

**Save Democracy !
Against the Politics of Terror
and Violence in West Bengal !**

CPI(M) PUBLICATION

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The West Bengal panchayat elections have seen the biggest attack on democracy and the democratic rights of the people. The violence and terror against all political opponents of the ruling TMC brings back memories of the 1972 rigged elections in West Bengal. Between June 3 and July 25, 24 CPI(M) cadres or supporters have been killed. But the violence is not restricted to the CPI(M) alone.

In the run up to the elections and through the entire election process no one who opposed the TMC was spared, from supporters and leaders of the Left Front parties, to the Congress, to the SUCI an ally of the TMC and even TMC supporters and voters and those from that party who stood as independents against the official candidate due to local rivalries. Scores were injured, hundreds of houses were torched, women in particular were targeted by the gangs of the ruling party, hundreds of false cases were foisted and voters intimidated.

The results of the panchayat elections cannot be taken as an accurate assessment of the people's will as there was large-scale violence, terror and rigging throughout the election process which extended even to the counting of votes. In several places, when it was seen that opposition parties or independents were leading, the TMC gangs, grabbed the ballot papers, tore them, drove out the other counting agents and even seats declared as won by its opponents were forcibly countermanded and TMC candidates declared elected.

The Left front Government, between 1977 and 2008, had conducted three tier panchayat elections seven times which were mostly peaceful. During those days, there was an air of festivity during elections, particularly among the poorer sections. In the last elections, when the Left Front Government was in power, the TMC won a majority of the gram panchayats pointing to the free and fair nature of the process. For the last thirty five

years, the panchayats in West Bengal have functioned as the platform for the involvement of the poorer sections, the socially oppressed, SCs, STs and women in decision making processes. Bengal has a high number of elected Muslim functionaries at all levels of the panchayat system. In the years of the Left front Government, the number of elected candidates of the SC/ST sections, and women were more than the seats reserved for them showing the change in the situation of these sections under Left Front rule. The decentralization of power to panchayats strengthened democracy and combined with the most successful land reform programme of the Left front Government, created a shift in favour of the poor and hitherto marginalized sections in rural Bengal. It was a unique process of all round social, economic and political empowerment of the people.

It is precisely to reverse the gains made by the poorer classes in rural Bengal, that the panchayat system has been a target of the TMC Government. Right from its initial days in power it has tried to erode and destroy the panchayat system by allowing bureaucrats a free hand in running the panchayats in place of the elected representatives. The aim is also to use absolute control of the panchayats to reverse the land reforms. There is an open campaign by the TMC at the village level that the former land owners will get their land back if TMC controls the panchayats. Sections of the neo-rich are trying to regain control over wealth and resources in rural Bengal.

Thus the terror and attack on democracy, though widespread in character, also has a class angle, the aim being the reversal of the pro-poor development policies and gains of the poor people under the Left Front government.

This booklet takes a look at the different aspects of the attack on democracy in Bengal in the context of the panchayat elections. In fact the attacks go beyond Party politics, impacting on every aspect of life in Bengal affecting the security of ordinary people and particularly women. The facts, figures and examples given in this booklet underline the urgent necessity for all those committed to democracy to come together to Save Democracy in West Bengal, against the politics of violence and terror.

Attack on Institutions

The TMC and its leader showed their contempt for every independent institution, whether it is the State Election Commission, the Human Rights Commission or even the High Court or the Supreme Court.

The Trinamool Government led by Chief Minister Mamata Bannerjee targeted the State Election Commission which had its own assessment of the situation. Given the general deterioration in the law and order situation in Bengal, the State Election Commission (SEC) headed by a senior lady officer, Mira Pande, held that the election should be conducted in five phases so that there would be adequate number of security forces available for deployment. But the State Government made an arbitrary and unilateral announcement that the elections would be held in two phases, that too in clearly biased distribution of districts. Even the last elections in 2008 had been held in three phases. The SEC was forced to go to court.

It is unprecedented in West Bengal that the courts have to intervene to ensure that the elections are held. Ultimately it was only the intervention of the Supreme Court that forced the Government to hold elections in five phases. However the Chief Minister herself started a tirade against the SEC and in particular against the State Election Commissioner accusing her of “being biased and she was given an extension by the CPI(M) and is therefore supporting them.” She even went on to say that if the TMC had a bigger majority in the Assembly she would have removed the Commissioner immediately. She also blamed her with a communal tone for being responsible for holding elections during the period of Ramzan. In fact the Supreme Court directly held the State Government responsible for the delay and the holding of the polls during Ramzan saying if the elections had been held earlier this situation would not have arisen. The Supreme Court criticized the TMC Government for its “dilly dallying” stand on the elections.

