

NAXALBARI

Before and After

Reminiscences and Appraisal

Suniti Kumar Ghosh



Naxalbari: Before and After
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Sunit Kumar Ghosh

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Preface

Since my return home after having lived an underground life, I have been urged by friends to write on the Naxalbari movement and its impact. I could not comply with their request as there were other demands on my time. I was then far more interested in the investigations into the character of the Indian state, of its ruling classes and of the movement that culminated in the partition of India into two British dominions on the basis of religion. The causes of the tragic partition of Bengal and similar questions had prior claim on my time. I have now – quite at a late stage – undertaken to write on the movement that once rocked India.

We have every respect for our leaders like Comrades Charu Majumdar, Sushital Roychoudhuri, Shiv Kumar Mishra and Saroj Datta. We honour and shall continue to honour their memory as also the memory of all those who have made sacrifices for the cause of the people and the revolution.

But we are interested in the past not for its own sake. We want to learn from the past and to make it serve the present and the future. Our allegiance is not to individuals but to the cause – the cause of the liberation of the Indian people. So, our reverence for our leaders is not uncritical. No sentiment will blind us to the negative aspects of the Party's policies. We shall not gloss over the errors in their policies and deeds, their shortcomings and limitations; rather, we shall expose them fully without sparing anybody's sensibilities. We must 'learn from past mistakes to avoid future ones'. While criticising the erroneous policies of our leaders, we are making our own self-criticism. 'In the past', said Mao Tse Tung. "'Left" deviation arose because the people had no experience. Without experience it is hard to avoid mistakes. From inexperience to experience, one must go through a process.'

The AICCCR or the CPI (M-L) did not maintain any archives, an important source of history. The history of those days would have been better written if we had them. The Communist Party of China carried its load of archives from the south to the north-west during the historic long march of 12,500 kilometres,

but the AICCCR or the Party gave no importance to the maintenance of their archives. The valuable minutes of the meetings of the AICCCR and the Party, which could help reconstruct history, are mostly lost.

Naxalbari held out a promise – the promise of the liberation of our people from oppression and exploitation. That promise is yet to be fulfilled. We are sure that, however long and tortuous the path may be, revolution shall triumph at a date distant or near, and the promise will be redeemed.

This book is in two parts: 'India Before Naxalbari' and 'Naxalbari and After'.

Several friends have helped me in different ways. I am immensely grateful to them. My debt to them can never be repaid.

Readers will please note that some words inserted within a quote have been put within third brackets. And emphasis on words or sentences, when not otherwise mentioned, has been added by us.

October 31, 2008

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Abbreviations

- AICC – All India Congress Committee
AICCCR – All India Co-ordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries
AIE – *Aspects of India's Economy* (edited By Rajani Desai)
AITUC – All India Trade Union Congress
BS – *Business Standard*
CC – Central Committee
Comecon – Council of Mutual Economic Aid
Cominform – Communist Information Bureau
CPC – Communist Party of China
CPI – Communist Party of India
CPI(M) – Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CPI (M-L) – Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)
CPSU – Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CW – *Collected Works*
CWMG – *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*
EE – *Eastern Economist*
EPW – *Economic and Political Weekly*
ET – *Economic Times*
GoI – Government of India
IAR – *Indian Annual Register*
PB – Politburo
PRC – People's Republic of China
SW – *Selected Works*
SWJN – *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*
TOP – *Constitutional Relations between Britain and India: The Transfer of Power 1942-7*
USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Note: Roman numerals after a book indicate the number of its volume.

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Part I: India Before Naxalbari

1

The Indian State: An Independent Sovereign State or a Semi-colonial Client State

It is held as an axiomatic truth that India became an independent, sovereign state from August 15, 1947 when the British imperialists transferred power to Indian hands. Do facts bear out what is generally supposed to be true?

The winning of national freedom, genuine not sham – the overthrow of colonial rule – is a revolution, a complete transformation of the society that the colonisers built in the colonised country. Society undergoes a complete change from top to bottom. The national revolution and the democratic (or new democratic) revolution are separate but closely related. A colony cannot win genuine independence and accomplish a national revolution without making a new democratic revolution simultaneously. The democratic revolution – the agrarian revolution that abolishes feudalism – becomes a new democratic revolution in this age of imperialism, a revolution not led by the bourgeoisie but by the urban and rural proletariat. Franz Fanon, author of *The Wretched of the Earth*, rightly said: ‘...decolonization is always a violent phenomenon....To tell the truth, the proof of success lies in a whole social structure being changed from the bottom up.’¹

At the end of the World War II, India stood at the crossroads. One road led to genuine independence, the overthrow of colonial rule as well as its domestic props, transformation of Indian society, destruction of all the structural barriers – foreign and domestic – to her regeneration – all the barriers that were an obstacle to development. Genuine decolonisation meant that the old order of the colonial era would have to yield place to a new one – political, economic, social and military. The other road led to a formal

transfer of power to traditional Indian allies of imperialism, continued integration into the capitalist-imperialist system and revolving around metropolitan powers as a satellite, continued existence of the development-inhibiting structural barriers created by colonial rule and consequent 'development of underdevelopment'.

Whether 'decolonisation' in 1947 was genuine or a manoeuvre resorted to by British imperialism (and its Indian allies), a formal withdrawal to blunt the edge of the national liberation struggle – when it was impossible for it to continue its *direct* rule – depended on the relative strength of British imperialism and that of the anti-imperialist Indian people and on the outcome of the struggle between the two forces in the immediate post-war days. The Indians were not a homogeneous entity then, just as they had not been when Bengal and gradually different parts of India were enslaved by the British. Ronald Robinson rightly said: 'Nor without indigenous collaboration, when the time came for it, could Europeans have conquered and ruled their non-European empires. From the outset that rule was continuously resisted; just as continuously native mediation was needed to avert resistance or hold it down.... The financial sinew, the military and administrative muscle of imperialism was drawn through the mediation of indigenous elites from the invaded countries themselves.'²

To quote Mao Tsetung: '... the Western bourgeoisie created two categories of people in the East, a small minority, the flunkies of imperialism, and a majority which is opposed to imperialism and consists of the working class, the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie, the national bourgeoisie and the intellectuals coming from these classes.'³ Which classes in India were the flunkies of imperialism interested in preserving colonial rule – direct or indirect? That small minority consisted of the feudals – princes and big landlords – the comprador big bourgeoisie – as contrasted with the national bourgeoisie,⁴ and a privileged stratum of elite intellectuals, including big bureaucrats, imbued with the values of the alien rulers, full of faith in the goodness and progressive character of their rule and full of disdain for the toiling countrymen – the wretched of the earth.

At the end of World War II, British imperialism was beset with several contradictions – with US imperialism (on which it depended for its post-war reconstruction), international communism, national liberation struggles in colonies, its own armed forces who mutinied in some places to realise their demand for speedy demobilisation, etc. Of all the contradictions with which British imperialism was confronted, its contradiction with the Indian people was undoubtedly the principal one.

Two Forces at Work

In India there were two forces at work, besides the Raj, at the end of the war. When the war in Europe ended, Viceroy Wavell released the members of the

working committee of the Congress from prison and convened a conference at Simla in June–July 1945. As VP Menon wrote, the Congress came in for cooperation without any conditions.⁵ The Congress leaders were eager to join the Viceroy's Executive Council (which Wavell intended to reconstitute with representatives of Indian political parties) 'on the basis that they would whole-heartedly cooperate in supporting and carrying through the war against Japan to its victorious conclusion'. (The Congress leaders', including Gandhi's, faith in the creed of non-violence was remarkably flexible.) Nehru felt overjoyed and said: 'We feel we must succeed at Simla ...I am very hopeful.'⁶ But the Simla Conference foundered on the rock of the League's claim to nominate all Muslim members of the reconstituted Council.

