

Extracts of Interviews with Comrade Bimal, Politburo Member of the CPI (Maoist)

Taken from Newspapers

(May and June 2009)

Hindustan Times: What is the future of the so-called Indian revolution you are spearheading?

Bimal: We have a considerable mass base in eight or nine states. Moreover, the capitalist economy is going through a crisis all over the world, and sooner or later, India will suffer the same fate as the West. So, the conditions are quite ripe for a revolution.

HT: You had earlier supported Islamic militancy. Do you still do so after the Mumbai attacks?

Bimal: We do not support the way they attacked the Victoria station (Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, or CST), where most of the victims were Muslims. At the same time, we feel the Islamic upsurge should not be opposed as it is basically anti-US and anti-imperialist in nature. We therefore want it to grow.

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HT: How is your party faring in states like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, West Bengal and Maharashtra?

Bimal: Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Orissa will be the new storm centers in Indian politics. We have our strongest base in Chhattisgarh – particularly in Old Bastar, which stretches across five districts – and it's totally in our control now. Our militia in the state is more than one-lakh strong.

We have the wherewithal to put up teams of 400-500 fighters, encircle hundreds of police and para-military troops, and wipe out them. We have also taken up development projects. Then, we are gaining strength in other states you mentioned.

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HT: Your party suffered a major setback in Andhra Pradesh. What are you doing about it?

Bimal: It's true that we faced a major setback in Andhra Pradesh (when the police drove the Naxalites out of their former strongholds across the state). But we will definitely recover because most of our leadership is alive and safe in our Dandakaranya camps. Our mass base, built up over 30 years, is still intact. But in a war, there will always be ups and downs.

(Excerpts from interview given to a correspondent of the *Hindustan Times*, published in the June 10, 2009 edition of that paper.)

Mint: The administration alleges that you ambush people and run away – that you don't have the courage to fight them...

Bimal: Absolute rubbish – they know we don't run away, but say so because neither they can ignore us nor can they fight us. Even on 2 November, when Bhuddhababu's (West Bengal chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee) convoy was attacked, I was within a kilometer of where the blast took place. Huge forces were deployed, the area was combed, but I did not run away. All our comrades in (West) Bengal are sons and daughters of the soil. Where will they run away? We are not scared of appearing before the people. Lakhs of villagers and tribals know what I look like since I interact with them regularly. ...

Mint: How do you forge ties with the locals?

Bimal: We play very diverse roles, which the people don't get to know. Because they have lost faith in the administration, villagers approach us with their day-to-day problems. We organize camps in villages so they can voice the grievances. We deal with the villagers with lot of compassion and kindness, which is why they love and protect us. We also work for women's liberation. There are many women who are tortured by their (parents) in-law, husbands or parents. But they cannot protest because they dependent on them. We fight for the liberation of such women. Women are very important for our movement. Many oppressed women have joined us in our struggle across the country.

They have led from the front in many a battle that we have fought. However, in terms of the strength, our women cadre in (West) Bengal is slightly weaker compared with other areas such as Jharkhand, Dandakaranya and Andhra Pradesh. Whereas elsewhere the ratio of men to women is 50:50 and even 60:40 in favor of women, in Bengal, the ratio is around 70:30 (in favor of men). Besides our guerilla operations, we also lead strong mass movements in many parts of West Bengal such as Lalgarh and Nandigram. A lot of women are participating in such movements, though they may not be members of the party. Exposure to such movements leads to political maturity. We need mature organizers for the party and would look to recruit women who have actively participated in these movements.

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Mint: How do you recruit people for your movement?

Bimal: We don't recruit from villages on our own. We have a party controlled mechanism under which we receive proposals from the locals. After obtaining the consent of the parents of applicants, we forward the proposals to one of our committees. It vets them and takes a final call on whether or not to recruit, based on the person's antecedents, class and disposition towards others in his or her village. The responsibility of the group that I lead is to train the new recruits. Many of them are initially intimidated by the difficult life we live, but most of them eventually learn to cope with it.

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(Mint, May 29, 2009.)

Mint: How long can you hold out? The state is mobilizing more forces...

Bimal: Let them send another 500 companies (of police). We are ready. This protracted war is not going to end soon. And we have prepared for it with full understanding of the strength of our opponents. We have enough resources... but more importantly, we have the support of the locals, and the whole area is surrounded by them. Tell Buddhababu, his forces should fight us – the guerillas – and not the tribals.

Mint: So you agree that you are using the tribals as human shields...

Bimal: We have never used the tribals as human shields. They are with us voluntarily...and some of them are even leading our forces. Come to Lalgah, and you wouldn't take long to understand that they support us, and the support is entirely voluntary.

Mint: A lot of civilians might die in the crossfire. Wouldn't you be morally responsible for those killed?

Bimal: In a war, there are no civilians – there are people either on your side or against you.

Mint: And moral responsibility?

Bimal: The Centre and the state should be held responsible for the bloodshed. We have repeatedly appealed to them to withdraw the forces and initiate a dialogue, but they ignored (the appeal). So, let them face the consequences. But yes, I will be hurt if the locals died in this war.

Mint: If the state government eventually agreed to your proposal for a dialogue, would you come?

Bimal: If the government agrees to discussions or debate, the people of Lalgarh will take part. The government will have to sit with the civilians and their representatives to understand what they want.

Mint: You have been saying that Mamata Banerjee (union rail minister and leader of the Trinamool Congress, West Bengal's main opposition party) should pressure the government to withdraw central forces from Lalgarh. Are you expecting her to bail you out? Has your party joined forces with the Trinamool?

Bimal: Let me tell you that the Trinamool Congress was never with us. We were in Singur and in Nandigram on our own and we had gone there to help the locals. We fight for the people, and our only partners are people who face oppression. The Maoists consider oppressors as their worst enemy, and the tribals of Lalgarh have been facing oppression by the CPM (the Communist Party of India-Marxist) and the state administration for decades.

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(*Mint*, 22 June, 2009.)

Bimal to Hindustan Times; June 18th: By defying the public mandate, they have initiated the war. Now no one should blame us for the bloodshed... The Germans made more advances in Russia than the State and Central Government made in Lalgarh. Let everybody be patient and see how the people of Lalgarh fight the battle. The State was supposed to pay heed to the local's grievances and solve them but they chose the way of policing. They will have to pay for acting against the people's decision.

[From: *People's Truth*, #7, August 2009.]