

PWG setting up new bases

By Our Special Correspondent

HYDERABAD, OCT. 23. The CPI(ML) People's War Group (PWG) has redefined its priorities and set in motion plans to form base areas in Dandakaranya and in the newly-formed Andhra Orissa Border Special Zone, comprising five districts of Orissa and the adjoining four North Coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh.

This paradigm shift could only mean that the PWG plans to establish its own form of governance and not allow any elected government to function.

A special PWG congress attended by the all-powerful central committee and secretaries of different states in March, is said to have given its stamp of approval for strategy changes are bound to cause concern to the Orissa and Andhra Pradesh Governments.

The existence of large and nearly impenetrable tracts of the forest areas in East Godavari, Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram, Srikakulam (in Andhra Pradesh), Malkangiri, Koraput, Ganjam, Gajapathi and Raigarh (in Orissa) is believed to have prompted the decision to form base areas in these districts.

Each base area, the PWG feels, should be around 400 sq.km. Similarly, base areas are to be formed in the Dandakaranya region consisting of Gadchiroli (Maharashtra), south Bastar and north Bastar (Madhya Pradesh), and Abuz Mad (in Chattisgarh).

This concept arose out of the PWG's decision to work with a 'liberated zone perspective'. Theoretically, a liberated zone is an advanced stage of revolution which comes after successful completion of the guerilla zone stage. The PWG had categorised its

movement in north and south Telangana districts as that of guerilla Zone stage.

In simple terms, it means that the PWG and the State are on an equal footing fighting for area domination in a guerilla zone phase; in the liberated zone phase, the PWG cadre would be on an all-out offensive while the State goes on the defensive. From this, it is clear the PWG leadership believes that the situation in the nine border districts and in Dandakaranya is conducive to launch the struggle with the liberated zone perspective.

Elsewhere in the five districts of north Telangana (Adilabad, Nizamabad, Karimnagar, Warangal and Khammam) and south Telangana (Mahabubnagar, Medak, and Nalgonda), the activity continues to be in the guerilla zone phase, the PWG leadership appears to believe.

The lack of preparedness of the Orissa police in face of the onslaught, and in that of the government in failing to understand the subtleties of revolutionary warfare has come in handy for the PWG. But the situation in the bordering Andhra Pradesh districts is different.

In Andhra Pradesh, the police is aware of the fallout of such drastic changes in PWG strategy, but the task of sensitising the ground level forces to the emerging situations is certainly a problem. However, police top brass assert that efforts are under way to tackle the problem. Senior police officers of the two States had met to discuss the situation, and the Centre had rushed two battalions of the central forces to Orissa to buttress the anti-extremist operations.

THE HINDU

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Enemy's enemy is not always a friend

All eyes are on Midnapore now, especially after Trinamul's Rajani Dolui declared on Monday that he was stepping aside from the poll fray because of CPI-M terror. Dolui's "walk-out" and the PWG's call to boycott the polls may determine the fate of many a seat in Midnapore, in the news during the past few months because of the political killings, especially the one on the night of 4 January. But did 11 men die in the house gutted by fire at Chhoto Anguria village in Hemnagar block of Garbeta on that night? The Trinamul, claiming Abdur Rahman, alias Baktar Mondal, to be its member, alleges the attackers were CPI-M cadres. The CPI-M says no one was killed. The state police couldn't find out what exactly had happened. Now, the CBI says it has identified some of the assailants. But the truth is still evading us.

The People's War Group gave another turn to the controversy, saying those killed on 4 January were its activists. The PWG says eight of their activists were killed and five still missing. This gives rise to three questions: Which party did the 'victims' belong to?; if those 'killed' were identifiable Trinamul members why

should the PWG claim them to be its activists; and what a Maoist outfit like the PWG has got to do with Trinamul, which it considers to be a rightist reactionary party. That there was a PWG-Trinamul tie-up was evident from the name of one of the "victims", Bhoda Majhi, a resident of Manikbandh in Goghat. For, Majhi has been a known PWG member.

But why did PWG tie up with Trinamul? To know that, we have to travel back in time. From the mid-70s Naxalites in Andhra began rebuilding their outfit. The first Telengana Regional Conference was held from 29 December 1976 to 1 January 1977 under the leadership of Kondapalli Seetharamaiah — that's when the Andhra Pradesh State Committee CPI-ML (People's War) was formed. The top secret document came to be known as the "Nagpur Report". The PWG programme was: "Let us lay the foundations to extend into the forests by sending one or two squads into the forests and organising the tribals."

