in writing with its policy regarding the use of technology in industry.

CHARGE-7

While allowing various private sector projects on agricultural land, the West Bengal Government is stating as a justification that there would be employment generated here. However it is not giving in writing as to how much will be invested in which project; what will be the amount of subsidy provided by the Government;

how many will be employed in which category of jobs. Moreover it is not being computed as to how many are dependant on and how much they are gainfully earning from the parcel of land on which the industry is being set up. The calculations concerning how many jobs will be created against the total jobs destroyed are not being done on behalf of the Government. We are of the belief that more people will lose their livelihood as compared to the number of jobs created in these projects.

There is one more aspect to be considered in this issue. It is not just a question of more jobs or less jobs. It involves the nature of jobs created vis-à-vis nature of those destroyed. Why does a skilled tiller have to become a security guard of a factory? Why should a woman worker skilled in allied agricultural activities have to become a maid at a neighbouring housing complex?

In this context we demand an employment policy in writing from the Government of West Bengal.

CHARGE-8

We believe that the ideal areas for creating fresh employments are small-scale industry, village-based industry, cottage industry, cooperative industry and industries based on appropriate technology and consumer goods for low-income groups.

We feel that in its over-enthusiasm to attract big capital the West Bengal Government is ignoring these industries capable of generating employment. The Government is supporting the big capital, by allowing subsidy. On the other hand the small industries, where incentives could create employment, are being ignored.

The Government is saying that in the interest of industrialisation, agricultural land is being taken away. Does industrialisation mean such capital-intensive factories alone or does it also encompass the healthy growth of other industries too? Does industrialisation mean ignoring the indigenous and local industries while supporting capital-intensive large-scale industries?

We demand that the West Bengal Government should declare in writing its industrial policy in the interest of employment and small capital based enterprises.

CHARGE-9

When the farmers at Rajarhat refused to hand over their land the Government, with the help of the police, had unleashed a reign of terror. Men, women, senior citizens of the families of farmers were recklessly arrested; many were harassed using the legal instrument of false cases; hundreds were physically tortured, jailed and fined. Similarly those who are trying to protect their agricultural land at Singur – men, women and children – are facing police torture, being arrested, being harassed with false cases, are becoming victims of forced disappearance by the police.

We strongly condemn such acts of torture and harassment.

CHARGE-10

The West Bengal Government while acquiring agricultural land for private owned industries, mines, housing, services and for setting up Special Economic Zones are expressing opinions which are going against agricultural activity. We, the citizens, are feeling particularly concerned with these statements. Firstly, the Government is saying that fertile land is not being taken and only single-crop land is being taken. Without going into the debate/statistics on this issue, we state that even unfertile land can be made fertile. A single-crop land can be transformed into multi-crop land without degrading its quality. Hence this logic is baseless.

Secondly, the Government is saying that agriculture is no longer profitable, hence if the money received from land sale is kept in the bank the accrued interest will yield greater returns. In order to make agriculture profitable the small farmers working on small land-holdings need Government support. And this support has to be provided since these small farmers produce for their own consumption and also for us. It is now beyond doubt that small farms with Government support are most efficient as far as productivity is concerned. This is why there were many other recommendations in this direction during the land reform years, for example farmers cooperative dealing with implements, accessories and ingredients of production.

The Government implemented the first three primary aspects of land reforms and leaving the rest unimplemented left the land reform process unfinished. Moreover it stayed away from supporting the small and marginal farmers in agriculture. As compared to the agricultural technology based on cost-intensive seeds, chemical fertilisers/pesticides and machines the government could have supported the small and marginal farmers with the environment friendly, farmer friendly, health friendly, folk knowledge based agricultural process, which it didn't do. Having led agriculture into a cost-intensive anti-farmer process it is not being said that agriculture is no longer profitable and land may now be sold off.

Thirdly, The Government is now saying that economy of West Bengal will now have to be shifted from agriculture-dependency to a more industry-dependent state to ensure economic development. That is fine. But how is agriculture creating obstacles to industrial development? It is not as if the necessary capital and labour for industry is tied up in agriculture. Countless numbers of people are unemployed; they can be employed in industries. Private and institutional capital is available, which can be invested in industries. Land earmarked for industry remains unutilised. So why in order to develop into an industrial economy does agriculture, farmer, land and crop need to be destroyed?

We demand a written policy from the West Bengal Government regarding the future path of economic development incorporating the equilibrium between agriculture and industry.

At present we the citizens would like to state the Government of West Bengal is committing a series of offences related to its principles governing economic development and their implementation. The above is our charge sheet. The Government submits a chargesheet when it is deemed that an individual has committed an offence/crime. We too hereby prepare our chargesheet to put the Government up for trial.

At the outset we are not going to submit this chargesheet to the Government or to the political parties in the Government or to any Court of law. We are submitting this citizens' charge sheet to the citizens in order to create public opinion, in order to demand explanation from the Government, in order to put up the Government on trial.

**(Draft of the chargesheet prepared by *Nagarik Mancha*,
on behalf of the Citizens of West Bengal)**

At a time like this, scorching iron, not convincing argument, is needed. ... For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling of the nation must be quickened; the conscience of the nation must be roused, the propriety of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced.

Frederick Douglass

**Resolution of IUF – An International Federation of Unions
of Food and Allied Workers**

In Support of the Agricultural Workers' struggle at Singur, West Bengal (India)

The IUF Agricultural Workers Trade Group Conference held in Seville, Spain from 11th to 13th December 2006

NOTES that the West Bengal Government has unilaterally decided to hand over 997 acres of prime agricultural land in Singur to an industrial concern (the Tatas) for the manufacture of a small car with disregard to the loss of jobs and food security of agricultural workers.

FURTHER NOTES that the above action is only the first among a string of forcible agricultural land acquisitions under which an estimated 60,000 acres of land will be taken, including in areas such as Haripur (for a nuclear reactor) and Kulpi (for a port and a special economic zone) where PBKMS members will be facing the onslaught of forcible land acquisition.

CONDEMNNS the conversion of Singur into a police controlled area, with ban on assembly and the invasion of a huge police force, and the subsequent forcible fencing of land of farmers who have refused to give their land for the project.

FURTHER CONDEMNNS the brutal action on 2nd December 2006, when houses of villagers were invaded, women and children were beaten up, property of villagers were destroyed and 48 people were arrested no trumped up charges.

FURTHER CONDEMNNS the continued terror by the police and by ruling party supported goons in the affected villages, and the undemocratic continuation of ban on assembly in the area.

FURTHER CONDEMNNS the police harassment of Anuradha Talwar (President of IUF affiliate PBKMS), Medha Patkar, well known Gandhian social worker and others (including media persons) who are supporting the struggle.

DEMANDS that the West Bengal Government must remove police from the Singur area, lift ban on assembly there and must allow the agricultural workers and farmers free access to their standing crops on the fenced off land.

FURTHER DEMANDS that the West Bengal Government must immediately stop land acquisition at Singur and all other agricultural areas and must shift all industrial development to land already available in industrial areas or to barren, non-agricultural land.

FURTHER DEMANDS that agricultural workers must be consulted before any policy decision is taken that may affect their lives and livelihoods, especially in Kulpi and Haripur.

CALLS UPON the IUF and its affiliates to render solidarity support to the movement of agricultural workers in West Bengal and to start an international campaign in support of their movement against acquisition of agricultural land for the corporate sector.

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DOCUMENT : 1

Note of Left Front distributed among constituent parties.

Left Front has taken some policy decisions regarding the recent initiatives of State Government in the area of industry. New initiatives have been framed in accordance with the industrial policy of Left Front Government declared in 1994.

1. Industry is the need for the economic development of the State.
2. According to 1994 industrial policy of Left Front Government on the basis of mutual advantage, foreign investment is simultaneously required along with indigenous investment.
3. This industrialisation is to be there without damaging the success of agriculture.
4. This task is to be fulfilled keeping intact the self-reliance of State in food grains, keeping undisturbed the success in fields of fruits, flowers and vegetables, and keeping secured the interests of marginal and small peasants.
5. Possible distance to be maintained for industrial lands from the high quality fertile lands. Where eviction of farmers would take place there in spite of land prices employment so far possible is to be arranged.

6. As far as possible, avoiding fertile agricultural land attempt to be made to build up industry on fallow, infertile lands. Bi-crop or tri-crop lands are not desirable to be used in this respect.

Statement on the issue of development of some industries and cities.