The TMC refused to attend an all Party meeting convened by the Commissioner for the timing of the elections. Mamata Bannerjee said “Why should we attend the meeting...you do not listen to us...” In fact, it was the dogged refusal of the State Government to accept the

autonomous role of the Election Commission that the uncertainty regarding the elections was created. But once the Chief Minister made such a statement other leaders had a field day attacking the SEC.

Mamata Bannerjee: “We will give a fitting reply for holding polls during Ramzan.”

Shubendu Adhikari (TMC MP) “An ant grows wings before it dies... we know what medicine to give for what ailment.”

Madan Mitra (Minister): “Mira Pande babu will have to hide her face after the elections.....you will have to go out of the country.”

Mukul Roy (Former Union Minister and TMC MP): “Whatever incidents have occurred it is because of the Election Commission”.

The Supreme Court mandated the use of central forces to ensure people could freely exercise their right to vote. However the State Government refused to implement the Supreme Court guidelines. It is the responsibility of the State Government to properly deploy the central forces.. Instead the State Government in most districts and particularly where the plan was to rig and intimidate voters, posted the central forces at the district headquarters, where they remained idle while the vote-loot gangs of the TMC operated with impunity. In the first phase of the elections according to a press report “The central forces were not deployed in the 10,038 booths at all..... They were primarily engaged in manning roads, scanning forests and occasionally accompanying observers to booths.” (The Telegraph)

Thus the Government openly defied the mandate of the Supreme Court.

The Election Commission’s orders against the use of bike gangs came after numerous complaints that these gangs were threatening candidates, voters and opponents of the ruling party. They were the terror squads for ensuring no opposition to the TMC. The High Court upheld the order of the Election Commission. However it was openly challenged by the TMC.

Subrata Mukherjee (Panchayat Minister): “The High Court orders will also be followed, the bike gangs will also remain and the elections will also be held.”

Madan Mitra (Minister): “No bike bahini? But we can have scooter bahinis or auto bahinis.”

In fact the TMC bike bahinis were out in a large number of areas intimidating the voters with the full patronage of the Government, the TMC and a section of the State police.

State-Sponsored Three Phase Attack on Democracy

It is the Government led by Mamata Banerjee and the use of State machinery which has sponsored the attack on democracy. Once the State Government found that it could not avoid holding the elections after the Supreme Court and High Court mandates, it put into operation a State sponsored three phase plan backed by the administration and the police. It is also well known that Left front supporters and workers have faced violence, terror, threats and intimidation intensified since the TMC formed the Government in West Bengal. Prior to the elections, over 100 comrades of the Party and the Left were martyred. Among them were three women, eight adivasis and 33 Muslims. The effort is to terrorise these sections and compel them to abandon the Red Flag.

In this background the panchayat elections saw a planned attack on the Left and all opponents so as to ensure the unchallenged supremacy of the TMC in the panchayats. On June 17th a Left Front delegation met the Governor and gave him a list of as many as 1500 such incidents.

In the first phase, candidates were intimidated and not allowed to file their nominations.

In one case in North 24 Parganas a group of TMC men went to a candidate’s house and handed over a white saree usually worn by widows in Bengal and told her, "unless you get your husband to withdraw, this is what you will wear".

In East Midnapore, the husband of a woman candidate was accosted in his office by a TMC gang. They told him "if your wife does not withdraw we will not only abduct her but will also kidnap your son. Prepare to live alone".

In Bengal there are around 58,000 seats in the three tiers of panchayat, panchayat samity and zila parishad. In 6191 seats, the TMC won unopposed. In 15 zila parishad seats, of which 10 were in Hooghly, the TMC prevented nominations of any other candidate and therefore “won” unopposed. Candidates of the opposition were threatened and forced not to stand. Some cases of kidnapping of candidates were also reported. Bike bahinis went around villages threatening people not to contest. In many areas processions taken out by candidates were attacked.