That's how and when PWG activists entered the forests and villages of Midnapore-Bankura. The PWG believed in the Charu Mazumdar doctrine of keeping the party underground and forming revolutionary frontal units. The Nagpur Report had

said: "Let us prepare people for armed struggle relying on mass line, mass organisation." That gave rise to Jana Natya Mandal, Rayat Kuli Sangham, and Radical Students' Union. The RSA and PWG's Biplabi Krishak Samiti have been active in West Bengal since the Nineties, the decade when the PWG underwent a radical change.

The PWG was helped by many Naxalites from different factions, who wanted the "people to know the difference between a real Communist party and the CPI-M". PWG's West Bengal unit was formed in early 1995 and it began "work" in Midnapore, Bankura and Hooghly. But before PWG, another Naxalite outfit, Central Organising Bureau of CPI-ML had been active in the Midnapore-Bankura-Hooghly border areas since the mid-80s. It had made the forests its "strategic zone" and a Calcutta youth was its leader.

Since people in the Midnapore-Bankura-Hooghly border areas, the adjoining forest belt and the bordering areas of other states are generally poor, the Naxalites got their support to build their organisation. The first direct confrontation with the CPI-M took place on 26 June 1989. The Naxalites had called a meeting against CPI-M atrocities at Masinapur village near the Bankura-Hooghly border. A group of 30 youths and students and farm labourers, after organising a procession at Masinapur, was going towards Jairambati bus (route 21) stand. Suddenly, some CPI-M cadres attacked the BKS procession. About 60 BKS activists were held hostage by CPI-M cadres in a local school and beaten up mercilessly. Some of the BKS activists' limbs were broken. About 53 of them were locked up in Bishnupur jail on what the Naxalites alleged were trumped up charges.

The next clash took place in the Nalpa-Kashtaguda, in 1993. The Naxalites alleged that CPI-M cadres had murdered one of their comrades, Tapan Chakraborty. Till 1995, some students and youths were individually trying to organise people against state oppression. Once the PWG unit was formed they all joined it.

The 4 January 2001 clash at Chotto Anguria and the death

of PWG activists are not isolated incidents. The CPI-M and BJP-Trinamul are today desperate to control the relatively well off (thanks to bumper potato productions) Garbeta-Kespur area. But the presence of the ultra-Left PWG has added a different dimension to the mainstream political game. Even police say PWG enjoys support in Garbeta, Goghat, Saltora areas. Silabati river divides Garbeta block into two: on one side are seven gram panchayat areas and on the other five, PWG first

PWG may have been fighting for the poor, but committed an ideological error at Chotto Anguria, says AMAR BHATTACHARYA

started its activities in panchayat No 2, then tried to spread to 3 and 4. Its armed squads even ventured into panchayats 10 & 12. This is how the PWG unit analysed the situation: "Attacks on BJP and then Trinamul & CPI-M controlled villages increased from 1997, keeping in mind the 1998 panchayat and Lok Sabha polls. During this time, BJP and Trinamul supporters jointly raided and looted and torched houses, raped women and killed opponents in Garbeta's 1,2 and 3 panchayat areas. CPI-M was then on the defensive."

Furthermore: "Under such circumstances, PWG Midnapore divisional committee sent an organiser to Garbeta in 1998. In early 1999, PWG after overcoming a lot of resistance and ignoring threats, organised a seminar in Garbeta to demand the just price for potatoes. BJP hoodlums assaulted women PWG members. Sensing the need to counter such inhuman acts, the PWG decided to form an armed squad for which it chose three activists. After this, on 9 September 1999 the guerrilla squad killed the dacoit-rapist, BJP-RSS leader, Swarup Sar-

kar. The BJP-Trinamul supporters then under the leadership of BJP's Rama Tewari murdered PWG supporter, Anath Sarkar. The next day BJP-Trinamul hoodlums killed three of Anath Sarkar's relatives who had come from Hooghly to attend his funeral (those killed were husbands of Anath Sarkar's two sisters and their father). The hoodlums kidnapped the 10-year-old son of one of Anath Sarkar's sisters. He is still untraced."

