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**Cover Picture** : The column built in memory of the victims of state repression during Naxalbari struggle at Kala Sanghian village in Punjab. One of the seven people who died during the violence was Teja Singh, whose grandfather Harnam Singh had participated in the freedom movement. Seen in the picture is Surinder Singh, the brother of Teja Singh.

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**RADICAL**  
DESIGN

"If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor."  
Desmond Tutu

## Working class wins despite all odds

**T**he May 9 BC election results have proved that it was a victory of the working class. In spite of poll predictions by the big media that the ruling Liberal party might actually form another majority government, and that the opposition NDP has a bumpy ride ahead, the Liberals failed to reach the magic figure of 44 seats required to form a government. In fact, none of the three parties, the BC Liberals, the NDP and the Greens could get 44 seats out of the total 87. The Liberals, who have been in power for the last sixteen years, bagged 43 seats, while the NDP has got 41. The Greens have made a major gain by winning three seats in the Legislature. The NDP and the Greens together defeated the attempt of the right-wing Liberals to gain another majority. This shows the general mood of the voters who wanted a change

and gave a clear verdict against the pro-rich Liberal Party, by rejecting its narrative of stability and jobs. Their attack ads targeting the NDP had no impact on them. The defeat of some Liberal cabinet ministers, like Peter Fassbender and Amrik Virk in Surrey, where working class and



## Editorial

immigrants have a sizable population, is a reflection of the over-all mood of the voters. As things stand today, the absentee votes are yet to be counted, while in some ridings there will be a recount because of narrow margin victories. Who is going to form the next government won't be clear until May 22, when full results are officially declared. Until that time, Christy Clark will continue to serve as the Premier of BC. But one thing seems to be clear, that a minority government will be formed in the province for the first time since 1953. The possibility of a minority NDP government under John Horgan with the support of the Green Party cannot be ruled out either. After all, two parties are ideologically close and share common ground on certain issues, like opposition to the Site C dam and corporate donations. Together they can give big relief to the working people of BC who have endured years of cutbacks under Liberals. The two parties must respect people's sentiments, and use this opportunity to serve the public instead of competing against each other and dividing the left-wing votes. That is the best alternative to keep the united right out of power. For now, the majority of the people have rejected the Liberals, and under no circumstances should they be given another opportunity to grab power. It is time to form a government that has a will to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, bring back the BC Human Rights Commission, review Uber, ban corporate donations, stop Site C Dam and bring electoral reforms.

This could never be expected under the Liberals. The situation demands that they be ousted from the office, and replaced by a government that is for the working class and not the billionaires. Those who are sceptical about coalition or minority governments must keep in mind that they are always good for the people, since they are more accountable than majority governments which can at times be arrogant. Never forget that universal healthcare was adopted in Canada because of a minority Liberal government supported by the NDP (formerly the CCF). This establishes that a minority government can deliver due to public pressure. So rather than opposing any possible coalition, we need to support it wholeheartedly.

-Editors

## Neverending Naxalbari

50 years of people's struggle for dignity and respect refuses to die

**W**hen 26 soldiers of India's Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) were ambushed and killed by ultra-leftist Naxal militants on April 24, an embarrassed Home Minister Rajnath Singh announced that they will revise the strategy to deal with left wing extremism, though last year he had claimed that the movement was on the decline.

The attack took place in Chhattisgarh state of central India, which is widely known as ground zero of the armed insurgency that is giving sleepless nights to Singh and other senior government functionaries.

It is believed that 300 militants owing allegiance to the Naxalbari movement, which is fighting a class war for the past fifty years, ambushed a CRPF contingent in a forested area of Sukma district. Singh, who paid tributes to the slain soldiers, indicated that the government will retaliate in equal measure, while Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted, "The sacrifice of the martyrs will not go in vain." The opposition parties too tried to score a point in an attempt to corner the government for not doing enough to deal with the situation. So much so, the opposition Congress party

asked to impose President's rule in Chhattisgarh, where Modi's Hindu nationalist Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) is in power. A hawkish media came down heavily on the government with accusations of intelligence failure, and

described the dead soldiers as "martyrs", while candle light vigils were organized across the country to mourn the tragedy.

What remained missing in the narrative of the political leaders, the big media and the



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self-styled pacifists, was an honest acknowledgement that Naxalism has refused to die despite many challenges, nor is there a will to address the issues that bred extremism, such as structural violence against tribal people, poor, landless and those on the margins of the society.