Wavell wanted the Congress leaders to 'see to it that a peaceful atmosphere is preserved in the country'. Wavell was afraid of a post-war upheaval in the country. So was Gandhi.⁷ The Congress president Abul Kalam Azad wrote to the Viceroy:

'...the contacts established between the Congress and the Government had largely allayed past bitterness and marked the *beginning of a new chapter of confidence and goodwill*.'⁸

As we shall see, it was that surge of 'confidence and goodwill' for the British imperialists that continued to rise and yielded the transfer of power. Congress leaders had reasons to feel 'confidence and goodwill' for the British imperialists. Close cooperation between the Raj on the one hand and the Indian bourgeoisie and Congress leaders on the other had already begun. The Raj regularly invited discussions with Congress leaders on constitutional issues, the future administrative setup, 'a scheme of army reorganization' and other matters like education, industry and planning. In June 1944, Sir Ardeshir Dalal, a Tata director and an author of the Bombay Plan – lauded by Nehru – had been appointed a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council in charge of planning and development. During the war, the British Raj and the Indian big bourgeoisie were bound with close ties of collaboration, for instance, in the Eastern Group Supply Council as also on various official committees.

On the other hand, after the end of the war the people – workers, peasants, the youth, office employees, even sections of the Raj's regular armed forces and the police – did not share the Congress leaders' 'confidence and goodwill' for British imperialism and though not led and organised by any political party, rose throughout India to liberate themselves from imperialist fetters. Nehru appraised the revolutionary situation correctly and joined hands with the imperialists and tried everything to dissipate the revolutionary situation. Nehru said that India was on the 'Edge of a Volcano' and that 'We are sitting on the top of a Volcano'.⁹ PJ Griffiths, the leader of the European group in the Central

Legislative Assembly also said, 'India, in the opinion of many, was on the verge of revolution'.¹⁰

India on the 'Verge of a Revolution'

In the winter and summer months of 1945-6 India, as all sorts of reactionaries had feared, was on the 'edge of a volcano' – ready to erupt at any time. Almost immediately after the end of the war, on November 21-23, 1945, Calcutta saw the first outburst of the pent up fury of the people who had suffered incredibly under the fascist British Raj during the war. The immediate cause was the police firing on a procession of students demanding the release of the Indian National Army (INA) officers who were then on trial. A student and a youth became martyrs and several were wounded. This incident set Calcutta and the suburbs ablaze. The city was completely paralysed. Trains were stopped. Barricades were set up and there were street battles all over the place. All communal considerations were forgotten and the people fought the heavily armed forces of the Raj with primitive weapons. Police and military vehicles were burnt down – about 150 of them. According to official estimates, 33 persons including an American, were killed and 200 civilians, many policemen, 70 British and 37 American soldiers were wounded.¹¹ Entire Bengal was surcharged with bitter anti-imperialist feelings.

Describing the mood of the people, Bengal Governor Casey wrote: 'Both in North and South Calcutta, a feature of the disturbances ... was that the crowds when fired on largely stood their ground or at most only receded a little, to return again to the attack....'

'Throughout the forenoon and early afternoon of November 23, the Congress and some Communist propaganda cars toured the affected areas dissuading the students from further participation.'¹²

Viceroy Wavell rushed to Calcutta. On November 27, he informed the Secretary of State: 'Casey was impressed by the very strong anti-British feeling, behind the whole demonstration, and considered the whole situation still very explosive and dangerous.'

Significantly, Commander-in-Chief Auchinleck made a survey of the internal situation within India on November 24, the very next day after the uprising. The Viceroy agreed generally with the report. Auchinleck wrote:

'If the Indian Forces as a whole cease to be reliable, the British Armed Forces now available are not likely to be able to control the internal situation or to protect essential communications, nor would any piecemeal reinforcement of these forces be of much avail. To regain control of the situation and to restore essential communications within the country, nothing short of the organised campaign for the reconquest of India is likely to suffice.'¹³

The lesson of the November uprising was well learnt. On November 24 itself, Auchinleck met some representatives of provincial governments regarding the INA trials. In his letter to Wavell on the same day, Auchinleck wrote that the provincial representatives had agreed that 'the trials should be limited to those involving brutality and murder of such a nature that it could not be defended as an act committed in good faith by a combatant'. He further added: 'The evidence reaching us now increasingly goes to show that the general opinion in the Army ... is in favour of leniency.' On November 30 – within a week of the uprising – the Indian Government issued a press communiqué which stated:

'Until all investigations are complete, it is not possible to state the number who will be brought to trial but the total is unlikely to be as many as fifty and may be as few as twenty, and, as explained above, trials will be limited to those against whom brutality is alleged.'¹⁴

The charge of 'waging war against the king' was dropped and the sentences already passed were remitted.

It may be noted that in the meantime, the British had brought home as captives tens of thousands of captured INA officers and men and had begun to court-martial them. The original plan, which had received the 'gratified approval' of the Congress leaders¹⁵ had been to release some prisoners, sentence many others to imprisonment and execute 40 to 50 prisoners. As has been mentioned, the plan was changed almost immediately after the November uprising.

As stories of Subhas Bose and the INA, who had founded the provisional government of Free India in Southeast Asia and planted the flag of Indian freedom in Kohima spread, there was a wave of excitement from one end of the subcontinent to the other. As RP Dutt has said, the example of the INA and 'the subsequent trials of the INA leaders kindled to white heat the flame of militant patriotism and the conception of the armed conquest of power in place of the old non-violent struggle.'¹⁶ The most alarming thing to the British imperialists was the impact of the INA on the British Indian armed forces.¹⁷ Nehru wrote to Commander-in-Chief Claude Auchinleck: 'Within a few weeks the story of the INA had percolated to the remotest villages in India and everywhere there was admiration for them and apprehension as to their possible fate ... The widespread popular enthusiasm was surprising enough, but even more surprising was a similar reaction of a very large number of regular Indian army officers and men. Something had touched them deeply.'¹⁸

On November 26, 1946, Auchinleck wrote to Wavell that there was a growing feeling of sympathy [among the men of the British Indian armed forces] for the INA'.¹⁹ The loyalty of the British Indian armed forces was thoroughly shaken

by the INA; men in large numbers transferred their allegiance to their motherland.

Gandhi rushed to Calcutta immediately after the November uprising. In a series of interviews with Governor Casey, he assured Casey that '*our future long term relations would be good*', that he would do his utmost in bringing about a peaceful solution of India's constitutional problem, and that he was lulling the people into the belief that 'India was going to get her freedom outright' and asking them to 'work on that assumption and no other'.²⁰ The Congress Working Committee met in Calcutta and reiterated its faith in non-violence 'for the guidance of all concerned' and clarified that nonviolence 'does not include burning of public property, ...' and so on. Before and after the November upheaval, Nehru went on emphasising 'the necessity of maintaining a peaceful atmosphere...'. He told the people that the 'British are packing up' and that 'in the present day world the British empire has ceased to exist' and expatiated on 'the folly of disorder and violence'. He advised students not 'to take suddenly the reins of the nation in their own hands' and 'to leave political leadership to those ... qualified to lead'.²¹ On December 3, 1945, Nehru assured Sir Stafford Cripps, an important member of the British cabinet (and through him the entire British cabinet), that he was doing his 'utmost to avoid conflict and restrain the hotheads'.²² Sardar Patel advised the youth not to waste their energies in '*fruitless quarrels*'.

On January 27, 1946, Nehru wrote a long letter to Cripps, in which he stated: 'Elections have somewhat held the people in check but as soon as these are over, events of their own motion, will march swiftly.... What happened in Calcutta two months ago and what is happening in Bombay now are significant signs of the fires below the surface. A single spark lights them.' He also said that any delay on the part of the British to take the initiative 'might well lead to disastrous consequences'. He assured Cripps (and obviously the British cabinet) that the gulf between India and Britain, which 'has never been so wide', could perhaps 'be bridged even now with a great effort' and that he, Nehru, was working 'to that end'.²³

Ignoring the Congress leaders' sermons to uphold law and order and the creed of non-violence, Calcutta rose again on February 11-13, 1946. The occasion was a protest demonstration by students against the rigorous 7-year imprisonment of Abdul Rashid of the INA. The city's life came to a general halt because of the strike. For two days, mills and factories in Calcutta's suburbs remained closed, trains did not run, people fought bitter street battles with the armed police and army units riding armoured cars. A marked feature, like that in November, was the strong solidarity among Hindus and Muslims who together directed their attacks against Europeans. The upheaval surpassed the

November uprising. According to official estimates, 84 persons became martyrs and 300 were injured. As in November, the anti-imperialist wave in Calcutta and the suburbs sent ripples throughout Bengal. Bands of Congress, Muslim League and Communist volunteers moved along the streets of Calcutta and neighbouring areas jointly and helped in restoring order. On February 13, *Swadhinata*, the Bengali organ of the CPI, condemned indiscipline and disorder just as the Congress President was doing.