1. Many companies in areas of housing industry, education, health are coming forward in the township of Rajarhat. This area is completely infertile. Farmers interest has not hampered any way. They gave up lands to the government inspired by and on their own. Presently, in West Bengal, unplanned housing is going on in different blocks, sub-divisions of different districts. If initiatives are taken in the area of housing projects, it will free people from land-brokers as well as make more feasible the scientific use of land presently jeopardised by unplanned urbanisation here and there.
2. No cultivable land was at all there in West Howrah suburban. Yet habitats got the price of land. Shortly the work of suburban will begin.
3. Dankuni suburban is basically industrial township. Enough fertile land was no where there. Major lands were non-agri low lands. Tendering is complete. Work would start in near future.
4. Another venture was taken to built up another suburban covering areas of Garia-Sonarapur-Baruipur. Objective is to set up district centre of South 24 Parganas at Baruipur.
5. Preparation is going on to build up a small river-port at Kulpi. Dialogues are on with central Government on this matter

On some industrial entrepreneurships.

1. Jindal Group has proposed to build up a big industry on an area of five thousand acre land in Guptamoni in our state. It depends on the availability of iron ore from neighbour state. Lands in this area are mostly gravelmixed and uncultivable.
2. 300 acres lands have been purchased in Borjora of Bankura for setting up of iron and plastic industry. This is also uncultivable land it has spontaneously been done.
3. Similarly foundry and rubber park is on the process of building in Howrah. Here in also farmers are fully co-operative.
4. In Rajarhat 25 thousand acre lands have been purchased at determined price by 'Esenders Group' of Singapore for I.T. Sector. That Company is an I.T. Company of international standard.
5. Salem Group is to take 65 acre lands in Uluberia for the purpose of building Motor Cycle Factory in collaboration with China. Industrial lands in Uluberia is infertile cultivation is not at all there. This is the first Two Wheeler (Motor Cycle) factory to be set up in eastern zone. To note, demand of two wheelers in eastern zone is highest.
6. Tendering is done for 'logistic hub' near the Kona Expressway of West Howrah. Singapore, having good experience, has interest in this matter. This is required for rise of capacity and necessary arrangement of carrying ability of airport and river port needed for expansion of trade in East and South East Asia in future.
7. Primary outline was framed for setting up one Health City. A set of hospitals of global standard will be built up for treatment of divergent diseases. Here employment-opportunities are more higher. Patients from Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar also including the states of North-East India would come up here. Indirect economic effects would parcolate upon the adjacent areas.
8. Likewise an education city will be set-up where developed I.T. and bio-technology would be taught.
9. Salem Group (Largest industrial company of Indonesia) works in China, Japan, Vietnam and all countries of South-East Asia. This group wants to build up a modern industrial estate of large size. Basically engineering, electronics, machine-tool industry etc. will be created. Manufacturing group would take primary initiative to bring in investments of this estate. This group has done this work in Sanghai and Hanoi. It would be proper if lands be provided to them in South 24 parganas. From which area lands to be given is to be worked out and initiatives to this end would be taken at political and administrative levels following the policy of Left Front.
10. April Pine Paper Group – largest paper producing company of the world keeping in mind of huge demand of paper in this state, they have been invited to come here. They want small parcel of land at the bank of river. We have thought to provide a land piece of a closed factory.
11. Baking Group wants to come in this state for coal-mixing. They use to supply coals of higher lower grade mixed with higher grade to the electricity producing centres. Other parts of the world this procedure is already on. We also do deserve it.
12. One rubber producing company showed interest in producing tine at Haldia. They would extract 'butadine' from HPL.

13. As per the agreement with Salem Group, they would build up 86 K.M. road to the health city, industrial city and port at their own cost.
14. One team of Indonesia has visited Haringhatha. They are related with dairy industry. Next time, they would come here again with Australians. This project will possible be done in the form of joint venture.
15. Ural Group of Russians started to work to produce heavy weight truck at Haldia. It is expected that production would start from the November of this year.
16. Ambani Group will set up I. T. training institute at Kalyani.
17. Hinduyas showed interests to let up factories of ascessories of marchine parts of Ashoke Leyland at Haldia.
18. Tata Group finalised to set up coke-over industry at Haldia.
19. Wipro Company has wanted 52 acre land at Rajarhat for setting up one more of their I. T. Centre.
20. One international convention centre of modern infrastructure is in the process of building over an 100 acre land at Rajarhat in our state.

Except these, many ones are wanting lands for centres of industry, I.T., bio-technology, education, health, food processing, animal husbandry. We are trying our level best.

Location of wanting land of Reliance Group

Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Karseong, Siliguri (Bidhannagar), Jalpaiguri, Aliporeduar, Falakata, Dhupguri, Koachbehar, Mathabhanga, Tufanganj, Haldibari, Raigang, Islampore, Itahar, Dulkhola, Balurghat, Gangarampur, Buniadpur, Tapan, Gajol, Chnecho, Kalichowk, Berhampore, Jangipur, Beldanga, Kandi, Krishnanagar, Kalyani, Haringhata, Hanskhali, Nabadwip, Tehatta, Chakdaha, Chapra, Deganga, Habra, Amdanga, Barasat, Barackpore, Rajarhat, Basirhat, Baduria, Bonga, Baruipur, Diamondharbour, Kakdwip, Bishnupur, Mograhat, Bagnan, Uluberia, Shampore, Howrah, Bally, Jagatballaopur, Udaynarayanpur, Chunchura, Arambag, Mogra, Pandua, Balagarh, Dhaniakhali, Polba, Chanditala, Goghat, Parsura, Tarakeshwar, Singur, Khanakul, Haripal, Burdwan, Durgapur, Ausgram, Bhatar, Galsi, Memari, Jamalpur, Raina, Khandoghosh, Kalna, Purbasthali, Manteshwar, Katwa, Dahogram, Mangalkot, Suri, Bolpur, Rampurhat, Mayureshar, Kotalpur, Bankura, Bishnupur, Indus, Jaipur, Purulia, Balarampur, Raghunathpur, Malda, Tamluk, Kanthi, Panskura, Medinipur, Garbeta, Chandrakona, Daspur, Jhargram and Debra.

(Source : BARTAMAN News Paper)

DOCUMENT : 2

On Building Industry by Government of W. Bengal : A Note of CPI

'Agriculture is our base – industry, our future' – this was the prime slogan of Left Front in the fourteenth assembly election. Certainly this is to accept that common people of the State primarily believed this slogan and this was proved through the election results. Left Front got more than 50 per cent vote, as well as raised seats from 199 to 235. This massive victory surely a remarkable fact. Again with this far more responsibility has ben shouldered upon the Government.

In this perspective, State Government stressed with very higher weightage on industry-building. In 1977, after Left Front coming in power, emphasis was laid upon agriculture. We never forget the scenario of food situation in the 5th and 6th decades. On for demand for food, 80 common poor people had to sacrifice their lives in 1959. We certainly claim, after land reforms and operation barga our state is not only self-reliant in food, but also ahead for equivant to other states in many areas. Yet, till now, for some food-item we have to depend on other states.

It was one time when the state was far advanced in industry. Presently it is regressed to some extent. This is the outcome of hindrances at every step towards state's industrialisation be cause of Central's policy and of influences of changing internation a atmosphere, specially of globalisation, privatisation and liberalisation. Much benefits were attained in favour of industry-building in State due to change in industrial lisencc process and freight equalisation policy. In this context, to build up industries state has taken up many steps in the mean time. Many industrialists of foreign and national origins also have invested capital and are forwarding promises in our state. In good numbered case, 'MOU's were agreed. In this regard notable, industry does not crop up consequentially as 'MOU' agreemnt takes place. Already, many

'MOU' agreements were done, but how far those agreements got effective only governmental statistics can tell this. (To mention in this regard, in question hour in state Assembly, answering questions, like; in period 1st January 2001 to 31st December 2005 how many new industrial investors built up how many industrial factories and in those factories how many unemployed youths got their employment upto 31st, 2005, commerce minister responded, during the said period 722 industries were set up by investors in spheres of large and medium sized industry. Here in total investment is Rs. 10,971.67 Crores. Probable job-employment is 96,805)

In many spheres, there are differences of opinion regarding method of building industry among constituent partners of Left Fronts. Party's view on the method of building industry has already been communicated to the Left Front on behalf of our party, In spite of this, till the day, Left Front is not able to accept an unanimous decision. Given below is the party's outlook on building industry of the state.