Significantly, the Chhattisgarh incident coincides with fifty years of the beginning of the Naxal movement in May 1967.

The uprising that started from the village of Naxalbari in West Bengal has never subsided completely.

The terms Naxal or Naxalbari, often used for left-wing insurgents who believe in Maoism, have roots in the bloody events that occurred in Naxalbari. Within half a century, it has now spread across at least ten states of India, and was termed as the biggest threat to internal security of the country by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

### **The origins of Naxalism**

Reacting to the April 24 attack, Israel's envoy to India, Daniel Carmon, emphasised deepening cooperation with India to combat terrorism. He categorically stated that the security forces have to face a "new battlefield".

Condoling the deaths of soldiers of a friendly country is one thing, but Carmon completely glossed over the background of the Naxal

violence in Chhattisgarh. A glaring factual error in his statement is his reference to a new battlefield. Firstly, Chhattisgarh is not a new battlefield and neither it is the only one. Perhaps he isn't aware that the flames which have engulfed many parts of India began with a spark that started on May 25, 1967 in a village of West Bengal.

Naxalbari had a sizable population of tribal people, the so-called untouchables or Dalits who are frequently discriminated against under a brutal caste system, and landless tillers, according to 1961 census figures. Most of them were engaged as agricultural labour or worked in the forests and mines. These segments were fighting for the right to own land and faced exploitation by the land-owning classes.

Supporters of the Communist Party of India (CPI), the mainstream parliamentary communist force that claims to stand for the weaker sections of society and land reforms, had started an agitation for these segments in 1959. In 1962, the party suffered a setback following the Sino-India war. A section in the party supported China, whereas others supported India and Soviet communists who had a cozy relationship with Indian establishment. This led to a split, and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) was formed in 1964

by a breakaway faction that accused the Soviets of giving up a Stalinist approach towards communist revolution and adopting a revisionist line. In 1965, the local leader of the CPI (Marxist), Charu Majumdar, tried to organize landless tillers and encouraged them to take up conventional arms, such as sickles and bows and arrows, and capture the plots of agricultural land to redistribute among the needy. This led to the forcible occupation of lands owned by the affluent, and violent clashes. Ironically, the CPI (Marxist) was a partner in the United Front government of West Bengal when the movement galvanized and went out of hand in 1967. Majumdar and his comrades felt disillusioned with the slow process of land reforms promised by the party, and intensified their struggle. All efforts for a peaceful negotiation by the government failed. The CPI(M) was caught in a dilemma, as it was hard to go after its own cadre. Under these circumstances, a police inspector was killed when he went to Naxalbari to arrest some political activists. On May 25, a police party opened fire on protesters, killing ten people, including six women. Thus, the foundation of a long battle was laid; Majumdar and others parted ways with the CPI(M) to launch an armed revolution with a hope of getting support from Maoist



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China. On June 14, at a convention held in Calcutta, radical activists formed a committee in support of Naxalbari. It became a rallying forum to all radical communists fighting against the "revisionism" of traditional leaders of CPI and CPI(M).

Inspired by the Maoist ideology, Majumdar and his associates desired to bring a radical change through guerrilla war by creating bases in rural India and encircling the urban centres. They wished to adopt the Chinese revolutionary model. China condoned the Naxalbari revolt by describing the bloody events as "Spring Thunder".

Two years later, those associated with the Naxalbari agitation established the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist). They claimed that the CPI(ML) is based on the ideas of Mao Tse-tung. In 1970, when the fledgling CPI(ML) held its first Party Congress and came out with its party program, the political direction of the Naxals became clear. Some pro-Maoist groups didn't join CPI(ML), but they supported the Naxalbari rebellion. The most prominent among those was the Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI), popularly known as Dakshan Desh group.

The CPI(ML) declared the independence of India from the British occupation in 1947 as "sham", a mere transfer of

power between the foreign rulers and the Congress leadership that represented the bourgeoisie and big landlords. They described the present Indian society as "semi-colonial" and "semi-feudal" in character. They also

charged that the government has been suppressing the rights of all the nationalities and religious minorities like Kashmiris, Nagas and Mizos, who are denied the right of self-determination, and called for a revolution to establish



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the dictatorship of the working class.

They outlined the major task of the party and called for confiscating the land belonging to the rich and its redistribution among the poor peasants, on the principle of "land to the tillers". They vowed to abolish the caste system, remove social inequalities, and end discrimination on religious grounds.