Waves of anti-imperialist struggle rose one after another in different parts of India – from north to south, from east to west – and lashed at the regime of the imperialists. The most spectacular and most significant among them was the uprising in Bombay which began on February 18, 1946. The ratings of the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) rose in revolt first in Bombay and then in Karachi, Calcutta and Madras. The rebel navymen, who had various grievances – bad food, racial discrimination, insults meted out by British officers and so on – were inspired by the deeds of Subhas Bose, and the example of the INA.²⁴

By February 22, 1946, the rebel sailors were in control of about 22 vessels in Bombay, including the flagship of the British Vice-Admiral. A total of 78 ships of the RIN, 20 shore establishments and 20,000 ratings were involved in the struggle. Over a thousand men in the Royal Indian Air Force camps in Bombay came out on a sympathy strike. When ordered, Indian soldiers refused to fire on the RIN ratings in Bombay as well as in Karachi. On February 21, the strike by the navymen developed into a pitched battle between them and British troops who had been called in as Indian soldiers refused to fire.²⁵ Bombay's workers and youth, irrespective of the community to which they belonged, stood by the heroic men of the navy, carried food to them, erected barricades and fought pitched battles with armed policemen and several British battalions equipped with armoured cars and tanks. On February 22, Bombay observed a general strike in the teeth of the opposition from big Congress and Muslim League leaders.

Ignoring the Congress and League leaders, the entire working class of Bombay came out at the call of the Naval Central Strike Committee, which was supported by the CPI. For two days there were pitched battles on the city's streets, in which, according to official estimates, there were about 1,500 casualties including more than 200 dead.

'The British tanks could clear the streets', wrote BC Dutt, one of the leaders of the revolt, 'only after hundreds had been shot down. This was the first time in the turbulent history of India's freedom movement that the rulers were forced to use tanks to battle with unarmed and leaderless people.... February 21 had been the ratings' day. February 22 belonged to the workers of Bombay'.²⁶

In his 'Foreword' to Dutt's book, S Natarajan wrote: 'What was impressive among the ratings was their complete freedom from communal or sectarian

prejudices and their staunch loyalty to each other.²⁷ To quote Dutt, 'The RIN mutiny was the one conspiracy against the crown in which there was no king's witness. They tried their best. They drew blank.'²⁸

Besides Bombay, Karachi was the scene of actual fighting between navymen and British soldiers. Gurkha soldiers refused to obey orders to fire on the *Hindustan*, an old sloop, which put up a brave fight. The Gurkha soldiers were then replaced by British soldiers.

Not only did the Indian army units refuse to obey orders to fight the navymen, they went on strike in several places in sympathy with the rebel navymen. We have noted that one thousand men of the Indian Air Force went on sympathy strike in Bombay. So did the men of the Air Force in Poona, Calcutta, Madras and Ambala. To quote Dutt, 'An RIAF squadron, which had been ordered to proceed to Bombay, was grounded at Jodhpur; every aircraft had mysteriously developed engine trouble.'²⁹ Hallett, then Governor of the UP, informed Wavell on November 19, 1945 that soldiers of the Air Force stationed in Allahabad, Barruauli and Cawnpore had sent their contributions to the INA Defence Fund.³⁰ The Indian Air Force stationed in Calcutta opposed the court martial of the INA men. It sent its subscription to the INA Defence fund with the words: 'for the defence of the brave and patriotic sons of India.'³¹ Penderel Moon noted: 'There was also unrest at this time in the RIAF and in some of the technical units of the Indian Army.'³² Not only was there unrest in some technical units of the army but army units, as pointed out before, disobeyed orders in Bombay and Karachi. In the Jubbulpur cantonment, soldiers staged a revolt in March 1946 and in Dehra Dun, Gurkha soldiers went on strike. In some places, the police also rose in revolt. In March 1946, the police in Allahabad and Delhi went on a hungerstrike. In April, 10,000 policemen struck work. In September, the military police went on strike in Patna and Begusarai. There was a widespread strike by policemen in Bihar in March 1947. The wall sedulously erected by the British Raj to segregate the armed forces from the people crumbled. At no time since the First War of Indian Independence in 1857-8 had the regular armed forces come out to defend the cause of freedom as they did now.

The brave men of the navy refused to be cowed by any threat - not even the threat of Admiral Godfrey (who had flown in bombers) to sink the navy. They appealed to political parties to lead them, promised to hand over to them the navy which they had renamed the Indian National Navy. But no political party, not even the CPI, responded to their appeal though they did have access to the rebel men of the navy.

Jinnah's appeal to them, especially the Muslims among them, to surrender came in the early hours of February 23 when their representatives were meeting to decide their future course of action. Dutt wrote: '... the overwhelming majority

were for a fight to death and not for surrender.'³³ The Naval Central Strike Committee ultimately took the decision to surrender, stating that they were surrendering not to the British Raj but to the Congress and the League. In their last message to the people, they said: 'For the first time the blood of the men in the services and the people flowed together in a common cause. We in the services will never forget this. We also know that you, our brothers and sisters, will never forget. Long live our great people. Jai Hind.'³⁴

After the surrender the manhunt began. More than 2000 rebels were arrested and kept in detention camps; about 500 were sentenced to prison terms to serve as common criminals. The top Congress leaders, who had given the pledge that 'no disciplinary action' would be taken, did little to keep their pledge.³⁵

What role did the Congress leaders play during the historic naval revolt? Sardar Patel, Abul Kalam Azad, SK Patil (secretary of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee and, later minister of the central government), Jinnah and Chundrigar of the Muslim League openly opposed the call for a strike on February 22, issued by the Naval Central Strike Committee and advised the navymen to surrender to the British. Patil had secret confabulations with the Bombay governor and the Congress and the League placed 'volunteers' at the service of the Raj to 'assist the police' and British army units to fight the people.³⁶ Colville wrote to Wavell that on February 22, he 'saw several of these volunteers... and they did useful though limited work.'³⁷

Bombay observed a successful general strike in the teeth of bitter opposition of the Congress and the League leaders. Workers and students fought pitched battles in the streets with British army units and the armed police, who were assisted by Congress and League volunteers.

At a mass meeting held in Bombay with the permission of the Bombay government on February 26, Nehru and Patel strongly condemned 'the mass violence in Bombay', i.e., the resistance of the navymen and workers who had dared to raise the banner of anti-imperialist revolt. Addressing the press next day, Nehru thundered:

'The RIN Central Strike Committee had no business to issue such an appeal [to the city of Bombay to observe a sympathy strike]. *I will not tolerate this kind of thing.*'³⁸ The Nehrus alone had the right to issue calls for strikes!