1. Industrialists (foreign/national) coming to invest for building industry in our country, are all of same motive of earning profit. They select locations for setting up industries in a State with a view to earn profits and benefits. Their object is not to set up industry for the good of state's people. For this, it is often seen, profit driven national industrialists move to foreignlands for building industry.
2. For setting up industry in the state the primary consideration would be how much well being to be generated for the people of our country by that industry. How much employment to be created for people. How much lands to be needed. What type of land is needed.' Our concrete views in this regard, too, had already been communicated which is : Primarily industry to be set up in non-agricultural land. How much people would be affected by the acquisition of these lands. What sort of rehabilitation would be there for the affected mass. Whether there is any balance between the loss of peasantry and profit of industrialists. Decision to be taken keeping in consideration on the one hand, the objective of industrialists and on the other, the interests of general people of the state. Certainly in this case, our concern would be to safeguard the interests of people of the state.
3. We should keep in mind, while providing lands for industry that we are not to regress again in production of food and cash crops. To mention, in this respect, agriculture to be developed in proportion with the rise in population. Some commercial news papers, in their editorials have mentioned to ignore the fall in food production as to them it is not a loss if caused by supplying lands for industry. Imports will fill up that food-gap. At this point, to mention, already Central Government has taken a policy-decision that foods will be imported. Already 14 Lakhs tons wheat have been traded in Singapore also to be imported. Surely left front is not one with much visions. We have not forgotten the past. Industry to be built up keeping the self-reliance of food secured.
4. Presently agricultural land in our state is nearly 1 Crore 37 Lakh Hectre. 73 percent land owners of these lands are the poor farmers of the state. At present, rice production in land is 148 lakh metric tons more than requirement, Wheat 8.25 lakh Metric ton, Oil seeds 5.5 lakh Metric ton (less than requirement) Potato 80 lakh Metric ton (more than requirement, exportable) Other agricultural commodities like fruit, flower, leafy products and vegetables are on rise in production gradually. Consequently purchasing capacity of villagers have increased. As a result to capture that market national and foreign industrialists are competing with each other.
5. Now question is, what type of industry to be setup or possible to be set up. Here our clear stand is labour intensive productive industries to be built upon.
6. Main industries of the state are jute, tea, small-medium industry, small cottage industry, agro-based industry leather, rubber and loom (in this state only in loom industry 6,66,514 persons are connected. Number of loom is 3.51 lakh. Loom-cooperatives are 638 in number). Millions of common people are associated with all these industries and at the same time, market is there for these industries.
So; for industrialisation, prime view should be how to develop more and more in areas of these industries.
7. Except above industries, there is possibility in this state to build up I.T., petro chemicals and automobile industries. State Government, in the mean time, has taken some steps in this matter. Here for research and development (R & D), stress to be given on making infrastructure.
8. With this emphasis to be given on self-employment scheme – already some millions people got benefited being associated with this scheme, specially women are more and more participating in this scheme.
9. Whatever be the industry, developed infrastructure to be built in the state. Wherein the developments

of road, communication system, electricity, education and health system has to be stressed upon. These infrastructures are to be built necessarily keeping in mind the good of major population.

10. With all these are related the issue of environment. Therefore, decisions are to be taken keeping in view the environmental balance and eco-balance.

For these works, lands are must. Already said, industry to be grown without hampering agricultural production system and for that land has to be acquired.

Where and How Industry and Infrastructure to be built and what would be the method.

1. Repeatedly it was demanded on behalf of the party that 'Land Use Board' to be reconstituted. In this respect, CPI(M) agree with us. But till the day, it is not materialised.
2. Through 'Land Use Board', a complete land map for the state should be prepared. Naturally, in that map it would be ascertained should what types of land of how much quantum are there. On that basis, it would be possible to demarcate lands for industry.
3. On lands of closed factories of private and state ownership, it is possible for industry to be built on.
4. Let repossession of lands received by industrialists where no industry is built still, be done.
5. Lands to be provided as per need for industry, not in accordance with the demand placed by industrialists. In this matter, if necessary an expert committee may be formed.
6. In place of permanent settlement, state Government should provide lands to industrialist on the basis of lease. As per agreement if industry is not setup within a stipulated time, state would have the right to reacquiring such lands. Here industrialists should not earn profit through 'real-estate' business with lands in the name of industry.
7. Agreed Conditionalities and terms to be made public.
8. Industrialists to run their setup obeying the industrial and labour laws of the state.
9. Industrialists (national/foreign) are not to be allowed for retail business.
10. Primarily infertile and non-agricultural lands to be used for industries. If necessary. Some monocrop lands may be provided for industry.
11. Cautious considerations to be made for providing lands for building industry to those industrialists who deprived workers from their legitimate claims in their companies.

Land Reforms – from above and in a legal way

Till 2004, The West Bengal Govt. has distributed about 13.04 Lakh Hector Surplus land among 27 lakh 60th thousand landless, poor, marginal farmers. Nearly, half of the land (6.26 lakh hector) was distributed before the onset of the L.F. Govt. in '77 – when the peasants occupied the untitled land through bloody struggles. As such, during the last 27 years the Left Front has given only 6.78 lakh Hector to Bargadaars and that is only 14.38% of the total agro-land of the state (96.61 lakh Hector). So, the claim for the great land reformers by the leftists are not so sound from this point of view.

The distribution of the surplus Khas land in such a way could not reduce the number of the landless. On the contrary, it's on the increase. As a result the social evil has become inevitable. On one hand a major portion of the agro-labours remaining idle for about 50-100 days leading to the wastage of labour, on the other hand, the agro population 92% of which are landless agro-labours, small and marginal farmers are gradually losing purchasing power. Even to-day, the West Bengal agro labours earn lesser as compared to the average national income of the agro-labours. Sadly, even after 30 years of Left rule – minimum wage could not be made compulsory for agro-labours.

More important is the fact that owing to the lucky gift of land through Govt. legislation– agro-labours have become dependents on Govt. mercy sacrificing self-dependancy. And, the Govt. distributing only 10-15% land and blocking the path of struggle of farmers for genuine effective land reforms, have maintained 85-90% of land owners right intact. In a word, legal land reforms from upwards has shut down the path of struggling radical land-reforms from downwards.

**(Courtesy : EKHON SANGHATI PROKASANI's
The direction of Development in West Bengal – 2)**

On the Compensation for Land Acquisition.

1. It is to keep in mind while considering land acquisition that farmers are cultivating generation after generation on such lands and maintaining their families. Land acquisition and compensation to be processed through Govt. and not through the Industrialists.
2. Proper compensation to be given to the recorded and unrecorded bargadars if they depend on that acquired land.
3. Rehabilitation to be arranged for the displaced persons.
4. Landless farmers working on the acquired land are to be provided compensation. On Compensation, detail discussions may be done among constituent parties of Left Front, specially with peasants and landless farmers organisations.

Whole process to be completed in such a manner, so that no doubt in the minds of state's people arises regarding the point of transparency.

DOCUMENT : 3

R.S.P's Note submitted for discussions in State Left Front.

1. Preparation of Land Map

Let a land map district wise for the whole land (as far as possible) of State be prepared first. Quantum of land in accordance with its character be determined keeping in view the following points :

- a. The unused agriculture land as well as the land for pisci-culture;
- b. Quantum of mono-crop (Foods/vegetables) lands.
- c. Quantum of multi-crop lands.
- d. Quantum of Unused Government lands.
- e. Quantum of lands of shut down private and public factories.

2. Projectwise determination of land quantity and method of land supplying.

- a. Prior to supplying lands to industrialists, examination of proposed plan be done by expert committee and proper determination of quantity of land be done on the basis of feasibility report.

Land Reform - at the dictates of Imperialism.

An effort was made at the initial stage of Left rule to pressurise the semi-feudal system through 'Land Ceiling Act' and 'Operation Barga'. The work was a little first step to uproot the semi-feudal land system. It is inexplicable that why the sun set in the mid sky. Who knows whether the intention was to arrest the agro-revolution in the path of Mao-Tse-Tung.

That the suspicion wasn't totally baseless is proved by the acceptance of suggestions by ULF Lazensky on the land reform. Lazensky was the chief advisor on land reform in post second World War under the captaincy of American Comande general Doglus Mcarther - in Japan ad Taiwan. During the latter stage he was engaged in laud and agro work in Indonesia, Phillipins, Vietnam, Malayasia, Thailand, Nepal, Iran, Mexico and India on behalf of the American Govt. Ford-foundation and the World Bank. He could deeply realise the political importance of land an the Ascan Economy. He was scased, that if the hunger for land of the landless remains unchecked, the peasant upsurge in the Asean Countries in the Chinese pattern will become unpreventable. He was in favour of land reforms with little alterations in the old system to establish the individual land ownership and develop the land market in a capitalist way. Needless to say that this reform will be thrust from upwards, not otherwise. During Sixties, The village economies of Indian villages broke down by the semi-fendal oppression leading to food scarcity femine-like situation in villages. In this condition, Lazensky's formula was to record the land rights in lieu of re-distribution of land, to make it secured, thereby whetting the oppetite of lands of the landless sharecroppers. In fact, 'Operation Barga' ensured the implimentation of this proimperial policy. This has been gladly acknowledged in the Economic Survey of Govt. of India, 2004-quoting lazensky. No wonder, that the land reforms of West Bengal has been praised by the Central Govt. as well as the economic Institution of the world capital.