The CPI(ML) claimed that the armed struggle it had launched has impacted twelve states starting from West Bengal in the north east, leading down south to Kerala. It is a separate matter that their program manifested itself through different groups in various parts of the country. These included People's War Group (PWG) and MCCI.

The aftershocks of the rebellion reached as far as Punjab where it inspired a whole generation of youth to revolt against tyrannical rule. Ageing political activists like Bujha Singh and Gurmukh Singh Lalton, who had participated in the struggle against British colonialism, were drawn into the movement. Both men were actively involved in the Ghadar movement, started in 1913 with an intention to overthrow British rule through armed uprising and form a secular and egalitarian

republic. Disillusioned with the exchange of power between the imperialists and the bourgeoisie, they continued to fight for social justice in post-independent India.

Bujha Singh became one of the prominent faces of the Naxal

movement in Punjab. He mobilized landless tillers to forcibly occupy and plough the lands belonging to the rich landlords. He died in police custody after being detained in 1970. The police claimed to have killed him in an exchange of fire that the activists found to be staged. More than 80 political activists were killed in staged shootouts.

In September 1973, the state repression of political activists fighting for the rights of the tillers at village Kala Sanghian left seven people dead. Among those killed was Teja Singh, the grandson of Harnam Singh, who had also participated in the Ghadar movement. In January that year, before the build up that led to these deaths, a Black Day was observed in the village on the Republic Day of India to denounce the independence. Thus, Kala Sanghian came to be known as mini-Naxalbari.

However, the Naxalbari movement collapsed for some time, following the arrest and subsequent death of Majumdar in a police lock up in 1972, partly due to state repression and partly because of infighting and dissensions that led to the mushrooming of many other factions and groups. Besides differences over the strategy to kill class enemies, Internationalism of the communist movement contributed to the bickering. When Bangladesh was liberated from Pakistan in 1971, the Naxals also stood divided, like the CPI and CPI(M) on the issue of Sino-India war. One faction



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supported the right of the Bangladeshis to self-determination, whereas the other felt that India was interfering in the internal affairs of Pakistan as part of its expansionist designs, and had precipitated the crisis in Bangladesh. The problem was with China, which openly sided with the repressive regime of Pakistan, making it difficult for CPI (ML) to go against Peking.

But Majumdar's prophecy that Naxalbari lives and will live and that it will not die was proven right when one phase of the movement ended and another began.

**From Naxalbari to Chhattisgarh** : In 2009, then-Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who was instrumental in opening the Indian market for foreign investors and introducing the economic liberalization that has pushed weaker sections to the wall, creating conditions that are conducive for insurgents, described Naxals as the biggest threat to the internal security of the nation.

The Naxals and the Maoists had become interchangeable terms by now, with the formation of Communist Party of India (Maoist) in 2004. The new party was established through the merger of CPI (ML), PWG and MCCI. Currently banned as a "terrorist organization", the CPI (Maoist) claimed responsibility for the

Chhattisgarh attack.

Manmohan Singh's statement and the recent events testify that Majumdar's death did not decimate the movement. By the admission of the current government itself, ten states are hit by the left-wing extremism. Last year, when Rajnath Singh claimed that the Naxal movement is on the decline, he had to admit that it exists in 141 districts. Among the states that face the challenge and form the part of the "red corridor" are Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh.

What binds the Naxal groups active in all these areas is their support base among those affected by the policies of the state. The most vulnerable are the tribal people and Dalits who face both economic and social prejudices. Be it Manmohan Singh – who represented the centrist Congress party - or Modi, who represents the right-wing Hindu nationalist BJP, their inclination towards a development model based on privatisation and foreign investment make the Naxals a common enemy, and the oppressed classes in need of affirmative action a liability.

Under the right-wing BJP, the challenge has grown for minorities, including tribals and Dalits. After all, the BJP supporters have always

desired to transform India into a Hindu theocracy that believes in the caste system and in "othering" tribals and non-Hindus. Attacks on Dalits and tribals, as well as Muslims and Christians, have notably increased under the BJP government.

The forests in some of these states not only provide them safe haven from the security forces, but also potential recruits especially from among the tribal population. When the Naxals made entry into these communities they were facing exploitation at the hands of the police, forest officials and businesses which profit from rich minerals and natural resources lying underneath these forest lands. Since tribal population forms merely eight percent of the total population of India, they live under constant threat of eviction by the government and the mining industry. The Naxals' slogan "land to the tiller" gave them some hope. Eventually, they began protecting them from all the forces of repression and created liberated zones with an alternative development model by digging water tanks, and opening medical centres and schools through volunteer labour. So much so, they encouraged the tribal people to evolve their language and save their sovereignty and cultural identity. This is why the movement remains stronger in Andhra Pradesh,



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Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and West Bengal, because of the significant presence of tribal population and extending to some new areas like the tri-junction of Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

With the backing of the Maoists, tribals began organizing in these states to fight back against the landlords and money lenders who took advantage of their vulnerability back in mid 1960s following the Naxalbari uprising.