Gandhi, the prophet of non-violence, condemned the rebels for their thoughtless orgy of violence – not the real orgy of violence by the Raj, of which the people were the real victims. To him the 'combination between Hindus and Muslims and others for the purpose of violent action is unholy...' He went on denouncing those who disbelieved in British professions that they would grant freedom to India. Though the violent revolt of a united people was a 'sin', the apostle of non-violence looked forward to communal holocausts, to 'internecine

warfare' between the Hindus and the Muslims, in which a few lakhs would be killed, as the only solution to India's problems.³⁹

It was a countrywide anti-imperialist revolt. Wavell noted in his diary on March 7, 1946 that the victory parade organised in Delhi was boycotted and crowds of men burnt down the Town Hall.⁴⁰

Workers were on the march everywhere despite the opposition of Congress and League leaders. The number of workers who went on strike in 1946 was 1,961,984 and in 1947, the figure was 1,840,784. There was an unprecedented upsurge of anti-imperialist struggle throughout the country in which workers, peasants, students, youths, office employees, navy men and sections of the Indian army, air force and police and lower rungs of the bureaucracy took part, and armed confrontations were frequent.⁴¹

Peasant revolts took place in different parts of India. In Thane district in Maharashtra the struggle of the Worlis broke out. In the Alleppey district of the native state of Travancore (now a part of Kerala), peasants and workers launched a united struggle. In several districts of Bengal, especially North Bengal, the Tebhaga struggle broke out under the leadership of the Communist Party. It was a struggle of the peasantry, mainly sharecroppers (who bore the expenses of cultivation) for a two-thirds share of the produce. The peasants fought heroically. In the undivided district of Dinajpur, 40 peasants became martyrs. In 1946 began the historic struggle of the peasants in Telangana districts of the native state of Hyderabad (Telangana, now a part of Andhra Pradesh) under the leadership of the Andhra State Committee of the CPI. It developed into a struggle for land and power. Large areas were liberated. The struggle continued even after the march of troops of the Indian government in 1948 to suppress it, until it was withdrawn unconditionally by the CPI leadership in 1951. In several other native states ruled by princes, puppets of the British Indian government, there were revolts of the people, especially in Travancore and Kashmir.

Imperialism Unable to Rule in the Old Way

We have noted Commander-in-Chief Claude Auchinleck's appreciation of November 24, 1945 of the Indian situation, with which Viceroy Wavell generally agreed. On February 19, 1946, Wavell recorded in his diary that he had met Porter, Secretary, Home Department, who was all for capitulation to the INA; that he had discussed with Bewoor, Secretary, Posts and Air Department, about a postal strike; that he had talks with Carr, AOC-in-C, about RIAF mutiny; with Griffin, Chief Commissioner of Railways, and Conran Smith, Secretary, War Transport Department, about a railway strike; and 'finally the C-in-C, most gloomy of all, about the RIN mutiny in Bombay and the INA trials. What a

cheerful day – prospect or reality of three mutinies and two strikes’, commented Wavell.⁴²

After referring to the ‘serious rioting in Bombay’, ‘a mutiny in the RIN, large scale indiscipline in the RIAF, some unrest in the Indian Army’ and ‘threatened strikes on the Railways, and in the Post and Telegraphs’, Wavell wrote to King George VI on March 22, 1946: ‘Perhaps the best way to look at it is that India is in the birth pangs of a new order...’⁴³

When in late March 1946 the Cabinet Mission with Secretary of State Pethick-Lawrence, Stafford Cripps and AV Alexander came to India to negotiate, mainly with Congress and League leaders, a settlement of the constitutional issues and met the Viceroy’s Executive Council, Edward Benthall said on behalf of it that

*‘the Council was unanimous that a change of Government at the Centre was imperative... It [the Council’s lack of confidence] is due to the uncertainty of Indian troops and police to whom they must look for defence and support in the future.’*⁴⁴

The Role of ‘The Big Boys of Congress and the League’

Towards the end of March 1946, Turnbull, Secretary to the Cabinet Mission, wrote: ‘The only hope is that the big boys of Congress and League are said to be much alarmed lest their followers break loose...’⁴⁵

The ‘big boys of Congress and League’, particularly ‘of Congress’, did not fail the imperialists. They acted in more than one way to save the Raj from the wrath of the rebellious people. As negotiations with the Cabinet Mission commenced, a bitter ‘war of succession’ began. The seemingly endless negotiations and the brave declarations with communal demands of the leaders for a larger share of the British legacy had an insidious effect on the people, much to the satisfaction of the Raj and the Indian reactionaries. ‘Amidst these “summit talks”,’ wrote Michael Brecher, ‘the poison of communalism penetrated deeper into the body politic of India.’⁴⁶

It is a cruel irony that Calcutta, the city of many glorious anti-imperialist struggles which the people fought shoulder to shoulder, irrespective of faiths, and other democratic struggles, the latest being the very successful general strike in sympathy with the All India Postal strike, – the city of nightmares to the imperialists and their underlings in India – became the first scene of a communal bloodbath. The people elsewhere too became victims of the vicious ‘war of succession’ between the two rival sets of compradors in the absence of a revolutionary party, which could lead and coordinate their struggles to gain victory. The imperialists, instead of trying to extinguish the communal flames, welcomed them and their Indian henchmen spread them by their acts and

rhetoric. Later, on January 24, 1947, the director of the Intelligence Bureau, Government of India, noted for the benefit of the policy makers:

*'The game so far has been well played, in that: (a) both Congress and the League have been brought into the Central Government; (b) the Indian problem has been thrust into its appropriate plane of communalism; ... Grave communal disorder must not disturb us into action which would reproduce anti-British agitation.'*⁴⁷

After the communal carnage in Calcutta, Gandhi told Wavell 'that if a bloodbath was necessary, it would come about in spite of non-violence.' The apostle of non-violence repeatedly looked forward to a 'bloodbath', a savage communal war, the killing of 'a few lakhs', 'grievous loss of life... on an unprecedented scale.'⁴⁸

Though Gandhi was not afraid of communal bloodbaths (rather, he seemed to welcome them), he abhorred all anti-imperialist and other democratic struggles of the united people. On July 21, 1946, he wrote to Vallabhbhai Patel: 'A great many things seem to be slipping out of the hands of the Congress. The postmen do not listen to it, nor does Ahmedabad, nor do the Harijans, nor Muslims. This is a strange situation indeed.'⁴⁹

Again, writing to Patel on July 24, Gandhi lamented: 'There are other strikes on top of the postal strike. All this looks significant.... The Congress position may seem strong on the surface but it appears to have lost its hold on the people. Or it may be that the Congress itself is involved in these troubles if only from a distance. This must be clarified; otherwise the battle which we are on the point of winning will be lost.'⁵⁰

The Mahatma released a torrent of denunciation of strikes and strikers, especially political and 'sympathetic strikes', and asked Patel to do the same.⁵¹ Nehru condemned the all-India strike of one lakh extremely low-paid postal employees as 'against the interests of the common people'. But the fact is, the common people went on 'sympathetic strikes' throughout India on July 29, to give the postal employees their support. Those who opposed these strikes were the imperialists and the Gandhis and the Nehrus. They were not adversaries but allies and they were on the same side of the barricade and the people on the other. The waves of struggle continued to rise. The situation in India was alarming for the British Raj and the Congress leadership.

At the end of July, the India and Burma Committee of the British cabinet concluded that if 'some positive action' was not taken 'without delay', 'the initiative might pass from His Majesty's Government. The postal strike and the threatened [all-India] railway strike were symptoms of a serious situation which

might rapidly deteriorate.' Wavell agreed and wired to Pethick-Lawrence on July 31: 'Widespread labour trouble exists and general situation is most unsatisfactory. The most urgent need is for a Central Government *with popular support*. If Congress will take responsibility *they will realise that firm control of unruly elements is necessary and they may put down the Communists and try to curb their own left wing.*' Wavell added that he disliked 'intensely the idea of having an interim Government dominated by one party [Congress] but I feel that I must try to get the Congress in as soon as possible.'⁵²

From UP, Governor Wylie reported: 'This strike business, for instance, is most unsettling.... *With all this strike fever about, it would be too much to expect that the police would remain totally unaffected ...*'⁵³

The director of the Intelligence Bureau, Government of India, warned: '... the labour situation is becoming increasingly dangerous.... I am satisfied that a responsible government, if one can be achieved, will deal more decisively with Labour *than is at present possible.*'⁵⁴ On August 6, Wavell again wired to the Secretary of State: 'I think it is quite likely that Congress [if it joins the government at the centre] would decide to take steps fairly soon against the communists, or otherwise the labour situation will get even worse.'⁵⁵

British imperialism found itself unable to rule in the old way. In an undated note Attlee wrote: 'In the event of a breakdown of the administration or a general alignment of the political parties against us, are we prepared to go back on our policy and seek to re-establish British rule as against the political parties and maintain it for 18 years? The answer must clearly be No.' Among the reasons he cited was the lack of the necessary military force.⁵⁶ In a 'top secret' message to the Viceroy on November 25, 1946, the Secretary of State informed him that 'We could not contemplate anything in the nature of reconquest and retention of India by force against the nationally organised opposition, and quite apart from the desirability of such a decision we do not believe that it would be practicable from a political, military or economic point of view'.⁵⁷ In a footnote it has been stated that 'the terms of this reply [to Wavell's letters] were agreed at a meeting' between Attlee, Pethick-Lawrence, Cripps and officials of the India Office.⁵⁸

When the British Raj felt unable to stem the tide of revolutionary struggles, it wanted some political party or parties of India *with popular support* to do it for them. The Congress leaders were lending their support from the outside but that was not enough. As the Muslim League refused to join the Congress in an interim government on Congress' terms, the British imperialists decided to entrust the Congress with the task of running the state machinery for them.