(Source : Update-12, June-July, 2006)

**(Courtesy : EKHON SANGHATI PROKASANI's
The direction of Development in West Bengal - 2)**

- b. After determination of land quantity, where such land to be provided, that is to be placed for discussion by the Government. Needless to say, firstly not to propose to supply such lands which are fertile and multi-cropped.
- c. Considering plans, to propose unused lands of Government and that of closed factories (public and private). If necessary, enactments of law is to be made for this purpose.
- d. Bi-crop or tri-crop lands to be supplied solely depending upon the wishes of landowners.

3. On the Compensation of Farmers.

- a. In all cases appropriate compensation (keeping in consideration the eviction from job) be determined.
- b. Proper alternative residence to be arranged while taking over homesteaded land and residential housing. Not only for BPL-farmers, but also for marginal and poor farmers and for peasant workers this would be must.

4. Other Cautions.

- a. Option for Govt. Supervision should be there for proper implementation of the project.
- b. If necessary the time limits may be extended.
- c. The land has to be given back to Govt. in case the project is rejected midway or is shut down after initiation.
- d. The type of land title to be determined.
- e. For other issues while preparing agreements the issues narrated in point 3 and 4 to be specifically mentioned in the agreements.
- f. Acquisition policy – whether Government will acquire first and then transfer it; or industrialists will directly purchase lands from their owners. In second case, a precaution to be taken so that uneducated landowners (farmers) do not suffer.

In reality, no frame of any project is known to us, real basis of those projects to be published.

***Mourn not the dead that in the cool earth lie –
Dust into dust –
The calm sweet earth that mothers all who die
As all men must ;
Mourn not your captive comrades who must dwell –
Too strong to strive –
Each in his street-bound coffin of a cell,
Buried alive ;
But rather mourn the apathetic throng –
The cowed and the meek –
Who see the world's great auguish and its wrong
And dare not speak !***

Ralph Chaplin

PRESS-RELEASE - 1

The Press Conference of on behalf of 3 (M-L) organisations in support of 12 hours 'Bangla Bandh' on 9th of October.

(On this press Conference of 26th September, 2006 – Swadesh Banerjee, Pradip Singh Thakur, Kartik Pal and Kalyan Goswami were present on behalf of the said three organisations. It may be mentioned – that on this call no reference was made to the 'Bandh' called by Trinamul and Singur save Agro-land committee. Eventhough it's they who first declared bandh on 9th October 2006 – Editor)

Against the illegal Privatisation of farmers' land in Singur and against the barbaric lathicharge on the peaceful farmers and agitators the CPI (ML), CPI (ML) New Democracy and the CPI (ML) Liberation – together we are calling for a bandh in Bengal from 6 am to 12 am on 9th of October.

On the late night of 25th September, police mercilessly lathicharged, teargassed under the direction of West Bengal Govt. on the farmers and their families involved in the Singur movement against handing over the lands to the Tatas seriously injuring hundreds of farmers including females and also arresting hundreds of farmers. Many of the wounded farmers are lying in Hospital under treatment. CPM Cadres also joined hands with the police in this unilateral unprovoked attack. We hereby strongly condemn the role of the Govt. and the CPM.

This attack was the fall out of continuous threats and provocation unleashed by leaders like Benoy Konar and Rejjak Molla and others.

The CPM Govt. earlier attacked the people during festive days on Ramjan and Durgotsav. This time also their oppression on the farmers in singur took place during Sharodotsav.

On one hand the CPM opposes the formation of Special Economic Zone (SEZ) by the Central Govt. by evicting the poors and the farmers, on the other hand in West Bengal they are forming SEZ for the interests of national and multinational monopolists – evicting the farmers from the fertile agro-lands. Shame to this CPM Duplicity!

4th October will be observed a statewide protest day as a prelude to the Bandh of 9th October.

Our call to the people of West Bengal in every walk as well as to the left and democratic force to join and support the 'Bandh' of 9th October.

Water, Electricity, Hospital and other emergency services will be left out of the Bandh.

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PRESS-RELEASE - 2

Press Release by two CPI (ML)s on 26th September

The Barbaric state sponsored terrorism unleashed by Polices' Lathi/Tear Gas etc. on the midnight of 25th September on the people and farmers of Singur who are unwilling to sell their agro lands and are in a movement – is unprecedented in all India perspective – to say the least. Even the females were not spared from Lathi-blows. The way the Left Front and the CPM issued the land acquisition notice and the way they declared the multicropper lands of the unwilling farmers as a 'Khas land' – is also without any precedence in an all India basis. We strongly condemn this act. Side by side, we consider this as our moral responsibility as the leftists to support the strike call of 9th October, 2006 by Trinamul and other parties as well as by the 'Singur Save Land' Committee and therefore we appeal to all labors – Peasants ad the working class and democratic people of West Bengal to make this strike a true success.

Apart from this we also hereby demand the immediate release of all the agitators who were arrested last night

Santosh Rana
Gen. Secretary
P.C.C. CPI(ML)

Pradip Banerjee
W.B. State Committee
CPI (ML)

SINGUR KRISHI JAMI RAKSHA COMMITTEE

Dated : 30.12.06

The Press Release dt. 28.12.06 issued by the Deputy Secretary to the President from the Rashtrapati Bhavan & letter written by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singhji dt. 28.12.06 and also the letter received from the former Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Bajpayeeji wherein all of them had appealed to Miss Mamata Banerjee to end her fast & have assured that the Chief Minister of West Bengal would discuss all issues which she has raised. They have also expressed concern over the farmer's plight in Singur, West Bengal.

Accordingly the **Singur Krishi Jami Raksha Committee** have discussed and decided unanimously that they would request Miss Banerjee to end her 25th days long hunger strike and to continue the struggle for the interest of the farmers of Singur Miss Banerjee has honoured the requests made by the Hon'ble President and the Respected Manmohanji & Atalji and end her fast, while the struggle to stop the plight to the farmers in Singur would continue. While ending her fast, while the struggle to stop the plight to the farmers in Singur would continue. While ending her fast she advised that all of us should respect the sentiments of the Hon'ble President of India and assurance given by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India to resolve the grievances of the farmers on all issues raised by the farmers through **Singur Krishi Jami Raksha Committee**.

We are at a loss to understand that while the Chief Minister of West Bengal has assured the Highest Offices of Government of India on 28.12.06 for his readiness to resolve all issues related to Singur episode, the very next day it is reported that they have sought for an extension for imposing Crpc 144 in Singur and accordingly got extension of another 20 days of the same.

The above action on the part of the Chief Minister of West Bengal clearly indicates his double standards. On one hand the Chief Minister assured the Highest Offices of the Central Government to resolve the issues, on the other as per statement made by Chief Secretary of West Bengal, The Government has extended the imposition of Crpc 144 at Singur.

We would also like to put on record our strong objection that while Miss Banerjee & others end their fast on your assurance, the Government of West Bengal has chosen to continue their further activities in Singur. We, therefore, surprised at the actions of the Government of West Bengal. This would certainly not create an atmosphere of mutual trust for resolving issues of farmers at Singur.

Under such circumstances, the **Singur Krishi Jami Raksha Committee** wish to draw the kind attention of the Hon'ble President of India and Respected Prime Minister Shri Manmohan Singhji, to kindly intervene and save the farmers from disasters.

On behalf of S.K.J.R.C.

Pradeep Banerjee

Partho Chatterjee

APPEAL LETTERS

**RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN
PRESS RELEASE
PRESIDENT EXPRESSES SERIOUS CONCERN OVER THE
HEALTH OF KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE**

The President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam has expressed his serious concern at the deteriorating health of Kumari Mamata Banerjee who has been on a fast. The President spoke to the Chief Minister of West Bengal two days ago and this morning to inquire about her health

Th President spoke to the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh also today and expressed his serious concern and emphasized the need to find a way to end the stalemate and to enable her to end the fast.

For immediate release

(Nitin Wakankar)
Deputy Press Secretary to the President
28.12.2006

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Prime Minister

**New Delhi
28.12.2006**

Dear Mamata Ji,

I have been greatly concerned about the state of your health. I once again appeal to you to end your fast. I have been assured by the Chief Minister of West Bengal that he is ready for a discussion on all issues that you may like to raise. I believe that the Chief Minister has written to you today along these lines expressing his readiness for a dialogue on all outstanding issues.

I, therefore, once again appeal to you to end your fast.

With regards

Yours sincerely,
Manmohan Singh

Ms. Mamata Banerjee
Kolkata

•••••

Atal Bihari Vajpayee

New Delhi
28th December 2006

Appeal

Your fast for the last 25 days have highlighted the issue involving the farmers' plight of Singur in West Bengal. The entire nation is with you in your this noble cause and struggle. I am deeply concerned about your deteriorating health. Your life is precious to all of us.