In Metagram in Birbhum district, houses of CPI(M) workers were burnt down as they had gone to file the nomination of a CPI(M) candidate. A well known and highly respected social worker of the area, Bhaskar Mazumdar, gave shelter to some of the CPI(M) activists. The bike bahinis came and shot him dead.

At the BDO offices gangs of TMC hoodlums would stand “guard” at the office and openly threaten those coming to file nominations. In some cases the candidates' papers were snatched away. The State Election Commission taking cognizance of such attacks ruled that candidates could file nominations at the SDO office. But even there incidents took place. In some areas in Jangal Mahal in West Midnapore, where Maoists were given TMC tickets, they threatened other candidates and prevented them from filing nominations

Arabul Islam, the notorious TMC leader in Bhangar, South 24 Parganas, who was jailed for an attack on CPI(M) leaders, filed nomination in the Panchayat Samiti. His gangs threatened and forced every single opposition candidate against him to withdraw. Those who initially refused to withdraw were chased away from their villages, and even houses of their relatives were attacked. Arabul won ‘unopposed’.
The Case of Kamduni: One of these areas where the bike bahinis

were successful was in a place called Kamduni in Barasat in North 24 Parganas. Criminals have had a field day in this area with illegal liquor dens and anti-socials, where a series of cases of sexual harassment of women were reported but the police had not taken any action.

Here except for one seat the TMC “won” all the panchayat seats unopposed. Then, in a terrible incident a college going student was brutally gangraped and murdered in broad daylight. After ten days the Chief Minister visited the family. She was met by women who were demanding punishment for the guilty. An anguished young woman, a close friend of the victim persisted with questions to the Chief Minister. The Chief Minister shouted at her and the women “Shut up. I know you are all CPI(M) or Maoists.”

This is an example of the impact on ordinary citizens of the use of criminals by TMC.

In the second phase, bike gangs who went door to door to force withdrawal of nominations threatened those who had filed their nominations. At the same time candidates were not allowed to campaign in many districts. In this phase particularly, women were special targets. West Bengal has 50 per cent reservation for women in panchayat elections on the basis of the law passed by the Left front Government. Many women candidates faced violence.

Manoyara Bibi was a candidate of the CPI(M). Of the 21 seats in the Bodra panchayat, in South 24 Parganas, where she lives, 11 seats were “won” by the TMC uncontested. Manoyara however was determined to contest. She somehow managed to file her nomination. The bike bahinis came to her house to threaten her. They kept a 24 hour surveillance of the village Kanchdia where she lives, to ensure that she could not campaign. Her husband is unemployed, her son is an embroiderer, but neither could go out of the house to look for work. This courageous woman then decided to go to the High Court. Her petition described her ordeal and prayed that she should be allowed to campaign and that she be given protection against the bike bahinis. In response the Calcutta High Court not

only ordered protection but endorsed the ban on bike bahinis given by the Election Commission.

But backed by the administration and their leader, the TMC did not let her campaign. She said “They have threatened to rip my clothes off and rape me. I have not been allowed to campaign for a single day.”

In area after area candidates and their family members were attacked. Houses were razed to the ground. For example houses of Left supporters were ransacked in Amdanga block where almost all seats were “uncontested”. In many areas candidates could not campaign. It is to the credit of the Left front that in spite of this unprecedented attack, the workers and supporters stood their ground in many places and refused to accept the dictates of the TMC hoodlums.

In Burdwan district which saw the most violent incidents against the Left Front there are some examples of great courage. In Raina a couple Aminul and Samiran Begum were both candidates of the Left front. After they filed their nomination, the TMC gangs came and threatened them and hounded them out of their home. Their son who was to give his exams pleaded that he be allowed to take his books. But the goons ransacked the house and locked the door. Yet the couple refused to withdraw their nomination.

In some areas, the violent inter party rivalry within the TMC was also a factor in intimidating the voters and vitiating the entire campaign. In some cases where the TMC workers killed each other, the police at the behest of a biased administration blamed the CPI(M) or other opponents in the area and foisted false cases on them. In Bhangar, South 24 Parganas, a CPI(M) district secretariat member and two candidates were arrested in a false case of murder just before the elections despite the family members of the killed person telling the media that they had no allegations against the CPI(M).

Hundreds of political workers were implicated in false cases like these and were unable to participate in the campaign.

In areas where the Congress is strong they also faced the terror tactics of the TMC. Even a Union Minister Abu Hasan Khan Choudhury alleged that he was attacked when he was campaigning in Malda.