Similarly, Dalits who have faced caste-based oppression for centuries in the orthodox Hindu society also saw in Naxalism a path to walk with dignity. The movement became popular among Dalits in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh around this time and enabled them to resist against oppression by upper caste goons.

The Naxals not only helped these communities to occupy agricultural land by using force, but also annihilated their oppressors and tried others through parallel courts. Notably, women who were often subjected to sexual violence by the upper-class people and the security officials increasingly became part of the Naxal squads, whose leaders came to be referred to as Dadas (elder brothers) or Banbabus (gentlemen of the jungles).

The women constitute 40 to 60 percent of guerrilla fighters in these areas.

It is pertinent to mention that a CPI (Maoist) spokesman who issued a statement following the April 24 attack claimed that it was in response to gang rapes and murders of tribal women by the paramilitary personnel. The audio clip by Vikalp, a special zonal spokesman of the party, said that the attack was to protect the honour of tribal women. Vikalp can also be heard condemning the government for creating a fascist atmosphere and growing violence against tribals, Dalits and minorities in the country.

In the meantime, tribal activists like Soni Sori, who has been advocating for the women who are being harassed by the security forces and the state sponsored vigilante groups, herself had to go through torture at the hands of the police. She was subjected to sexual violence in custody and later an attempt was made to burn her face with acid. A complaint was also lodged with the National Human Rights Commission against large scale sexual violence in Chhattisgarh by the police and the militia.

The Sukma incident wasn't the first major attack by the Maoists in the region. In May 2013, the Maoists killed 28 people in an ambush on a convoy of supporters of the Congress party leaders who

were carrying out a rally. Apart from some senior Congress leaders, several security personnel died in the attack, in which an Improvised Explosive Device was used, besides indiscriminate firing by the insurgents. Those who died included former union minister VC Shukla, and controversial political figure Manendra Karma, who was instrumental behind an infamous vigilante group, Salwa Judum, which was raised to create fear among the tribals who supported Naxals. This group encouraged sexual violence against tribal women. There was so much hatred among indigenous women for Karma that they celebrated his death. Chhattisgarh has never been peaceful. The unrest has always been here since the time of Naxalbari eruption. At that time, Chhattisgarh was part of Madhya Pradesh and carved out as a separate state in 2000. But the partition did not make any difference and the tribals who felt neglected by the authorities welcomed Naxals when they first set foot in the area. Notably, in February 2000, the year Chhattisgarh came into being, 23 policemen were killed in a landmine blast in Bastar district of the state. In 2005 another powerful blast left 22 CRPF soldiers dead in Bijapur. If Vikalp's statement is any indication, the problem is not going to end soon, considering the fact that the situation that



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gave birth to Naxalism in the first place hasn't changed much. The gap between the rich and poor continues to grow, the landless tillers continue to fight for survival, the Dalits continue to be discriminated against by the dominant society, the tribals continue to face structural violence and minorities constantly live in fear under a government whose supporters are trying to impose their brand of Hinduism on everyone with impunity, even as the people of Kashmir and other nationalities continue to struggle for their right to self-determination while the paramilitary forces constantly suppress their voice of dissent.

Nobody knows for sure whether the Naxals will ever succeed in their mission, but for people whom they claim to represent the choice is either to endure the apathy of the power structure or resist through whatever means they have.

### Fight goes on

Wheelchair bound GN Saibaba is a Delhi University professor who is ninety per cent disabled below waist. He was recently given a life sentence by a court in Maharashtra after being charged for supporting Maoist insurgents. His only fault was raising his voice against repression of tribals in the name of "war on terror" by the state authorities. Especially when the government started

its infamous Operation Green Hunt in the areas influenced by Naxals, atrocities on the tribals crossed all the limits. People like Saibaba believe that the real intention of the government is to displace the tribals in the name of war against Maoists, to enable the extraction industry to appropriate their land that is rich with minerals.