I appeal to you to give up your fast so that you can continue your struggle.

(A. B. Vajpayee)

Kum. Mamata Banerjee
Member of Parliament

•••••

Governor, W.B.

Raj Bhavan
Kolkata-700 062

22.12.2006

Dear Smt. Mamata Banerjee,

Following our conversation yesterday, I have had a detailed discussion with the Hon'ble Chief Minister and the Minister for Commerce and Industries, Government of West Bengal. I have given them all the documents that you had sent to me. They have said to me that the documents will be examined in detail, as also the comments and suggestions that I have made.

May I now urge you, once again, to please call off your prolonged fast? You have generated a discussion on the issues in question, and handed over relative documents to the Government. By terminating your fast you will create a climate congenial to the constructive dialogue. This will be appreciated by all.

Please consider this sincere and earnest request of mine.

In the hope that I can greet you over Christmas and the New Year with cheer!

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
Gopalkrishna Gandhi

Smt. Mamata Banerjee
Kolkata

•••••

CHIEF MINISTER

WEST BENGAL

D.O. No. 156-CM
December 28, 2006.

Dear Srimati Banerjee,

The Government has received from Hon'ble Governor of West Bengal a list of farmers in which you have raised the issues of those who already took the cheques and gave us the land and those who did not receive the cheques or otherwise did not provide the land. I am again requesting you to discuss all these issues with the Government and I assure you that I have an open mind to discuss all these issues. I gather that you have the information and positive supportive documents that without due process of law we have acquired the land substantially by force. Regarding your allegation, I assure you that such allegations of yours are not correct. Yet, if you feel those are substantial, I am also prepared to discuss those issues of land in question as pointed out by you. After discussion between us further appropriate steps will be taken by the Government.

In view of your deteriorating health condition due to continuous fasting for a long spell of time and to facilitate a congenial atmosphere for discussions I sincerely appeal to you to end your fast.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,
Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee

Srimati Mamata Banerjee
Member of Parliament

•••••

LETTERS

SINGUR KRISHI JAMI RAKSHA COMMITTEE

To
Shri Gopal Krishna Gandhi
His Excellency
The Governor of West Bengal
Raj Bhavan
Kolkata-700 001

At the outset, we convey our sincere gratitude and heartiest regards for your concern and sympathy for your personal initiative and suggestion for breaking the stalemate over the issue of 26 day long Hunger Strike by Miss. Mamata Banerjee at Dharmatala.

The Press Release dt. 28.12.06 issued by the Deputy Secretary to the President from the Rashtrapati Bhavan & letter written by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singhji dt. 28.12.06 and also the letter received from the former Prime Minister. Shri Atal Bihari Bajpayeeji wherein all of them had appealed to Miss Mamata Banerjee to end her fast & have assured that the Chief Minister of West Bengal would discuss all issues which she has raised. They have also expressed concern over the farmer's plight in Singur, West Bengal. We also thankfully acknowledge your sentiment and concern too.

Accordingly the **Singur Krishi Jami Raksha Committee** have discussed and decided unanimously that they would request Miss Banerjee to end her 25th days long hunger strike and to continue the struggle for the interest of the farmers of Singur. Miss Banerjee has Honoured the requests made by the Hon'ble President and the Respected Manmohanji & Atalji and end her fast, while the struggle to stop the plight to the farmers in Singur would continue. While ending her fast she advised that all of us should respect the sentiments of the Hon'ble President of India and assurance given by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India to resolve the grievances of the farmers on all issues raised by the farmers through **Singur Krishi Jami Raksha Committee**.

We are at a loss to understand that while the Chief Minister of West Bengal has assured the highest Offices of Government of India on 28.12.06 for his readiness to resolve all issues related to Singur episode, the very next day it is reported that they have sought for an extension for imposing Crpc 144 in Singur and accordingly got extension of another 20 days of the same.

The above action on the part of the Chief Minister of West Bengal clearly indicates his double standards. On one hand the Chief Minister assured the Highest Offices of the Central Government to resolve the issues, on the other as per statement made by Chief Secretary of West Bengal, the Government has extended the imposition of Crpc 144 at Singur.

We are sure that the mass massacre at **Nandigram (Sonachura)**, East Midnapure at the hands of CPI(M) goons and state police resulting, killings of Seven innocent, helpless farmers, set fire on their houses, and properties is a **shame for democracy**. The State Government by using her brutal force and deploying CPI(M) cadre cannot take away the democratic right of our citizen. The State cannot carve the individual right of the citizen as protected by the constitution of India. We are witnessing that the State Government is forcibly taking away all democratic rights from the farmers of Singur, Nandigram, Salap, Bhangar, Kulpi etc.

Atrocities made to the farmers of Nandigram and Singur and also the State Sponsored terrorism initiated by the State Government throughout the State for forcible land acquisition calls for immediate intervention of the Central Government. we have received allegations that the local MP & one Minister of State, W.B. have supplied arms and ammunition to the CPI(M) Cadre resulting **blood shed** at Sonachura, Nandigram East Midnapore.

Sir, in a democratic system one may come and one may go but one should not be allowed to destroy our democratic values. The way things are happening at Singur, Nandigram, Bhangar, Salap reminds us of British Raj. One should not forget the role of East India Companies. The State Government is also acting in a manner to protect few persons and their interests throwing away the interest of the common people.

The whimsical act of the State Government with an ulterior motive and for one's vested interest cannot be allowed to destroy the fate of the farmers and we are sure that you would too accede to this point, Sir.

Time and again, we have expressed that we do not oppose to Industrialisation or Economic Reforms, if it serves the interest of the common people. But in the name of globalisation, we just cannot remain to be all silent spectator if it ruins the interest of the common people of the country.

The Chief Minister of West Bengal has been playing a dubious role. All the statements and facts are being changed overnight to suit their will. **The approach of the Chief Minister has created further confusion and leaving enough room for misleading the people in general. Every action of the State Government is a clear indication of its action as undemocratic, illegal, unconstitutional and unethical.**

The Government applying all kinds of undemocratic methods by using its Police and cadre Raj to grab agricultural land from the farmers and **would destroy the fertile land** of the farmers. We are also receiving reports of destroying fertile lands in Singur/Nandigram/Bhangur/Salap/Kulpi.

We are also at a loss to understand as to **why the Chief Minister is showing so much of interest for private party like the TATAs & SALIMs forgetting the State's responsibility to protect the interest of the helpless farmers. We are surprised to see that so far the Chief Minister has not shown any feelings towards them. All that what we have observed is that his concern is only vested with the TATAs/SALIMs.** The State Government is also reluctant to protect the poor farmers and their livelihood.

We once again put on record that all of us want Industrialisation. Sir, all of us would like to see West Bengal, which has been showing a dismal picture for the last three decades would be developed as a modern habitat competing with any other province of our country. Sir, we would like to mention here that we are not opposed to any Industry. But the model which the Left Front Government has been projecting for Industrialisation by grabbing the agricultural land is not only detrimental to the interest of the cultivators but also a suicidal move for the society as a whole, as it will certainly **lead to severe food crisis** in near future. **Moreover, no industrialisation or development can take place if there is not peace and congenial atmosphere. Here the State Government with the help of police and CPI(M) cadre is indulging violence and mass killings.**

The massacre at Sonachura certainly demands immediate removal of the Chief Minister Shri Buddhadev Bhattacharya. We therefore, appeal to you to kindly intervene and to take appropriate action for detailed investigation into the incident of Nandigram and to bring justice to the deceased families and common people.

We urgently need your kind intervention and support to the helpless farmers who have expressed their desire of retaining their lands and to fight against the Left Front Government for its **irrational, arbitrary, illegal and procedural impropriety which shocks conscience.** The purported decision to forcibly take over the land at various places of our state is so outrageous in its defiance of logic and/or of accepted moral standard that no sensible person who has applied his mind to the question to be decided could have arrived at. The said purported decision is such that no authority properly directing itself on the relevant law and acting reasonably could have reached it.

We strongly believe that our Constitution is great and each one of us should be protected through our Constitution.

We therefore appeal to your goodness to kindly advise the State Government to stop immediately the process of land acquisition in the State and restore the Constitutional values and save the lives of the poor farmers from disasters.

With regards

9th January, 2007

Kolkata

**MOST IMMEDIATE
DECEMBER 6, 2006**

**News Editor,
The following statement is being sent to you for publication.
Muchkund Dubey, New Delhi
Tel. No : 24615383**

We are deeply anguished at the large scale displacement and loss of livelihood being caused through widespread land acquisition all over India by the State Governments with the active encouragement of the Centre in the name of promoting 'development'.