A Congress MLA in Howrah Asit Mitra was badly beaten up with iron rods and had to be hospitalized. He had gone to an area where the houses of Congress supporters and CPI(M) supporters had been burnt. He was attacked for daring to visit the area.

Rabiul Mondol is a daily worker in Maniktola, a TMC “won” village. He had attended a Congress rally and stood up and clapped when the speech was on. This was noted by the TMC gangs who were keeping a watch on the meeting. Soon after the meeting he was attacked with iron rods and suffered fractures. Why? Because he had dared to applaud a Congress leader’s speech.

Even allies of the TMC like the SUCI were not spared.

A woman party candidate of SUCI, an anganwadi helper, was being threatened by the TMC after she had filed her nomination for district panchayat seat in Pataspur in East Midnapur district. After the polling was over, her house was attacked, looted and damaged by the TMC anti-socials, her husband and her son, an engineering student were brutally beaten and he suffered fractures. Because she dared to report the matter to the police the TMC “punished” her. She was first tied to a tree and then mercilessly beaten, disrobed and then thrown in a nearby field. Villagers did not dare to go near her. Later she had to be hospitalized with multiple injuries and is in trauma.

In this second phase of the polls, there was hardly any district where there were no violent attacks on opposing candidates. These attacks were planned, deliberate and occurred under the patronage of the TMC leadership. Perhaps never before in the history of parliamentary democracy, except in cases of communal campaigning, have such provocative and hate filled speeches been made by top leaders inciting and encouraging violence against opponents.

It was led by Mamata Bannerjee who said she “will teach a lesson” to

those opposing her. Her Ministers and MPs followed suit with the most outrageous statements. But no action was taken against any of them.

Tapas Pal M.P: CPI(M) is a party of rapists. Wherever you see them, throw them on the ground and beat them, attack them.

Anubrata Mandal: TMC District President Birbhum: If any independent candidates are there opposing us, burn their houses and attack them. If the police comes bomb the police.

Manurul Islam Birbhum MLA: It will not take even a minute for me to behead you (in a public speech referring to a Congress leader).

In the third phase of the attack on democracy on the day of voting in all five phases there was widespread rigging, capture of booths, violence in areas where Left Front was mobilizing its supporters for votes. Thousands of complaints have been given to the State Election Commission. According to the reports from different areas the number of booths captured in the different districts in the State is 4470 (see annexure). Over and above the figures given in the annexure district wise, in a substantial number of booths there was booth capture for a period during the voting, a “partial capture.”

In some cases voters were not allowed to enter the booths or after two or three hours of polling the Left parties agents were driven out from the polling station and TMC people stamped the ballots.

In many booths, polling agents of the CPI(M) and the Left Front parties were driven out after which stamping of ballot papers took place. In fact all opponents of the ruling party faced a similar situation in many areas. In many areas from the early morning people were not allowed to leave their homes in the villages to go to the polling booths to vote. Hundreds of Left Front supporters and workers of other opposition parties were injured in attacks when they attempted to go for polling. Many of them have suffered serious injuries and have been hospitalized. Even some candidates to the three tier Zilla Parishad, Panchayat Samiti and Gram Panchayat were not allowed to vote in many places. Even two Members of Parliament, Mahendra Roy in Jalpaiguri district and

Nripen Roy in Coochbehar district were prevented from voting. Candidates were attacked.

Manwara Bibi was the CPI(M) candidate from Madhudanga village under Jamuria police station in Burdwan district. Her husband Sheikh Shadat was a contract worker in a private open cast mine. After she filed her nomination, the TMC goondas threatened her and said if you do not withdraw we will kill your husband. Supported by her village, consisting of SC families belonging to the Bauri community, she refused to withdraw. She and her family, were driven out of her house. They took shelter outside and tried to campaign. On the day of polling, her husband was in the voting area when he was threatened by the TMC not to vote and not to talk to any voters. Even as he protested they hurled a bomb straight at him, which hit him in the stomach. He died in the hospital. In the village all the men have fled. False cases have been filed against them. It is the Bauri women who are looking after Manwara and her children. When the results were declared in spite of all odds, Manwara Bibi won the elections.