Being a revolutionary activist, Saibaba had tried to mobilize public opinion against state violence in the tribal areas. Apart from advocating for the rights of the tribal population, he has been standing up for Dalits and other religious minorities. He was first arrested and thrown into jail in 2014 when Manmohan Singh was still in office. His situation worsened when Modi came to power with a brute majority the same year. Though he was later released on bail on medical grounds following wide spread protests, he was incarcerated again after his bail was revoked.

The right-wing Hindu nationalists ensured that he was not reinstated in his job while he was out. Saibaba during that time told *Radical Desi* that the working class and the oppressed groups have no choice but to fight back against social injustice under the current system that remains unchanged. But he is not alone in this fight.

Sheetal Sathe of Kabir Kala

Manch, a progressive theatre group, was also detained and charged for being a Maoist sympathizer. All she has been doing was to raise awareness through songs and plays about the exploitation of Dalits and tribals in Maharashtra and denounce "sham freedom" of the country.

Apart from these leftist activists, others too are being intimidated for standing up for the rights of the minorities. In Kashmir, where a struggle for the right to self-determination has been going on since India gained freedom from the British, the Muslim majority continues to face the brutality of the paramilitary forces. Draconian laws are being constantly used against pro-independence activists, and Kashmiri Muslims settled outside their state are repeatedly harassed. Resistance is being met by forced disappearances, staged shootouts, tortures and rapes. Human Rights Watch pointed out in its 2015 World Report that members of the security forces continue to enjoy impunity for serious human rights violations in Kashmir. It also condemned the ruthless Armed Forces Special Powers Act that gives immunity to soldiers deployed in Kashmir and other conflict zones.

The situation in other states fighting a similar struggle is no different. That explains why Naxals are thickly connected with the emancipation



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struggles by these nationalities. Prakash Singh, who previously served in the Ministry of Home Affairs, writes in his famous book, *The Naxalite Movement in India*, that some of the arrested Naxals had revealed that they had received training in the use of explosives in rebel Naga camps in Nagaland, which too is fighting for right to self-determination.

In contrast to what activists standing up for tribals and other minority groups have to go through, the Hindu extremists enjoy state patronage, in spite of the fact that Indian constitution guarantees equality and secularism. At almost the same time that Saibaba was given a life sentence, another court acquitted Swami Aseemanand in the Ajmer Sharif blast case. A Muslim shrine was targeted in a 2007 attack that left three people dead. Aseemanand is a Hindu activist who is part of the movement that aims to transform India into a Hindu nation. He can be seen in the company of Modi in a picture that can be easily googled.

Modi was the Chief Minister of Gujarat when anti-Muslim carnage was organized by his party in 2002 following the burning of a train carrying Hindu pilgrims. More than 50 people died in the incident that was blamed on Muslim fundamentalists. Thousands of Muslims were later

slaughtered by the mobs led by BJP supporters. None of those involved in the anti-Muslim violence was charged for terrorism, while the Muslims accused of torching the train were charged under anti-terror laws.

Not a single Hindu extremist group is named in the list of terrorist organizations on the website of the National Investigation Agency. According to this list, the CPI (Maoist) and other organizations fighting for the right to self-determination remain banned terror groups, but what is starkly missing is the name of any Hindu group that is terrorising minorities in India.

One can argue that Naxalism cannot be romanticised or there is no justification to the killings done by the Maoist

insurgents. Those who died in the latest Chhattisgarh attack also came from poor or middle class backgrounds, and left behind wailing widows and children. But the blame for the violence lies at the doorstep of the system that is not ready to change itself, and remains indifferent to the underdog and has failed to serve the interest of those who remain marginalized and forced to fight back for dignity and respect. The Naxal movement or any other armed struggle will keep going through ups and downs or might disappear completely at some point in time, giving illusions to leaders like Rajnath Singh to pat themselves on their back, yet resistance won't ever end as long as injustice and repression go on.

-RDNB

## Those shedding tears for the killings of soldiers by Maoists should also see the other side of the story

**T**he April 24 attack on India's Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) contingent by the Maoist insurgents in Chhattisgarh state has evoked sharp reaction not only from the Indian leaders but also from Israel.

The ambush left 26 soldiers dead. The incident occurred in the Sukma district of the state that remains under influence of the ultra leftist Maoist insurgency for the past many years.

While Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted that the "sacrifice" of the "martyrs" will not go in vain, the hawkish media has blamed the incident on intelligence failure and the lack of political will to deal with Maoists. The opposition too has hardened its criticism of the government for not doing enough to tackle the "biggest threat to the internal security of the country." A section of the civilians organized vigils in memory of the slain soldiers.