When the British imperialists found it unwise to take extreme measures to suppress the people, Congress leaders were entrusted with the task. The Congress leaders felt equally worried at the situation as it was developing. They were only too eager to join hands with the British imperialists to fight back the revolutionary tide and suppress the rebellious people. In August, the Congress Working Committee adopted a resolution condemning the growing lack of discipline and disregard of obligations on the part of workers.⁵⁹

On August 5, Wavell reported to Pethick-Lawrence that, according to an unimpeachable source, 'Patel... was convinced that the Congress must enter the Government to prevent chaos spreading in the country as the result of labour unrest.'⁶⁰ The British cabinet had decided on August 1 that 'if the Muslim League were unwilling to come in [on Congress' terms], it would be necessary to proceed with the formation of an Interim Government with Congress only.'⁶¹

So, Congress president Nehru was invited to form an 'interim' government with himself as the vice president under Wavell. The Congress leaders undertook to fight and suppress the rebellious, anti-imperialist people - not only from the outside but also from the inside of the imperialist state machinery - to serve as imperialism's shield and protect it from the wrath of the people. There was a preliminary round of 'transfer of power' when the 'interim' government was installed in office on September 2, 1946 - the first round of 'transfer of power' through which imperialism tried to save itself. In his letter to Mountbatten, dated March 18, 1947, appointing Mountbatten Viceroy of India, Attlee wrote: '... while the Interim Government would not have the same powers as a Dominion Government, His Majesty's Government would treat the Interim Government with the same consultation and consideration as a Dominion Government...'⁶²

Imperialism's hopes were more than fulfilled; its reliance on the Congress leaders to extricate it from an 'increasingly dangerous' situation was more than justified. On October 9, 1946 Nehru informed Wavell that 'A short while ago the [UP Congress] Government issued an ordinance of the kind we have been issuing here to tide over the period from October 1...' The UP ordinance 'provided for the maintenance of public order and essential services through preventive detention, imposition of collective fines, and the control of meetings and processions.'⁶³

On January 21, 1947, Wavell informed Pethick-Lawrence that searches, still then incomplete, had been conducted, that 'the Madras [Congress] Government appear to have taken action against communists and are contemplating a conspiracy case [conspiracy against the King-Emperor] against leading members of the party.... The Bombay [Congress] Government has also written strongly

for ventral action or a central directive against the party and indicating that they propose, in the absence of either of these, themselves to take strong action for detention of Communist agitators who constitute a great threat to public tranquillity in that Province.'

In this holy war against the anti-imperialist people, the Congress leaders would brook no interference even from British Parliament. Wavell's message added that Home Member Patel deprecated the idea of any discussion in British Parliament of the action taken against Communists '*as it can only impede the efforts of Congress to deal with the revolutionary element in the country.*'⁶⁴

A discussion in the Parliament would expose the fascist nature of the Congress leaders' attack on 'the revolutionary element in the country'.

The countrywide search of the offices of the CPI, trade unions, Kisan Sabha, Students Federation, Friends of the Soviet Union, etc., was carried out 'under the direction of the Government of India', of which Patel was Home Member. But in reply to RP Dutt's cable, Nehru unhesitatingly wired back: 'The police raids on the Communists took place without the authority or knowledge of the Ministers.' He sent a similar reply to Harry Pollitt.⁶⁵

Even Wavell was amused. Communicating to Pethick-Lawrence on January 29, 1947, he said that 'the Congress Government in Bombay had decided that the only way to deal with the Communists was to resort to detention without trial'. Wavell poked fun at the Labour Party minister: 'it may come as a shock to you if they should resort to such "imperialistic" methods'.⁶⁶

On February 27 the Bombay Governor reported to Wavell that Bombay's Congress ministry 'is determined to handle the communist and other extreme Left Wing elements firmly, and are bringing forward this session a new Public Safety Measures Bill which re-enacts all our Ordinances in full...'⁶⁷

The Bombay Governor also wrote on April 2 to Viceroy Mountbatten that the Congress ministers of Bombay felt that '*their real opponents are the Congress Socialists and the Communists*'⁶⁸ – not the British imperialists.

At its 22nd session held in Calcutta on February 13-19, 1947, the All India Trade Union Congress expressed its concern at the '*indiscriminate firing by the police on workers*' and stated in a resolution: 'Firing was resorted to in Coimbatore, Golden Rock, Kolar gold fields, Ratlam, Amalner and Kanpur, resulting in the death of more than 50 persons, including women and children and injury to more than 400.'

After referring to 'the suppression of civil liberties', ban on workers' meetings, arrests and internment of trade union workers, destruction of union properties and so on, the resolution added: 'In Madras alone, hundreds of labour workers are in jail, and in some places, Section 107 of the Criminal Procedure Code has been applied, demanding security of good behaviour from labour leaders.'

The AITUC also protested against 'the recent amendments to the Bombay District Police Act and the enactment of ordinances in the provinces of Punjab, Madras, Bengal, United Provinces and the Central Provinces under which persons can be arrested, externed or detained without trial.'

The AITUC also condemned the governments of Madras, Bombay and the Central Provinces [all Congress-ruled provinces] for detaining trade unionists in jails without trial and for externing some of them.⁶⁹ It was an all-out war against the people who were fighting against cruel exploitation and oppression and for freedom, that the Congress leaders had waged before and after their assumption of office at the centre. At the Meerut session of the Congress presided over by Kripalani and addressed by Nehru, among others, held in November 1946, Sardar Mota Singh, a delegate, 'thundered that the British were using Pandit Nehru and his colleagues as "political cows" to prevent the masses from attacking the British power, standing behind the cows.'⁷⁰ As we shall see, it is to these 'political cows' that the British transferred power in what became the Indian Union.

The Congress leaders found that along with repression, other means were necessary: they tried them all. One of these was to try to break the workers' unity, which had withstood all communal tension. On August 12, 1946, the CWC adopted a resolution drafted by Nehru to organise the Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh on an all-India basis.⁷¹ This organisation had been functioning in Ahmedabad under another name on Gandhian lines as a stooge organisation of Ahmedabad's textile magnates. When the militant working class struggles threatened the very foundations of British imperialism and the Indian big bourgeoisie, the Nehrus took upon themselves the mission of splitting the working class.

And at its meeting in Calcutta on December 7, 1945, the CWC took disciplinary action against the communist members of the AICC and asked all subordinate committees to purge the Congress of all communists. As part of their fierce onslaught against the people, they accused the communists of having cooperated with the government in order to isolate them from the people. The irony was that when they themselves were acting as willing agents of the Raj against the people, they accused the communists of having cooperated with the Raj after Nazi Germany's attack on the Soviet Union - which they did for ideological reasons. And what about Gandhi who pledged cooperation with British war efforts in 1944 and 1945 - and people like Rajagopalachari?