In this context we are highly concerned over the grave situation that has developed on the issue of the setting up of a Tata car factory on large tracts of first class agricultural land at Singur in Hooghly district of West Bengal. We are convinced that the Tatas' adamant attitude to have the car factory at Singur and Singur alone has created this grave situation. But at the same time the State Government too cannot absolve itself of blame since it has abjectly surrendered to the Tatas' unjust demand without taking into consideration the plight of the common people—the peasants, poor farmers and landless agricultural labourers—who will be directly affected due to eviction from the land they till for their livelihood. The fact is that the farmers, despite the massive show of strength and police highhandedness on the part of the State administration, are resisting this takeover—even though this resistance is being suppressed by influential sections of the media on account of the vested interests at work.

It is no one's case that industrial units should not be set up in West Bengal. But this cannot and must not happen by displacing large sections of the common people. That is unacceptable. Why can't the Tatas or other industrial houses go to backward regions like Bankura or Purulia to set up their plants? Why can't the State Government take over the factories that are lying idle nearby and hand these over to the industrial houses for the purpose? It is strange that the West Bengal Government, run by the Left Front for almost 30 years, is kowtowing to the Tatas' obduracy and using force against the common people to propitiate big business.

It is time the State Government and the Left parties in power in West Bengal reverse their policy in this regard and make it clear that industry cannot be developed in the State by large scale displacement of common people, especially the poor farmers and agriculturists. The State Government must withdraw its highhanded repressive measures forthwith and resort to transparency without bending over backwards to placate the industrial houses.

We condemn equally strongly similar expropriation of land by other State governments in collusion with Posco and Tatas in Orissa; Reliance in Maharashtra, UP and Haryana; Tatas, Jindals and Mittals in Jharkhand; and several such cases in Chhattisgarh. We also deprecate the Central Government's policies which encourage such expropriation of land extinguishing the people's livelihood and conferring exorbitant benefits on big business. In this connection we firmly oppose the Central SEZ Act.

We demand a national moratorium on all land acquisition and displacement till a national consensus is arrived at.

We also demand that an independent commission of eminent persons (including experts, representatives of affected persons, social activists etc.) be set up to recommend, within the period of one year, a national policy for overhauling the land acquisition, SEZ and related Acts and for providing an effective blueprint to protect the interests and concerns of all the affected persons. The enforcement of this policy should be the necessary pre-condition for any land acquisition and displacement.

Signatories:

1. Rabi Ray (Former Speaker, Lok Sabha), Cuttack
2. Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer (Former Judge, Supreme Court), Kochi
3. Prof Rajni Kothari (Former Member, Planning Commission), New Delhi
4. Aruna Roy, (Former Member, National Advisory Council, UPA Govt.), Beawar
5. Prof. Muchkund Dubey (Former Foreign Secretary), New Delhi
6. D. Bandyopadhyay (Former Commissioner, Land Reforms, West Bengal, Former Secretary, Rural Development, Govt. of India), Kolkata
7. S.P. Shukla (Former Member, Planning Commission), New Delhi
8. S.R. Sankaran (Former Secretary, Rural Development, Govt. of India), Hyderabad
9. K.B. Saxena (Former Secretary, Rural Development, Govt. of India), New Delhi
10. K. Subramanian, (Former Director General of Police, Tripura), New Delhi
11. K. Balagopal (Human Rights Activist and Advocate), Hyderabad
12. Dr. Bela Bhatia (Sociologist), New Delhi
13. E.A.S. Sarma (Former Secretary, Energy, Govt. of India), Vishakhapatnam
14. Prof. Arun Kumar (Economist, Jawaharlal Nehru University), New Delhi
15. Prof. Chaman Lal (President, Jawaharlal Nehru University Teachers' Union), New Delhi
16. Vijay Pratap (Social Activist), New Delhi
17. Suhas Borker (Independent Documentary Filmmaker & Social Activist), New Delhi
18. Sumit Chakravartty (Journalist), New Delhi

With swift steady strides and prodigious leaps, the power of human hands to satisfy human wants advances and advances, is multiplied and multiplied, yet the struggle for mere existence is more and more intense, and human labour is becoming the cheapest of commodities. Besides glitter warehouses human beings grow faint with hunger and shiver with cold.

Henry George

For bleeding Nandigram Rulers have no colour

Debashis Bhattacharya

The insidious expropriation of the masses which began soon after independence, has come into the open with the advent of so-called reforms. The entire parliamentary political establishment of the country subscribes, albeit some with a double mask. The ruling classes are collaborators in the open loot of multinationals and monopolists, which are now free to Commandeer the natural resources and wanton exploitation of toiling masses. It was high time that the toiling masses of India Stand up and fight against this imperialist-capitalist onslaught.

It happened in Singur, in Nandigram. And how?

Through an unprecedented united mass upsurge the people of Nandigram not only stood up firmly against the onslaught, but unmasked the capitalised Marxist Left Front Government of West Bengal led by CPI(M) thoroughly. Their double standards were exposed in Singur. The lesson was complete in Nandigram of East Midnapore.

The Government here-after sitting idle for 30 long years in power without caring much for industry and industrial workers, as well as for the necessary infrastructure-recently woke up to an absurd dream of making up the loss fastest in the shortest possible time in the crudest possible way. They have gone mad in embracing big capitals-forsaking ideals, principles or self-respects, allowing the capitalists to dictate the terms and policies, infact even crawling – on being asked to bend. The Big Capitalists are all out to mislead the people as well as the Govt. with the day dreams of building castles not in the air, but on the fertile multicrop agro-lands. And, for the same a limitless demand for the Prime Lands – at the cost of innocent lives of poor farmers – somewhere for an industry, somewhere for SEZs, somewhere for atomic Power Project, but every where it is the toiling poor masses who are the Scapegoats – to these new breed of Maharajas with the rulers at their feet. Their new princely estates comes within the gambit of a strange sounding acronym – SEZ – meaning Special Economic Zones. As the name suggests, these cut out zones will have a special status, very special indeed. Except for floating its own currency, these zones would operate more, or, less like a princely estate, and would even have special courts to try the economic offences. Doling out state largesse in the name of ‘production incentives’ – no, it's not fair to dub these as subsidies – these SEZ will primarily be duty free zones. Complete exemption froms excise duty, custom duty, sales tax, octroi, mandi tax, turnover tax, as well as income tax holiday for ten years are some of the inducements. Also spelt out are provisions for 100 percent foreign direct investment, exemption on income tax on infrastructure capital fund and individual investment, and an assurance for round the clock electricity and water supply at reduced rate. The SEZ promoters have also been given a waiver from carrying out an Environment Impact Assessment.

The left opposes SEZ at the centre but practices it in, West Bengal where they rule.

Nandigram fits into the scheme of the state Government for the proposed Special Economic Zone (SEZ) and Mega Chemical Hub for the Salim group of Indonesia – indirectly responsible for killing thousands of communists in collaboration with President Suharto. For this purpose 17000 acres of land covering 17 moujas will be acquired at Nandigram-I block – leading to the deprivation of the means of livelihoods of thousands of farmers and fishermen. About 40000 families reside in the ear marked areas for industrialisation Projects in Nandigram along with further 1000 families residing on the lands covering 1500 acres without adequate documents of ownership since last 25 years. But, for an obsessed Govt., these are the matters of least botheration!

As such they tried to go ahead in a clandestine way keeping everyone in the dark – Serving the notice through backdoor by the Chairman, Haldia Development Authority. The People Smelling danger for their lives and livelihoods – thundered in one voice leaving aside politics, religion class, caste etc. and practically revolted against the ill motive – declaring loudly and boldly that they are ready to sacrifice lives, but never the lands. Government was more arrogant and adamant. As Mahashweta Devi says – when the communists become Fascists, they put the old fascists into shame! And, so, the land acquisition fracas turned into a bloody gun-battle leaving at least 6 people dead, several other injured and missing. Police remained silent spectator and the CPI(M) cadres and miscreants had a field day at midnight on 7th January, 2007 with bombs and weapons like AK-47. Even the females and old were not spared. They fired indiscriminately at demonstrators protesting the forcible acquisition of their land for a SEZ to be developed by Indonesias’ Salim group in Nandigram.

There was constant provocation by Benoy Konar, CPI(M)'s central committee member and ironically a peasant leader! The Chief Minister tried to play foul by declaring the Jamat-e-Ulema Hind – a major player in organising

the peasants' spontaneous stir – a communal one.

Two CPI(M) leaders, namely, Lakshman Seth (M.P.) and Sushanto Ghosh (M.L.A.) – were the main architects of this scaring attack at midnight on innocent people.