Indeed, it is sad that so many soldiers died and left behind wailing widows, children and parents. On top of that, these soldiers came from poor or middle class families. But

those who are shedding tears for the dead soldiers must also see the other side of the story. They need to ask themselves why they never respond to the violence committed by soldiers on ordinary civilians in the name of the so-called war on terror? How often are candles pulled to organize

vigils for ordinary people, who either die at the hands of the soldiers or are turned into living corpses because of custodial rapes? Is it not the time to look into the reasons that lead to such tragedies? If yes, then who should be blamed? For that we need to go into the reasons behind this



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bloody conflict and the response of the state.

The Maoists have been fighting a class war in India since 1967. Chhattisgarh is one of the ten Indian states where an armed conflict has been going on between the paramilitary forces and the left-wing extremists who seek to overthrow the government and establish a classless society.

Their bases are mainly in the tribal areas which have rich mineral resources. Both the extraction industry and the government have created a situation which has pushed the tribal population towards Maoists.

The tribals, who form only eight percent of the country's population, remain exposed to eviction and exploitation by the mining industry. The structural violence has turned many into Maoist sympathisers. To be fair with Maoists, they have provided an alternative development model in some of these areas, and a sense of dignity to the tribal women, who have always been vulnerable to sexual violence by the police officers. It is not without reason that tribal women are also part of Maoist squads.

Notably, Maoists have helped in building health centres, schools and water tanks in the liberated zones, through volunteer labour to make tribal people self sustaining. Not

only that, they have helped tribal people to evolve their language, and stood in defence of their right to self determination. One can see the pragmatic reasons behind these "good deeds," as Maoists need recruits and forest cover to carry on their fight, but the fact that the government has created a vacuum by ignoring the needs of the tribals cannot be denied either. The Maoists have only captured the space created because of the apathy of the state.

The malnourishment and poverty among the tribal people proves that the Indian establishment has little interest in the impoverished community. Rather it is more inclined towards a development model that suits the rich who are eyeing to displace the tribals and expropriate the minerals to make huge profits. Ever since the extraction companies began to expand their operations in the tribal areas, the conflict has intensified.

From the tribal perspective, the paramilitary forces are being sent to these areas to force them to leave their land, under the guise of liberating forests from the left-wing extremists. For that the bodies of the tribal women are frequently used as a battlefield

by the soldiers. Custodial rapes are a common occurrence, and those who raise a voice of dissent either face death in staged shootouts, or tortures. Activists and journalists are discouraged from visiting the areas to obtain an independent assessment of the situation. In some instances, social justice activists have either been forced to leave, or have been slapped with charges under draconian laws after being branded as Maoist supporters. Blinded by nationalism, the mainstream which is too bothered by the deaths of the soldiers, needs to wake up and see how the Indian republic treats its own citizens. An audio clip by Maoist spokesman Vikalp, issued following the April 24 attack, needs to be contextualised. The clip said that the attack was in response to the sexual violence against tribal women. If the government does not want to listen to the Maoists, whom it expects to give up violence, then at least listen to people like Varsha Dongre, a female jail officer who had exposed the police for sexual abuse of tribal women. Dongre posted on Facebook that she has witnessed how young tribal women have been subjected to sexual violence by the soldiers.

The police officials see unmarried women as potential Maoist insurgents and squeeze their breasts to see if they are lactating. Instead of doing a follow-up on Dongre's evidence, the government suspended her from the job, citing rules that prevent officials from expressing personal opinions about government policies. However, the officers who have been using social media to intimidate social justice activists continue to enjoy

impunity.

This is not to suggest that the Maoists are one hundred percent right. A revolution cannot be achieved by killing a few soldiers who also come from poor families, but only with their support and the support of the masses. Nevertheless, the blame for this whole situation goes to the Indian leadership that remains indifferent towards the weaker section of society, which has no alternative but to fight back against repression.

Never forget that the tribal people have always been fighting for their rights, whether under British occupation, or the occupation of other rulers in the past. Even if the Maoists disappear completely, they will still fight, if not with the guns then with bows and arrows, for dignity and self respect.

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## Racism: white supremacist gangs and police forces

**T**he recent news of splits and internal disputes within the so-called “Soldiers of Odin” was great news to anti-racist movements in Canada. According to news reports, some Canadian affiliated groups of this Finnish-based white supremacist organization have quit, claiming that they do not support the anti-immigrant

positions of the official Soldiers of Odin. Apparently the split in Canada is largely between the Quebec chapters which are said to be fully behind the white supremacist agenda, that those in the rest of the country which want to take a somewhat different position.