The state police which was stationed at the polling booths refused to intervene when attacks on workers and voters of the Left Front took place. In many instances, the police lathicharged or arrested those who were resisting the attacks or asserted their right to vote. In a planned manner, the central police forces were not deployed in many of the hypersensitive and sensitive booths. Where they were deployed they did not intervene, being guided by a State police force which itself was acting under political orders.

A CPI candidate's polling agent, Golakpati Barui was kidnapped by the TMC who were rigging the booth where he was posted in Salempur gram panchayat. When his wife Sudipta heard the news she rushed to the police who refused to act. She then mobilized 20 women of her village who confronted the police. They were lathicharged, four of the women were arrested. But since the news got around, the TMC was forced to release her husband. Her act of courage saved him.

Despite the orders of the State Election Commission and the High Court directive, motorcycle gangs were not stopped and were allowed to move freely to terrorise the opposition and the voters. Even on the day of polling these bike gangs threatened people from going to polling booths.

But even after the polling is over the gangs are roaming around the areas taking revenge on those who they believe defied their dictates. Post poll violence is continuing in many districts in different forms.

In Rampur village, in Galsi, Burdwan, the villagers belonging to SC communities and also the Gwala community prevented TMC gangs from rigging the elections in a particular booth. A recount was ordered in which the villagers participated. The TMC was furious and wanted to take revenge. They went to the village breaking open doors and windows, smashing everything in sight. 150 families fled the village. The village has many cowsheds. In a most bizarre and cruel act, the TMC refused to allow the cows to be fed or even be given a drop of water for three or four days. When a young boy went to give them water the TMC got him arrested.

Since a large number of candidates of the Left parties consisted of Scheduled tribes, Scheduled castes, Muslims and among these sections a substantial number of women, the attack by the TMC is also an attack on the socially oppressed sections. These sections braved the terror and resisted the onslaught on democracy. In particular the resistance by the women from the poorer sections is noteworthy.

At no time has such a brazen attack and perversion of the democratic process of elections taken place in West Bengal or in the entire country.

The results of such a rigged election are bound to be distorted.

Criminalisation of Politics

Earlier the State had witnessed an unprecedented attack on opposition MLAs within the Assembly, leading to serious injuries. The Speaker refused to take any action. Recently, the court has ordered that in the

event of the Speaker's refusal, the injured MLA has every right to directly file a complaint against those who attacked him.

Any questioning of the Chief Minister is not allowed either inside the Assembly or outside. Everyone who does so is branded a Maoist or a CPI(M) worker. Only recently the State Human Rights Commission has ordered the Government to pay compensation to a farmer who had dared to ask the Chief Minister in a public meeting as to why prices of fertilisers were increasing. He was arrested on the Chief Minister's instructions. The Commission has declared that he was wrongly branded a Maoist and that he should be compensated. Earlier the case of the Jadavpur Professor who was wrongly arrested because he had forwarded a cartoon of the CM was also taken up by the Human Rights Commission and compensation decreed, but the Government has refused to implement the order.

The attack on democracy is seen equally in educational institutions where professors and teachers who do not accept the writ of the TMC goons are physically assaulted and humiliated. Universities and colleges are witnessing utter anarchy. The audacity of TMC activists has reached such a level where a police official was attacked by them in Harirampur in South Dinajpur and police was not allowed to act, in a criminal case, leading to protests by policemen.

The experience of the panchayat elections has implications far beyond the results. It shows that widespread criminalisation of politics in West Bengal is affecting all aspects of life in the state. West Bengal which used to be one of the safest states for women, is now the worst. On the streets of Kolkata, or in the districts the miscreants who provided the muscle power for the TMCs assault on democracy are harassing women, extorting money from shopkeepers, from small enterprises because they know the police will not touch them as they have the patronage of the Chief Minister herself.

Bengal heads the list of States that have seen huge increase in crimes. According to the National Crime Records Bureau report, there has been a 41.6 per cent increase in crimes in Bengal in the last two years, which is the highest in the whole country. West Bengal also

topped the list in crimes against women.

If West Bengal is becoming the crime centre it is because of the political patronage given to these criminals. If they believe that it is "their Government" and no one can touch them because the TMC depends on them in many areas, the impact of this brand of politics affects all citizens regardless of their political affiliations, class, caste or religion.