In fact, the horrifying blood stains ironically in the green revolution areas have exposed the ugly side of development as dreamt by the ruling class. The rulers at the mistakingly ensured seat of Power never listens to rationality. Even dare to trample down the very people with arms and whips – who have voted them to power just a few days back. The marxist chief Minister of West-Bengal proudly states that capital has no colour.

But the experience of the people is that the Rulers have no colour. If necessary, so called Marxists can become tyrants to see through their anti-people objectives. History also tells us that on this hated path of the beginning of the end of power – the powerful undermines the real strength i.e. the strength of the people. The exemplary strength of the Nandigram people will not only bring down the L.F. Rulers to reality, but will definitely spread the flame of fire to Haripur, Baruipur, Barasat, Salboni, Kharagpur, Kulpi, Singur, and elsewhere wherever the rulers dare to raise their blood soaked hands against the peace and prosperity of the farmers, fishermen or labours. The cries and wails of the bereaved mothers of Nandigram and Singur will not go in vain, instead they will be blown as the conch shells calling for the courage and sacrifices against the tyrants.

However the upsurge has forced the Govt. to go on the back foot temporarily – The Chief Minister admitting his mistake not for the first time. But, the contradiction is apparent in the following statements as appeared in the Economic Times.

“The Government should not make the agricultural land available to SEZs. The policy currently permits single-crop farming land to be utilised for the economic zones. We demand only barren lands be made available for SEZs.”

–Sitaram Yechury
(ET 22-09-2006)

“It was difficult for the State Government to entirely avoid acquisition of fertile land for proposed urbanisation and industrialisation.”

–Nirupam Sen
(Commerce and Industry Minister West Bengal)
(Et. 24-11-2006)

The Chief Minister and his Govt. is in no mood to tolerate any one, repeat any one standing on his way to the path of capitalism with the party cadres and administration being ever ready to attack.

But, above all here in Nandigram we have witnessed a militant upsurge-united, firm and determined to thwart all capitalist attacks.

Who has the last word?

Of course, the people, because the privileges shall have an end, but the people are eternal. And, Nandigram will act as the Lighthouse along with Singur against all capitalist anti-people onslaughts. It's historical. Long Live Nandigram!

“We will not sit silent in Nandigram. We will hit back if they adopt violent means. We will make life hell for them (protestors). We will surround Nandigram.”

***Binoy Konar CPI(M) Central Committee Member
(Drawing the battle lines in Nandigram)***

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

The International Liaison Committee of Workers and Peoples

To the Save Agroland Committee of West Bengal
Mr. Pradip Banerjee
Convener.

January 23, 2006

Dear Friends and comrades,

By this letter, we wish to insure the peasants today struggling in West Bengal to keep their land and their jobs, and to not sacrifice them for the profit of capitalists, of the the international Liaison Committee of Workers and Peoples full solidarity. That solidarity also goes to the farmers organisations, to the trade unions and all those who are supporting that movement.

This message of international solidarity comes from the international liaison committee of workers and peoples to which working class and democratic organisations are linked in more than 70 countries.

The ILC acts to coordinate world-wide the actions of working class organisations in the spirit of unity, international fraternity and independence in relation to the employers, international institutions or governments.

The ILC regards the demands of the farmers, share croppers and agricultural workers of West Bengal as totally legitimate. They are entitled to keep their land and the work through which they and their family survive against forceful acquisition of these lands by big capitalists.

They have the full right to do this without experiencing State police violence and intimidation.

The right to land for those who toil it is a fundamental democratic and social right. It has always been at the root of the struggles for social progress and against exploitation, all over the world. *“Land and freedom”* is one of the oldest and most central rallying cries of the exploited and the oppressed.

At the first step of its practical expression of solidarity, The ILC is conveying your message and the report on your struggle which reached us through comrade Sanyal to all the components of the ILC on the five continents.

In the same time we are immediately sending messages of protest to the West Bengal authorities.

We are not witnessing an isolate or particular incident.

What is going on now in West Bengal, as you know, is happening in other States of India. But also in many other countries, in various continents, land is being grabbed from the peasants to allow capitalists and multinationals to build up Special Economic Zones for their profit and their speculation. The Multinationals grab more and more land of their own choice for greater profits, for the creation of SEZ: to achieve that aim they destroy jobs and lives and they are willing to reduce agricultural production even when starvation is looming.

That is part of the implementation in all countries of the plans of the WTO which, in the name of free trade, is doing away with all the protection preventing farmers and agricultural workers from being hit by the opening to the multinational masters of agro-business. Even in China today, land is forcefully taken away from the peasants to establish special economic zones and millions of jobs in the rural areas are being destroyed.

In March 2005 in Madrid, a World Conference sponsored by the ILC, was attended by representatives of working class and democratic organisations of all the continents. Among them was a broad delegation from India.

In the final statement of the conference, centered on the fact that *“at the start of the 21st century, more than ever the working class needs its own organisations. There cannot be democracy if workers don't have the right to their own organisations, trade unions ad political parties.”* It was underlined that *“the question of land is central for billions of men and women all over the world. The right to land for those who toil it is a fundamental right. (...)*

We state that the genuine labour movement is on the side of the farmers for the implementation of genuine agrarian reforms.”

It is therefore quite clearly in the framework of that common statement that we express our full solidarity

with the farmers of West Bengal.

Nothing can justify the grabbing of those lands for the sake of capitalist profit, not more in West Bengal than elsewhere.

It is the needs of the people and their will democratically expressed which must be at the basis of any decision affecting the lives and the conditions of the people. Not the needs of the capitalist profit.

To defend those needs, to defend democracy, what is more necessary than ever is the building of a strong and united alliance of the workers and the peasants: worldwide, they share the same interests and share the same enemies.

The ILC is opened to all proposals for the extension of the campaign :

- an international conference on the matter
- a fact finding international inquiry commission invited by Indian trade unionists.

Those suggestions can be discussed later : for the time being, we are immediately starting our solidarity campaign along the lines presented in this letter.

Yours in solidarity

Daniel Gluckstein,
Coordinator of the International Liaisons Committee of Workers and peoples.

To the Chief Minister of West Bengal

Dear sir,

We have been informed of the events taking place in the area of Singur. We wish to express our strongest protest at all attempts to intimidate or repress the opposition of the farmer, the share croppers and the agricultural workers of the area to the forceful selling of the land that ensure their livelihood. In the name of the International liaison committee of the workers ad peoples which associate democratic and workers organisations of 80 countries, we are addressing to the farmers of Singur our full solidarity in their struggle for their rights.

Please, receive the expression of our consideration.

Daniel Gluckstein,
Coordinator of the International Liasions Committee of Workers and peoples.