That the PWG's relationship with BJP and Trinamul was very bad is evident from its statements. Later, PWG's armed squad raided BJP member Jayanta Ghosh's house and looted money and snatched his double-barrelled gun. They even snatched Trinamul member, Pijush Ghosh's gun from his house at Bachua village. Clashes continued in Selampur and Bhenti villages and BJP-Trinamul lost some of their men. Among those killed was Trinamul leader Nitai Senapati, whose death prompted even Miss Mamata Banerjee to rush to Midnapore. Under such circumstances, how could PWG tie up with Trinamul? Is it PWG's tactical mistake, the cost of which it has been paying for the past 10 years? Did it commit the mistake of identifying allies and enemies for temporary relief? A recent PWG document says: "Once the BJP-Trinamul's plans were thwarted by PWG, the CPI-M woke up from its hibernation. It chased out the remnants of BJP-Trinamul from villages and began recapturing them, or at least tried to recapture them. The BJP-Trinamul's defeat infused new blood into CPI-M cadres in Garbeta. The sly CPI-M knows very well how to exploit this situation."

Just over a month ago, the PWG mouthpiece had this to say about Garbeta: "What is the situation in Garbeta where PWG has been so active? PWG has always been facing a threat from CPI-M because it has been dreaming of cleansing Garbeta of PWG with the help of police. That's why we have to prepare for another battle."

Had the PWG activists and Trinamul members assembled at Rahman's house to prepare for that battle? Did the PWG believe an enemy's enemy was

a friend? And did that tactic take it close to Trinamul? That the PWG was preparing for an armed battle and the entire area was agog with PWG's cry was narrated to journalists: "On the last lap of the night of (3 January) Wednesday, our squad had reached the area with 38 people. Fifteen of those went to Hemnagar's Chotto Anguria village to Baktar Mondal's house. Twenty-three of them accompanied me to a village at Hetoshala, a bit more than a km away."

Two things are clear from the entire episode: One, even if

Mandal's house wasn't attacked and torched, there would have been a clash to capture or recapture certain areas. Two, unethical and immoral tie-ups among mainstream political parties may be an accepted fact but for an anti-establishment, armed revolutionary outfit to enter into an alliance with a parliamentary party is something else. It exposes the lack of foresight and understanding of the PWG, for which it paid a heavy price.

(The author, editor of Naya Ishtahar, is documenting the history of the Naxalite movement)

Left Front starts poll parade at Brigade

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, March 25

IN AN impressive show of strength at the Brigade Parade Ground today, the Left Front kicked off its poll campaign by showcasing its 'achievements' vis-à-vis the Trinamool's 'anarchy' and its links to the tehelka-tainted NDA Government.

Former Prime Minister V P Singh, who attended the rally, dwelt on the prospects of a third front with Jyoti Basu at its helm, while the latter pointed to the post-tehelka confusion among the Opposition in West Bengal to rubbish the Left's rivals.

"The Trinamool is oscillating between the Congress and the BJP. Does it have any programme?" posed Basu, maintaining that Mamata Banerjee wouldn't be able to undo the "immense harm" she had done to Bengal as an NDA partner. "What's the point in trying to escape now by pulling out of the NDA? What was she doing when the Vajpayee Government

NAYANAR OPTS OUT

E K NAYANAR and Industries Minister Susheela Gopalan have opted out of the fray for the Kerala polls on health grounds. Rarring Youth Welfare Minister Radhakrishnan, none of the present Ministers figure on the CPI(M) candidates' list released on Sunday. Detailed report on P9

forced the closure of six PSUs in the State? She was party to the Centre's decision of opening up the economy, for which the peasants are paying the price. She can't simply wash her hands of now. She is a traitor," Basu said. He cited the tehelka exposé to hint that Banerjee was not as clean as she would like others to believe.

He hit out at the Trinamool for its "nasty means" to gain narrow electoral gains. "It cares little for morality. It once used Champala Sardar to make up a false rape case. They claimed it was done by CPI(M) cadres. It was proved to be a baseless

charge. Now Mamata is trying to woo the minority, even promising them job reservations. Can she do that? Does the Constitution endorse reservations on religious lines? She doesn't care. She is so desperate to come to power, she will use any means." Pumping up the spirit of the cadres, Basu said: "We should win for what we have done for the last 24 years, even if we stay indoors. Our enemies are trying to malign our record. But they won't succeed. There is no room for complacency though."

Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee highlighted the NDA Government's "neglect" of the flood victims. "I urged the PM to help us. He declined. But he cannot derail us. We have excelled in agriculture and are turning around the industry."

He accused the Trinamool of tying up with "divisive forces" such as the KPP and JMM. On Mamata, he said: "Anarchy is all she wants. For this, she shook hands with Gandhiji's assassins and is now aligning with forces that are out to divide Bengal."

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