

MAOIST 'REVOLUTION'

A Theological Reflection

Indian Theological Association, a national forum of professional educators of the Christian community, in the course of its 33rd conference cum research seminar, reflected upon the ongoing violent engagement between the Maoists and State forces in different parts of the country, issued the following statement:

We the members of the Association resonate with the sentiments expressed by large sections of the Indian civil society, particularly human rights and civil society organizations, about the distressing situation arising out of the ongoing-armed engagement between the Maoists and State law enforcement forces in different parts of the country.

1. It is most painful to note that massive recourse to most gruesome violence and bloodshed has been taking place. We appeal to all concerned to forthwith desist from violence and bloodshed for the solution of the problems and to take steps for restoring normalcy. Only then can the problems be addressed through negotiation.

2. Reports of torching of homes, torture and killing of men who refuse to fall in line, as well as of sexual violence on women, have been causing deep anxiety because these lead to irretrievable damage to our culture. Such steps further add to the historic injustice the tribals have been subject to. It is indeed saddening that our own people are seen as killing our own people. We appeal to all parties concerned to stop any form of violence and bloodshed and damage to the living conditions of our people.

3. Is it not most distressing to learn that organized destruction of social institutions like schools, health centres, technical and other service institutions has also been taking place. This is equally deplorable since it will further contribute to the backwardness of these far-flung regions of the country.

4. Those closely studying the social phenomena have been informing us that it is due to the prolonged neglect and non-implementation of projects and programmes that created conditions favourable to the entry and operation of Maoists. It is therefore incumbent upon both the State agencies as well as on the Maoists to create conditions favourable for resuming the delayed development of the tribals in these affected areas.

5. Unilateral imposition New Economic Policy and consequent signing of undisclosed number of Memoranda of Undertaking, for exploitation of the vast mineral resources, without the participation of the

local population, have led to massive forced eviction of the tribals from their millennia-old habitat. Such coercive steps have been seen as violative of many a tribal, Panchayati Raj and State contracts and conventions. Clearly this is at the expense of the precious tribal heritages that are part and parcel of the humanity at large. Grassroots democracy, endorsed by recent Parliamentary initiatives (Panchayati Raj, Pesa, etc.) demands honouring of many of the tribal customs and traditions that are part of their culture and identity.

6. Finally, it is clear that the innocent population, now caught between the crossfire of the two forces, as well as of the Salva Judum, need deliverance from the multi-cornered repression. The Association appeals to all concerned to facilitate their rescue and restoration of conditions for resuming State-imitated and other programmes for their development and well-being.

Antony Kalliath CMI
ITA Secretary

Jacob Parappally MSFS
ITA President