MOVEMENT DETAILS

- 25th May, 2006 – Tata representatives obstructed by common people.
- 29th May, 2006 – 1000 farmers have shown black flags to Nirupam Sen, while he planned to address a meeting.
- 1st June, 2006 – BDO Deputation by thousands of farmers.
- 8th June, 2006 – Singur Krishi Jami Raksha Committee formed with 2 convenors, Becharam Manna from TMC & Sankar Jana from SUC. Local MLA, Rabindranath Bhattacharya became the President.
- 14 & 17th July, '06 – 1000 farmers rallied to Chinsura D.M. Office to submit the objection letters.
- 24th July, 2006 – Durgapur Expressway blocked by farmers.
- 18th Aug, 2006 – Government notification issued under 9(1) clause of Land Acquisition Act.
- 22nd Aug, 2006 – Govt. hearing started near Block Development Office. Farmers boycotted the hearing with agitational programme.
- 25th Aug – Farmers refused to accept the notice. BDO was forced to wind up the hearing camps & all other activities.
- 28 & 29 Aug – Agitational gathering in Block Development Office.
- 1 & 2 Sept, 2006 – Govt. Officials of Hooghly district tried to issue final notification. But they had to face, extreme agitation by females of, farmer-families in local Panchayet Office. Finally Govt. Officials withdrew their attempt & failed to issue the notice only.
- 3rd Sept – Seminar organised in Jadavpur University on behalf of forum for people's initiative supporting this issue & scientists-researchers- intellectuals-land commissioners joined there.
- 4th Sept – A team of different humanist organisations i.e., FIAN surveyed in Singur.
- 10 & 11th Sept – Agitational programme went on in Singur.
- 25th Sept – Peaceful "Gherao" by farmers in BDO to stop the forceful & manipulation of "cheque issue". Suddenly round about 2-2.30 pm thousands of police & CPI(M) cadets put off the lights of the entire area & started "lathicharge" in inhuman way on the farmers. Hundreds of men & women injured severely, 73 arrested out of them. Mamata Banerjee herself was severely injured & arrested.
- 26th Sept – Rajkumar Bhul died, as he was brutally beaten the previous day. He became the first Martyr of Singur Movement. Protest & agitation all over the state. "Sanghati Udyog" formed with representatives of different organisations, Rail & Road-blockade along the whole day on behalf of TMC all over the state.
- 28th Sept onwards – "Puja" boycott in every area of Singur.
- 1st Oct, 2006 – Chief Minister termed this incidence "unwanted" & expressed his sorrow. Farmers observed "NISHPRADIP" i.e., no light on in the evening in entire locality spontaneously.
- 3rd Oct – Spontaneous "ARANDHAN" i.e., no cooking in the entire locality for the whole day.
- 4th Oct – Sudden unplanned effort of all party meeting on behalf of Govt.
- 9th Oct – Successful Bangla Bandh.
- October onwards – Movement locally, every day in Singur.
- 28th Oct – Public Hearing organised in Singur by "SANGHATI UDYOG" under the leadership of Mahasweta Devi, Medha Patkar, etc.
- 2nd Nov., 2006 – Sample survey for fact finding started in Singur on behalf of "SANGHATI UDYOG".
- 3rd Nov. – SUCI Mass meeting in Singur, speaker : Pravash Ghosh
- 4th Nov. – RYA rally in Singur.
- 4 Nov. Onwards – 3 camps started in 3 different places of Singur led by Subrata Mukherjee.
- 5 Nov. – Big mass meeting of S.K.J.R.C., Speaker Mamata Banerjee. CPI(ML) liberation meeting in Dhaniakhali on that very day.
- 7th Nov. onwards – Two camps started on behalf of S.K.J.R.C. in 2 Places. One more camp started in Baro Hat Kalitala on behalf of All India Krishi Majur Committee.
- 8th Nov. – Mass meeting of CPI(ML) New Democracy speaker : Paltu Sen. Internal discussion took place between S.K.J.R.C. leaders & "SANGHATI UDYOG" leaders.
- 10th Nov. – A representative team of 15 worker leaders of Kanoria Jute Sangrami Shramik Union gone to Singur to meet & discuss with the local leadership of Singur Movement.
- 11th Nov – Again a public hearing announced in the camp of All India Krishi Majur Committee.
- 12th Nov. – Opinion exchange meeting for future planning was convened by S.K.J.R.C. with friendly individuals & organisations irrespective of colour.
- 17th Nov. – Dandi Abhijan started from Esplanade towards Singur on behalf of TMC.
- 19th Nov. – Protest rally on behalf of S.K.J.R.C. against the police camp in the villages.
- 20th Nov. – TMC – Dandi March reached Singur.
- 26th Nov. – Opinion Exchange meeting with all friendly individuals & org irrespective of colour organised by S.K.J.R.C.
- 30th Nov. – Next meeting of above type was supposed to be held in Singur & afterwards a rally was supposed to take place. But sudden 144 notification came illegally & not only the rally but also the indoor small meeting was cancelled by police forcefully. Moreover, all the leadership especially Mamata Banerjee was arrested on the way while going to Singur to join the meeting in a complete illegal manner as if "emergency period" was declared in W.B. TMC legislators showed their grievances and breaking of furnitures took place because, the constitution was ignored by Govt. in all respect in the above incident.
- 1st Dec. 2006 – Successfully 12 hour Bangla Bandh on protest of applying undeclared "emergency".
- 2nd Dec. – Brutal police atrocities in Singur in the field as well as in the villages – house hold affected (broken) – police set fire to

- paddy store – Lathi Charge/Rubber Bullet/Tear Gas cell used by police. 122 people arrested.
- 3rd Dec – Emergency K.J.R.C. meeting in this circumstances of severe state repression to determine future course of action.
- 4th Dec. – Indefinite hunger strike started under the leadership of Mamata Banerjee and Vijay Upadhyay, Avash Munshi joined her in this battle. Simultaneously more than 25 farmers & their wives also started fasting under the leadership of Rabindranath Bhattacharjee in 5 places of Singur.
Rajnath Singh, Sunanda Sanyal came to the fasting platform of Esplanade.
- 5th Dec. – Bandh convened by SUCI, moral support by K.J.R.C., not in active manner. K.J.R.C. representatives team met Hon'ble President. Protest meeting in College Square convened by Scientist forum.
- 6 Dec. – 12 noon - 2 pm – Road blockade prog. all over the state.
George Fernandez, Sumanta Hira came to Esplanade Mancha. Intellectuals' gathering in Student hall convened by APDR & Nazrul Mancha. Medha-Mahashweta-Shankha Ghosh were present.
- 7 Dec. – “Singur Chalo” Abhijan – Resisted & obstructed in Vaidyabati by Police, Emergency meeting of K.J.R.C. – leaflet publication, letters from CM & to CM publication, organisation of mass gathering meeting on 10th Dec. etc. discussed.
- 8 Dec. – Hon'ble Governor of W.B. took initiative to end the stalemate & came to the Mancha to meet Mamata Banerjee.
- 9 Dec. – Police arrested & tried to force feed Rabindranath Bhattacharjee along with others in Beraberi Bazar. They continued fasting under police custody.
Ex “Arjum” Player & “Dronacharya” coach Sayeed Nayimuddin visited the mancha.
- 10 Dec. – World Human Rights day observed by the Singur Krishi Jami Raksha Committee. Mass fasting and Arandhan was organised in different places of Singur. More than thousand people sat on a mass fasting for ten hours near Dharmatala Manch. Ashalata Sarkar the participant accused of the heroic Chattogram Armery case came to support the movement and joined the fasting also.
- 11 Dec. – Huge mass meeting near the Dharmatala Manch. Public gathering addressed by Miss Mamata Banerjee and other leaders.
- 12 Dec. – Emergency meeting of Krishi Jami Raksha Committee.
- 13 Dec. – Women gathering at Dharmatala Manch. Symbolic boycott of Tata goods organised by the peasant women of Singur. Lawyers team visited the Manch.
- 14th Dec – Ex Primenister V.P. Singh came to meet Mamata Banerjee and others and addressed the gathering in support of the movement.
- 17th Dec. – Mass-hunger strike programme by the Singur Children.
- 18th Dec – Brutal murder of Tapasi Malik, an eighteen year poor girl of a peasant family – An activist of the movement.
- 19th Dec. – Assembly of ladies in Dharmatala. An amazing expression of Hunger, Grief and demand through demonstration by lying on the street for hours.
- 20th Dec. – Sit in demonstration was organised before D.M. Office of Chichura. Chief Minister sent another letter to Mamata Banerjee.
- 21st & 22nd Dec. – The proposed 48 hour Bandh was postponed considering the X-mass festival. Chief Minister sent another letter on 22nd.
- 25th Dec. – People came from different part of the state throughout the day to register their moral support for the movement, and to convey their deep feeling for the hunger strikers.
- 26th Dec. – Priya Ranjan Dashmunshi came to the manch as an emissary of the Prime Minister to meet Mamata Banerjee. But his mission failed.
- 27th Dec. – Amlan Dutta the veteran philoshoper and educationalist came to the manch and addressed before the gathering in the form of a press meet.
- 28th Dec. – Deputy Secretary to the President of India APJ Abdul Kalam, the Hon. prime minister of India Mr. Monmohanji, Mr. Atal Behari Bajpayee sent letters to Miss Mamata Banerjee to end her fast. Considering all the requests the committee have decided unanimously that they would request Miss Banerjee to end her fast along with Vijay Upadhyay. After that both of them have ended their fast.
- 29th Dec. – A six member team from Krishi Jami Raksha Committee visited Singur.
- 30th Dec. – Silence and mourning for Saddam. Letter to the Prime Minister and the President against the extension of Sec. 144.
- 31st Dec. – Rally in Singur.
The organisation led by Siddikulla Chowdhury Joined KJRC.
- 1st January, 2007 – Singur day and Farmer's day observation.
- 2nd January – Youth programmes in Dharmatala. Meeting of the legislators in assembly.
- 3rd-9th January – Daily visit to Singur by different team.
- 3rd. January – Press Conference. Anomalies in Govt. Status Report. Firing in Nandigram. Attack on the house of Manik Das in Singur.
- 4th January – Visit to Nandigram. Meeting in Garchakraberia & Sonachura by the leaders of K.J.R.C.
Smashing the office of WBIDC in Kolkata.
- 5th January – Discussion on next programmes to be settled centrally. Acceptance of proposal and decision. Local joint meeting in Nandigram.
- 6th January – Firing at midnight in Nandigram.
- 7th January – Visit to Nandigram. Emergency meeting. Bandh Proposed.
- 8th January – Successful 12 hour Bangla Bandh.
- 10th January – Deputation to the District Magistrate and the Governor on Singur issue.
- 11th January – 11 students arrested during demonstration.
- 12th January – Observed Swami Vivekananda's Birthday as an Oath Day by Trinamul Yuva Congress.