Gandhi's disciple DG Tendulkar observed that Gandhi 'was aware of the deep hatred of the British rulers that was in the people's heart. To forestall and prevent the conflagration of the deep-seated hatred was his constant concern.'⁷²

On December 4, 1946, Nehru said:
'There was a great urge among the masses of India for political progress. The Congress leaders had tried with some success to restrain that urge and keep it behind the Government.'⁷³

Though essentially true, it is an understatement. Throughout the twenties and the thirties and the Second World War years and after, the Congress leaders acted as the enemy within (of all the top Congress leaders, Subhas Chandra Bose alone was a patriot of patriots and that is why he was hounded out of the Congress in 1939). The others did not hesitate to stoop to any falsehood and deception and occasional atrocious attacks on the people (as when they held ministerial offices in eight provinces between 1937 and 1940 and again from 1946) to kill their 'great urge' to become free. British imperialism and its Indian flunkies succeeded because the leadership of the CPI had been non-revolutionary and non-Marxist since 1936. To cite only one instance here, PCJoshi, then general secretary of the CPI, wrote in *Congress and Communists* (1944): 'To us the Congress is our parent organisation, its leaders our political fathers...' He described his own party men as 'Communist Congressmen'.⁷⁴ This leadership strengthened the people's illusions about the Congress leaders instead of shattering them. Individual communists and groups of communists stood by the people bravely and selflessly and led many of their struggles.

But in the absence of an organised revolutionary party – the crucial subjective factor – the objectively revolutionary situation gave rise not to revolution but to counter-revolution, the most unnatural partition of India on communal lines costing enormous bloodbath and close integration of the two new states into the capitalist-imperialist system, which preserved all the structural barriers to her development. A telegram from London to Campbell-Johnson, Viceroy Mountbatten's press attaché, dated June 3, 1947, said: 'A packed House of Commons listened with intense interest to Prime Minister's announcement [of the agreement between the British Raj and the leaders of the Congress and the League to create two new states on the basis of partition of India and dominion status] this afternoon. Proposals and first reaction from India undoubtedly created profound gratification among all Parties. Sense of unity and recognition of tremendous issues and possibilities involved were comparable only with most historic moments during war.... This has been a great day for us all.'⁷⁵

India was regarded by the British imperialists as 'the essential Lynchpin in the structure of the Commonwealth'.⁷⁶ They devoutly wished that India would remain within the British Commonwealth. As early as April 16, 1943, when World War II raged, the Secretary of State, L Amery, wrote to Prime Minister Winston Churchill: 'To keep India within the Commonwealth during the next ten years is much the biggest thing before us... [and] should be the supreme goal of the British policy.'⁷⁷ He wrote to British Foreign Secretary Eden in a similar vein on May 9, 1943.⁷⁸ The goal of the British imperialists was to have a self-governing India within the British Commonwealth and to enmesh her with Commonwealth ties – economic, political and military.

When 'much the biggest thing before us' was achieved, with Nehru and Patel themselves seeking dominion status,⁷⁹ it was, no doubt, a 'great triumph' of the British imperialists. The reaction of the US imperialists was quite enthusiastic, though there was 'the most appalling bloodshed and confusion' in India.

The Nehrus assured the British Raj that 'in their view Hindustan would not ultimately leave the Commonwealth, once Dominion Status had been accepted'. But they emphasised 'the need for secrecy on this matter because if it became known that Congress leaders had *privately* encouraged the idea, the possibility of their being able to bring their party round to it would be seriously jeopardised'.⁸⁰

How Independent and Sovereign Did India Become After the Transfer of Power?

Did India become truly independent and sovereign with the transfer of power? Did she undergo a revolution – the overthrow of the rule of imperialism, big comprador capital and feudalism, the structural barriers to her development? Or, did imperialism make a formal withdrawal behind its flunkies – the 'political cows', as Sardar Mota Singh said – in order to blunt the edge of the national liberation struggle? Was the old order of the colonial era – the order that the colonisers had built in order to help them best to exploit and oppress the Indian people, after destroying the pre-colonial society – economic, social, political and military, refashioned by an independent, sovereign India which would lead to her regeneration?

Indian economy had no independence of its own and remained an appendage of the economy of Britain during the colonial rule. British capital dominated every sector of Indian economy and sucked the lifeblood of our people. Here are a few facts to point out that the Indian economy did not become free from imperialist fetters after the transfer of power: the stranglehold of metropolitan capital was more and more tightened instead of being relaxed. Nehru assured the British capitalists in December 1946 that they would have full freedom to flourish here.⁸¹ In different official resolutions, speeches and so on, the Indian government extended a warm welcome to imperialist capital. An official memorandum of the Indian government in September 1949 declared: 'The policy of the Government of India was to allow foreign capital to come in to operate freely in the industrial field.... Every attempt must be made to secure the maximum possible influx of foreign capital in the shortest possible time.'⁸² The Birlas' *Eastern Economist* wrote in a leading article: 'India for many years to come will need foreign capital and technical skill which must come mainly from the United States and Great Britain... it is clear from the Eastern

Economist's recent calculations so far as India is concerned that without foreign investment, it is quite impossible now to maintain our standard of life [already quite abominable] ... *India's hunger for food this year is great but her hunger for capital – if less evident – is nearly as deep.*⁸³

Some Indian magnates such as Tata and Birla had been negotiating with British and US monopolies for the establishment of joint enterprises in India even before the 'transfer of power' and some deals were already concluded. On May 2, 1945, Manu Subedar, a small industrialist and leader of an anti-collaborationist group in the Indian Merchants' Chamber, Bombay, denounced in the Central Legislative Assembly the collaboration between foreign monopolies and Indian big capital as an 'illegitimate marriage'.⁸¹ The joint ventures between imperialist monopolies and Indian big capital soon became the norm in India, encouraged by the Indian government. And trade followed the old colonial pattern.

For some years after the transfer of power, the Indian rupee was tied to the British pound sterling. When in September 1949, Britain was forced to devalue the pound in relation to the dollar by 30.5%, India had to devalue the rupee in the same proportion. Announcing the devaluation, John Matthai, India's then Finance Minister, said that he 'had to act, not on conviction born of logical necessity but, so to speak, by the compulsion of events; since sterling was devalued, there was no other course open to us.' As a result, India's exports became cheaper and imports dearer and the people poorer.

The sterling debts – between Rs 1,700 crore and Rs 1,800 crore in 1946 – tied the Indian economy to the metropolitan economy. These sterling balances, which Britain owed to India, represented the value of goods and services compulsorily taken away from India during World War II and in the following months. Indian food, raw materials, textiles and other finished products were taken away not only for the army but for the civil population of England and other countries when the Indian people were victims of acute scarcity, steep inflation, sky rocketing prices, black markets and famine. The goods were taken by Britain at controlled or negotiated prices at which Indians could not get them. 'The price paid by India', to quote Subedar, 'runs into millions of lives.'⁸⁵ 'The British government refused to give any assurance that it would not scale down the debts: it even refused to enter into any negotiations about them. The Anglo-US Financial Agreement of December 1945 made it mandatory on the UK to scale down the debts. In his memorandum on Indian Sterling Balances, dated August 5, 1947, Hugh Dalton, the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, wrote like a super-imperialist: 'The Indians have asked for releases of £ 48.5 millions [out of £ 1,160 millions estimated by him] from the blocked account for the remainder of 1947. On my instructions the request has been rejected... No commitment

for further releases after the end of 1947 has been made in the present negotiations, nor are we committed to recognise the total, without further cancellation or adjustment More than three-quarters of them earn only one-half percent [as interest].⁸⁶ This was one fact of imperialistic swindling. The Indian ruling classes were willing victims of it even after the transfer of power.

In a note on India's sterling balances, Subedar wrote: 'There is no reason why assets, at least those who [which] belong to Britishers non-resident in India, should not be mobilised by the British Government with a view to reducing the outstanding balance.'⁸⁷ He wrote to Patel, 'It is most extraordinary that three Cabinet ministers [members of the British Cabinet Mission, who came to India in March 1946] should have come here and not a word was said to them by any Indian in regard to the sterling balances.'⁸⁸

On July 7, 1950, Nehru said that, 'our economy is obviously tied to England and other allied powers.'⁸⁹

In November 1951, GD Birla proposed the formation of an Indo-American Development Corporation with business magnates and officials of the two countries – a kind of 'supertrust directing the future of Indian economy.'⁹⁰ And in January 1952, BR Sen, then India's Ambassador to the USA, 'recommended an investment company in which both American and Indian private capital would participate initially on a 70:30 per cent basis'.⁹¹ Both the representative of the Indian government and an outstanding leader of the Indian big bourgeoisie were keen that the future of the Indian economy should be directed not by the Indians but chiefly by US big capital. Were these the voices of an independent, sovereign India or of a client state?