These reports are somewhat puzzling, however, since by all appearances the British

Columbia members of this movement have not dropped their white supremacist outlooks. They are still patrolling the streets of Vancouver, Surrey and other cities, allegedly to “protect white people” against “violence” at the hands of dark-skinned “immigrants”. Clearly the disputes among the racists are based on other factors, but this remains



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obscure to outside observers. Perhaps more immediately relevant in the lives of people from racialized communities is the ongoing reality of racist police departments. A recent statement from Black Lives Matter Vancouver (BLM-V) speaks to this situation.

As the group says, on April 28 in Surrey, "two male police officers slammed a 16-year old Black girl to the ground and handcuffed her. The officers (one white, one South Asian) approached her while she was waiting for the bus, assuming she was someone else. When she told them they had the wrong person they threw her to the ground, handcuffed her, and one officer held her down with his knee in her back. Her response was one of absolute terror." After going through the girl's belongings to check her ID, the officers eventually realized she was not the person they were looking for. They left the traumatized teenager at the bus stop, rather than apologizing for assaulting her, or helping her to get home safely. BLMV says, "we need to disabuse ourselves of the notion that Canada is a multicultural haven of peace and equality. It is not. We need to recognize how deeply embedded racism is within Canadian culture."

While some people respond to such incidents by saying "At least it's not as bad as the US. At least it's not as bad as

Toronto," BLMV points out that any mistreatment of Black people by law enforcement is not acceptable.

"Black people are targeted, criminalized, and oppressed by policing institutions across North America. We remain over-policed and under-protected. We will not stand silent; we demand accountability," says the group, which stresses that this was "not an isolated incident. Canada is an illegitimate state founded on white supremacy and the genocide of Indigenous peoples. Canada is actively continuing colonization. This shows up in how Black people and Indigenous people are surveilled, policed, and disproportionately incarcerated. Law enforcement is a necessary instrument of the prison-industrial complex that channels Black and Indigenous people into the prison system."

In fact, there is an alarming rise in the percentage of incarcerated Black people and Indigenous people in Canada. A 2013 report by Howard Sapers, former federal Correctional Investigator for Canada, points to a "troubling pattern". The report notes that as of 2013, 9.5% of federal inmates are Black (an increase of 80% since 2003/04), yet Black Canadians account for less than 3% of the total Canadian population.

Aboriginal people represent a staggering 23% of federal inmates yet comprise 4.3% of the total Canadian population. One-in-three women under federal sentence are Aboriginal.

The BLMV statement says that "this disturbing trend only continues when Black children are stereotyped, criminalized, assaulted and traumatized by Canadian law enforcement. This needs to stop. The two police officers should be investigated, charged, suspended without pay, and publicly named. The public has a right to know who these officers are. The investigation of police officers by other police officers is categorically biased and has proven inconsequential time and again."

In the meantime, the parents of the 16-year-old have sought legal counsel, and BLMV is contacting the Independent Investigations Office (IIO) and the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner (OPCC) about racial profiling and police accountability. This is an issue of deep concern to all who care about social justice and freedom from racial discrimination, whether at the hands of white supremacist gangs, or the police forces who are on the public payroll.

*Kimball Cariou is the Editor of People's Voice, a social justice activist, and a member of the Radical Desi Editorial Team.*

## Remembering Karl Marx

**T**his month marks the 199<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of a great revolutionary scholar whose ideas and theories changed the course of world history.

Karl Marx was born on May 5, 1818 in Trier, Germany, to well-to-do Jewish parents Heinrich Marx and Henrietta Pressburg. His father was a lawyer and known for his progressive views. Marx was twenty when he lost his father. His mother had to take

care of Marx and his other siblings.

Marx was impacted by the political events that influenced Germany when he was still in his teens. The French revolution of 1830 and the later uprising of weavers in Lyon had shaken all of Europe. He was also influenced by the environment at the gymnasium where he studied. Its headmaster was a known materialist and atheist and encouraged students to read

radical literature, because of which he was under constant surveillance.

In 1835, Marx went to the University of Bonn to study law. After spending a year at Bonn University, he went to the University of Berlin to pursue higher studies.

In 1836, he got engaged to his childhood friend Jenny Von Westphalen, who held similar views. They eventually got married and had seven children. Due to later



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hardships in their lives, only three survived.