The attack on democracy and suppression of critical voices also permits the proliferation of scoundrels, blackmarketeers and cheats who feel they can more easily loot the people. The shameful Sharada chit fund scam in which thousands of crores of savings of poor people across Bengal were looted was precisely because the Government and ruling party headed by Mamata Bannerjee and her Party supported and promoted chit funds companies. Even today the Government has refused a CBI inquiry even though Governments of other States where Sharda operated like Assam, Tripura and Orissa proposed such an enquiry even though the numbers of the affected are much less. Why is it refusing? It is because the ruling party leaders are involved in the biggest ever financial scam in the state.

The attack on democracy affects all citizens. It is an issue fundamental to the interests of the people and the State.

The people of West Bengal are building up resistance on the slogan of "Save democracy, Put an end to the Politics of Terror and Violence".

Let us add strength and solidarity to that effort.

It affects all of us.

Annexure – I

Phases of Panchayat Elections (2013) in West Bengal

Phase	District	No. of Booths
I	Paschim Medinipur	750
	Purulia	0
	Bankura	34
II	Hooghly	731
	Purba Medinipur	241
	Bardhaman	909
III	North 24 Parganas	311
	South 24 Parganas	429
	Howrah	291
IV	Malda	99
	Murshidabad	19
	Nadia	97
	Birbhum	140
V	Coochbehar	400
	Jalpaiguri	0
	Uttar Dinajpur	0
	Dakshin Dinajpur	19
	Total	4470

N.B.: Over and above the figure of captured booths mentioned in the list, a good number of booths are partially captured.

In some cases, voters were not allowed to enter the booth or after two/ three hours of polling the Left parties' polling agents were driven out from polling station and TMC people stamped on the ballot paper indiscriminately.

In certain centres, after complaint was lodged with the State Election Commission or District Panchayat Election Officer, police intervention took place and polling resumed at the polling Centre.

Annexure – II

List of Left Front Workers Killed since June 3 to July 25, 2013

Sl. No	Date	Name of Martyr	District	Party
1.	3-Jun-13	Golam Mostafa	Murshidabad	CPI(M)
2.	7-Jun-13	Subhas Mondal (55)	Dakshin 24 Pargana	CPI(M)
3.	9-Jun-13	Dilip Sarkar	Bardhaman	CPI(M)
4.	9-Jun-13	Madan Saren (48)	Bardhaman	CPI(M)
5.	13-Jun-13	Kalimuddin Sarkar	Maldaha	CPI(M)
6.	14-Jun-13	Bhaskar Majumder (53)	Birbhum	CPI(M)
7.	21-Jun-13	Debsaran Ghosh (44)	Murshidabad	CPI(M)
8.	21-Jun-13	Amar Ghosh (44)	Murshidabad	CPI(M)
9.	25-Jun-13	Ramjiban Khamri (65)	Paschim Medinipur	CPI(M)
10.	28-Jun-13	Akbar Ali (23)	Maldaha	CPI(M)
11.	1-Jul-13	Ankhiranjan Mondal	Uttar 24 Pgs.	CPI(M)
12.	3-Jul-13	Siatul Sardar (37)	Murshidabad	CPI(M)
13.	4-Jul-13	Md Eklakh	Hooghly	CPI(M)
14.	13-Jul-13	Naosad Sekh (33)	Murshidabad	CPI(M)
15.	15-Jul-13	Sk. Hasmat (40)	Bardhaman	CPI(M)
16.	19-Jul-13	Motherbox Malllick	Uttar 24 Pgs.	CPI(M)
17.	22-Jul-13	Khabiruddin Sekh	Nadia	CPI(M)
18.	22-Jul-13	Ashim Bagdi (25)	Birbhum	CPI(M)
19.	22-Jul-13	Jamir Sekh (40)	Birbhum	CPI(M)
20.	22-Jul-13	Kafiulla Sekh (45)	Birbhum	CPI(M)
21.	23-Jul-13	Billal Mondal (35)	Murshidabad	CPI(M)
22.	23-Jul-13	Fatik Sekh (36)	Murshidabad	CPI(M)
23.	24-Jul-13	Humaun Mir (32)	Birbhum	CPI(M)
24.	25-Jul-13	Ajiz Ahmed (60)	Uttar Dinajpur	CPI(M)

*“First they came for the communists, and I did not speak out—
because I was not a communist;*

*Then they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—
because I was not a socialist;*

*Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—
because I was not a trade unionist;*

*Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—
because I was not a Jew;*

*Then they came for me—
and there was no one left to speak out for me.”*

--Martin Niemöller

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