As regards feudal or semi-feudal relations in the vast countryside, there was no fundamental change, except that some grosser manifestations of feudalism were curbed. There was no democratic or agrarian revolution in India. There was no basic change in the property structure in the rural areas.

We shall confine ourselves to a few words on the changes in the political and social system in India after the transfer of power. The national liberation struggle of the Indian people was strangled by the British imperialists with full cooperation and active help of the front men of the comprador-feudal combine in the absence of a revolutionary party. The long-cherished aim of the alien rulers to have India within the British Commonwealth was fulfilled. The British imperialists of all hues celebrated the transfer of power on the basis of partition and dominion status as a 'great triumph', as a gain not a loss.⁹² They were sure that their Indian agents would defend and preserve their long-term interests in India and in the Indian Ocean region. And this is how they resolved their bitter contradiction with the Indian people. Indian 'independence' was the new face of British imperialism in India – a manoeuvre extremely deceitful and equally successful.

India's 'freedom' was ushered in with the playing of 'God Save the King' followed by *Jana Gana Mana Adhinayaka*.⁹³ Nehru toasted the health of the British king and Mountbatten toasted the health of the Dominion government.⁹⁴ It was symbolical that Union Jack was not lowered; it flew proudly when the Indian flag was unfurled.⁹⁵

The last Viceroy and Governor-General of India became the head of the new Indian state and Nehru and Patel 'wanted him to stay on as long as he would.'⁹⁶ HV Hodson, a former Reforms Commissioner of India, observed: 'By a strange paradox Lord Mountbatten as constitutional governor-general of independent [!] India exercised more direct executive authority in certain spheres than he had enjoyed as autocratic viceroy'.⁹⁷ Nehru and his colleagues sought Mountbatten's advice about the composition of the cabinet for post-colonial India; they 'tore up the list of cabinet' they had prepared and changed four members of the old list.⁹⁸ The trust that the top Congress leaders, quite astute men, reposed in Mountbatten reflected their trust in – and their closeness to – British imperialism. Gandhi had said earlier: 'The sole referee of what is or is not in the interest of India as a whole will be Mountbatten in his personal capacity.'⁹⁹ Leonard Mosley wrote that 'from that moment on', Nehru's first meeting with Mountbatten in India, Nehru became 'Mountbatten's man.'¹⁰⁰ (Nehru is supposed to have been Lady Mountbatten's man, too). We shall not refer here to Patel's effusive expressions of gratitude to Mountbatten. These were the persons who, with the complementary role played by the leaders of the CPI – PC Joshi and his associates – left a profound influence on the course of Indian history.

Invited by the Congress leaders, Sir John Colville and Sir Archibald Nye (who became next year UK High Commissioner in New Delhi) remained as governors of the two largest provinces – Bombay and Madras. While in 'free' India, they flew the Union Jack on the bonnets of their cars. Campbell-Johnson commented that the invitation to Colville and Nye to continue as governors 'gets our relations with the new India off to a start good beyond all expectations.'¹⁰¹

As President of the Indian Constituent Assembly, Rajendra Prasad requested Lord Mountbatten, the head of the new State, to convey 'a message of loyal greetings from this House' to the British King. It said: 'That message [the King's message to the new dominion] will serve as an inspiration to the great work on which we launch today, and I have no doubt that *we anticipate with great pleasure association with Great Britain of a different kind*. I hope and trust that *the interest and sympathy and the kindness which have always inspired His Majesty*, will continue in favour of India and we shall be worthy of them.'¹⁰²

As the Congress leaders had assured the British imperialists, the Indian Union joined the British Commonwealth of Nations, which recognised the British sovereign as head of the Commonwealth, to whom all dominions had to swear allegiance. *It may be noted that on May 2, 1949, almost immediately after the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in London, Attlee declared in the House of Commons 'with reference to the London agreement that no distinction should be drawn between the use of the terms "Commonwealth", "British Commonwealth" or "British Empire", all of which should be regarded as interchangeable.'*¹⁰³ Appreciating Nehru's role in the 1949 London Conference, Attlee said: 'Mr Nehru for India showed high statesmanship in accepting a new relationship whereby in respect for India the [British] monarch was recognised as Head of the Commonwealth.'¹⁰⁴

Both Nehru and Jinnah agreed that India and Pakistan would fly the Union Jack on twelve days in the year but wanted that *this should not be publicised*. 'In fact,' Mountbatten wrote, 'they are worried about their extremists agitating against over-stressing the British connection although they are quite willing to retain it [the Union Jack in the upper canton of the Indian flag, as designed by Mountbatten] themselves.'¹⁰⁵

Indian society underwent no radical change. The administrative structure built by the colonisers remained. The British-trained Indian Civil Service [ICS], the steel-frame of the colonial administration, continued as before. Its successor, the Indian Administrative Service [IAS], to quote Francine Frankel, 'retained the structure and style of its elitist forerunner, perpetuating a national administrative system that in numbers and outlook was more suitable to carrying out the narrow colonial functions of law and order than the broad responsibilities for economic development of an independent government.'¹⁰⁶

In the sixties, Gunnar Myrdal wrote that the system of education 'conformed closely to the old colonial pattern of building up a highly educated elite with an attached lower rank of technical personnel functioning as subalterns, while leaving the population at large in a state of ignorance.'¹⁰⁷ The police and the judiciary continued with little change. The same laws prevailed with few changes, only the repressive laws were given more teeth and the coercive apparatus of the state has been strengthened with the passing of years as paramilitary forces have proliferated. Formally, colonialism died but the colonial spirit and structure remained.

The Indian Constitution, under which we are governed, owes much to the British. The Constituent Assembly that framed the Constitution was constituted on the basis of the May 16 (1946) Statement of the British Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy. The members of the Constituent Assembly were not elected on the basis of adult suffrage, which Congress leaders like Nehru had promised

several times. The then existing provincial legislative assemblies of 'British India', formed under the Government of India Act of 1935 (which Nehru called a 'charter of slavery'), which restricted the franchise to about 11.5 per cent of the people and provided for separate electorates for different religious communities, were asked to elect their representatives by single, transferable votes of their members (except Europeans), Muslim and non-Muslim members voting separately. And, according to an agreement between Nehru and the Chamber of Princes, on the accession of the native states to the Indian Union, about fifty per cent of the seats allotted to them in the Constituent Assembly were filled by nominees of the princes (who had been stooges of the British government) and the rest were supposed to represent the people of those states.

The first session of the Constituent Assembly was convened by Viceroy Wavell on December 9, 1946. Speaking at the Subjects Committee meeting during the Meerut session of the Congress in November 1946, Nehru declared: 'When we attain freedom, we shall have another Constituent Assembly.'¹⁰⁸ Deception was the name of their game. The draft of the Constitution was prepared by members of the ICS, chief among whom was Sir Benegal N. Rau, the constitutional adviser to the Constituent Assembly. Campbell-Johnson pointed out that *Dominion Status made possible the maximum administrative and constitutional continuity, on the basis of the great India Act of 1935.*¹⁰⁹ 'Approximately 250 articles [out of 395 articles],' wrote Michael Brecher, 'were taken either verbatim or with minor changes in phraseology from the 1935 Government of India Act, and the basic principles remained unchanged.'¹¹⁰ GD Birla proudly claimed that 'we have embodied large portions of the [1935] Act as finally passed, in the Constitution which we have framed ourselves and which shows that in it [the 1935 Act] was cast the pattern of our future plans.'¹¹¹ 'The new constitution accepted the basically British compromise of 1935', observed Thomas Balogh, the Oxford economist who was for some years adviser to the British Cabinet.¹¹²

As regards military arrangements, the old order continued as before. Immediately after the transfer of power Claude Auchinleck, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian army, became the Supreme Commander of the armed forces of India and Pakistan. The commanders of the three branches of the armed forces of India – the army, the navy and the air force – became British. Until the late fifties the commander of the Indian navy was British. As ST Das writes: 'Till May 1961, the post of the Director of Naval Armament Inspection of the Naval Headquarters was held by a British officer. The appointment of Chief of Naval Aviation was also held by an officer of the Royal Navy.'^{112a} An appeal was made to British officers and other British personnel in India's armed

forces to continue and a 50 per cent increase in 'India Allowance' was granted to British 'other ranks'. Forty nine per cent of the British officers and 94 per cent of 'other ranks' were retained in the armed forces of 'free' India.¹¹³ But there was no place in the Indian army for the officers and men of the INA (whom Nehru described in 1945 and 1946 as 'the pick of the Indian Army', 'a splendid lot', 'a fine lot' – brave, stout-hearted and capable and very politically minded' – whose 'standard of ... fighting is admittedly very high' and 'It is possible they will be acceptable to the future army of free India').¹¹⁴ The navy men who rose against the British in February 1946 and the Indian soldiers who joined the Indonesians in their struggle against the Dutch imperialists who were trying to reconquer their country at the end of the war, were not reinstated for their revolt against imperialism.