It was in Berlin that Marx witnessed the exploitation of the poor and the working class. Apart from studying law, he concentrated on philosophy and history. He gradually started getting involved into political activism and developed critical thinking. He was very vocal in his criticism of regressive ideas.

In the early 1840s, he became the co-editor of a radical leftist newspaper when it was unthinkable to question the emperor and censorship rules were stringent in Prussia. This was the beginning of Marx's

long march to revolution. He fearlessly denounced reactionary and repressive policies of the government. As anticipated, the paper was banned in 1843 for its anti-establishment stance.

Marx was forced to move to Paris with Jenny. In the much more liberal and democratic environment of Paris his commitment towards activism and social justice grew stronger. He came in contact with other revolutionaries who were associated with the League of the Just. Paris was a centre of radical activism and provided refuge to many communities that were forced to escape repressive regimes

around the world. Marx became involved in grassroots level movements of immigrants and workers fighting for equal rights. He openly participated in public demonstrations and protest rallies. He began advocating for economic and political liberation of the workers and opposed private ownership. He believed that only a classless society can bring an end to poverty.

Unfortunately, the political situation began changing in Paris and Marx came into the eyes of French authorities. Under pressure from the Prussians, the French officials forced him to leave Paris.



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In 1845, Marx had to move to Belgium. But his problemse did not end there. Both Marx and Jenny were arrested and harassed by the police in Belgium, and were released following protests by the activists.

He was once again forced to return to France in 1848 after a change in the regime because of an uprising. But it wasn't long before they were forced to move to London, in 1849 when the situation changed and counter-revolutionaries gained an upper hand.

Marx spent the major part of his political life in London. During the first years of his stay in the city he had to go through financial difficulties. The family had to settle in a cheap locality of Soho, a rundown community. They mainly survived either on money inherited from their families or at times had to sell their personal belongings to meet expenses and debts. In spite of all these difficulties, Marx began publishing a radical newspaper.

In the meantime, Marx's growing association with Friedrich Engels became a turning point in his life. The two men jointly worked on organizing workers and the communist movement. Marx was an authority on philosophy, while Engels had a grasp of political economy. The chemistry between the

two friends culminated in the publication of the Communist Manifesto in 1848.

Engels was instrumental in getting Marx's work published. Marx mainly wrote in German, but thanks to Engels, his writings were translated in English. His entire work laid the foundation of the communist philosophy that inspired the Bolshevik revolution of Russia and the Chinese revolution in the later years.

Engels, who came from a rich family, also supported Marx financially.

In 1851, Marx got an opportunity to write for the *New York Daily Tribune*. By this time, he was following both domestic politics of Britain and the international situation. His notes on the first mutiny in India against the British occupation in 1857 became an important historical document. He recognized the uprising as the first war of independence. Even though London became his refuge, he never compromised on his principles and consistently spoke against British colonialism. He openly supported the Irish people in their fight against British occupation.

Marx actively participated in the struggles of the working class and anti-war movement. Not only was he critical of the chauvinism and bigotry used by the ruling classes to divide

people in the name of patriotism, he was equally critical of anarchism. He believed in workers' unity and was instrumental in building international workers' solidarity.

Jenny also stood behind him like a rock in the face of these challenges. She cooperated with Marx in giving shelter to revolutionaries at their home even during the worst circumstances.

After suffering the loss of two children mainly because of penury, a major shock came to his life when Jenny passed away in 1881. This affected his health. In January 1883, he lost his daughter. Two months later Marx died on March 14.

Though Marx is not among us, his ideas for a just society are still relevant as long as the exploitation of the workers and poor continue across the world, and the occupation of colonised lands does not end. It is necessary for not just the self-proclaimed Marxists, but also the humanists, to keep his legacy alive and stand up against ongoing imperialist wars and growing bigotry and racism across the world. Particularly, journalists in the contemporary world need to learn from the life and contributions of this great thinker who never gave up his passion for writing for people without caring about money or pleasing the power. **-RDNB**



## Who We Are

If anyone asks who we are  
Tell him or her our name is Rebel  
Our duty is to end the tyranny  
Our profession is to launch revolution  
That is our namaz,

This is our sandhya  
Our puja,  
Our worship  
This is our religion  
Our work  
This is our only Khuda,  
Our only Rama.

*Kartar Singh Sarabha was one of the leaders of the Ghadar Party, formed to launch an armed rebellion against the British occupation of India in 1913. The Ghadar activists wanted to liberate India from foreign rule and establish an egalitarian and secular republic. This poem has been reproduced here to mark the birth anniversary of Sarabha that falls on May 24.*