The Joint Defence Council of India and Pakistan was composed of Mountbatten, Auchinleck, Baldev Singh and Liaquat Ali – two Britishers and one representative each of India and Pakistan – with Mountbatten as the Chairman. Both Nehru and Jinnah 'wholeheartedly welcomed' the British government's proposal to negotiate 'overall Commonwealth defence arrangements'. The Joint Defence Council was empowered to conduct negotiations on behalf of India and Pakistan. To quote from Mountbatten's message to London, dated August 8, 1947,

'As I shall continue to be Chairman of the Joint Defence Council after 15th August, I shall hope to be able to regulate these discussions [with the British military delegation to decide on overall Commonwealth defence arrangements] and trust that the desired objects will be achieved.'¹¹⁵

India became a partner of the 'overall Commonwealth' military arrangements. Besides, as L. Natarajan pointed out, 'India signed its first military agreement with the United States under the Mutual Defence Assistance Programme in March 1951...'¹¹⁶ These military agreements were concluded not between equals but between giants and a pigmy, between powerful imperialist countries – one of them a superpower seeking to dominate the world – and India, an underdeveloped country teeming with 'half-naked, half-starved' people. 'Thus came to an end', wrote Attlee later, 'the direct rule of the British in India.'¹¹⁷ Do all these facts indicate that India became independent and sovereign with the transfer of power?

'...the fact is', writes Robin D.G. Kelley, 'while colonialism in its formal sense might have been dismantled, the colonial state was not.'¹¹⁸ Imperialism today, as Thomas Balogh said, does not require overt political domination to enforce its rule.¹¹⁹ Instead of directly administering a dependent country, it dominates it through local agents and using the levers of capital (both direct investment and 'aid', a euphemism for loan-capital), technology, military hardware, etc. Besides, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund

and other international institutions, set up on the initiative of US imperialism, play the role of the colonial administration of enforcing the rules of the imperialist game. The essence of neo-colonialism or semi-colonialism lies in subordinating the dependent country's economy, politics and military strategy, to the economy and global strategy of imperialism.

Though India did not become free, an important change occurred. From a colony India became a semi-colony : India's dependence on Britain yielded to dependence on several imperialist powers, chief among which was the USA. A semi-colony is *formally* independent, but *in reality*, it is dependent on several imperialist powers. In this 'semi-dependent country' the domestic ruling classes enjoy political power but within the framework of basic dependence on imperialist powers. As part of the world capitalist-imperialist system, they cannot shake off this dependence, for they can survive and expand by collaborating with and serving imperialist monopoly capital as they did before – at the cost of the abysmal misery and wretchedness of the people.

For genuine decolonisation, for real freedom, it is necessary to overthrow by *force*, imperialism as well as the comprador-feudal combine, all the external and internal forces that act as a brake on the development of the productive forces and on the development of men themselves and keep the country enchained to the capitalist-imperialist system. Genuine decolonisation demands breaking out of the capitalist-imperialist system and the overthrow of the government of national betrayal and, as Fanon said, a change of the entire social structure.

National independence cannot be a matter of peaceful negotiations and compromise: it must be fought for and won. Imperialism, to repeat, is fascism in a colony: its violence can be combated and defeated by greater violence. The Indian patriots who fought the British in India's First War of Independence in 1857 and were captured, were hung from the trees on the wayside. Was the horror less than what the Nazis did to the Jews? There are innumerable other instances which are essentially of the same kind. The country needs to be cleansed of the filth that has accumulated in every sphere of life during the long colonial rule and after. A free India means a new India, a reborn India, where the people can mould their own fate and bring about regeneration in every sphere of life.

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It is a pity that there are persons in this country who refuse to be guided by facts and reason and are incapable of making their own investigations in order to find out truth from facts and who invoke the authority of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International (1928) – which was not above making serious political mistakes – to assert that the industrial bourgeoisie cannot be comprador.
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36. See Bombay governor John Colville's report to Viceroy Wavell, February 27, 1946, TOP, VI, pp.1079-84; See especially p.1082.
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2

Indian Economy: 1947 to the Early 1970s

Two Models of Development

For a country where colonialism had been recently dismantled, there existed two models of development. One model demanded, first, the confiscation of existing imperialist capital; second, the nationalisation of the big comprador capital; and third, abolition of feudalism. It implied the destruction of the main growth-inhibiting barriers. The distribution of land among the peasants and the former landlords on a more or less equal per capita basis and the gradual building of cooperative farms and communes would release vast, dormant creative powers of the people and raise the production of agricultural goods to a level unknown before. This would further create a large market for industrial goods and a part of the surplus generated by agriculture would augment the capital for building industries without harming the interests of the peasantry. In response to the development of society the workers, the technical personnel and the men-in-charge of enterprises would put their heads together and invent new technologies without relying on imperialist countries for them. Any new advance in technology would not be patented for the profit of a few but would be widely diffused and belong to the masses. This model ensured independent, self-reliant development of the productive forces and would seek not only the transformation of the world around man but the transformation of man himself from one interested in himself alone to one to whom service to society would get precedence over serving his self-interests. It conceived of development as a mass movement and attached greater importance to the voluntary participation of the entire people than to capital goods and technology. This would reject bureaucratic centralisation and pursue a policy of decentralisation to unleash the initiative, creativity and enthusiasm of the people at all levels; it upheld the view that it is the people, not the leaders, who are the makers of their destiny; and would further seek to rouse people's political

and social consciousness and to subordinate the self to the spirit of service. Its aim was the all-round development of men and women – the emergence of active, politically conscious, truly free, socialist men and women.

All this is not a fairy tale. This model was followed in China after its liberation in 1949 and it transformed her within a brief period from a weak, backward country, teeming with starving people, ravaged by war and hyperinflation, and despised by all as 'the sick man of the East' into a strong, self-reliant, sovereign state that was the hope and inspiration of progressive people all over the world. A few brief extracts from a three-volume study by the World Bank dealing with the development in China until about the end of the seventies may be quoted here. The World Bank can hardly be accused of being biased towards the China of Mao Tsetung's days.

It states:

China's agricultural sector accounts for less than eight per cent of the world's arable land but provides enough food for about 22 per cent of the world's population.

Industrialisation has been very rapid, as the result of an unusually high rate of investment, *virtually all of which has been financed by domestic savings*. Its net output [of industry, including mining and energy] grew in real terms at around 10 per cent per annum in 1957-79.

Much effort has been devoted to attaining new technical capabilities. Almost the entire range of modern industries has been set up, with much emphasis on those making capital equipment.... In practically every significant industry, major plants have been built in several parts of the country and special efforts have been made to spread manufacturing into backward regions and rural areas.

Citing some instances, the World Bank affirms:

'In a few areas, however, China has developed a technological lead.' It may be pointed out that China, relying entirely on herself, exploded her first nuclear bomb in 1964 and the hydrogen bomb in 1967, 26 months after atomic fission became a fact. The same step had taken the USA more than seven years. China declared that she would never be the first to use them, that they were 'entirely for the purpose of defence and for breaking the nuclear monopoly, with the ultimate aim of abolishing nuclear weapons.'¹ China's scientific advances included the world's first synthesis of protein (insulin) and benzene, innovations made in 1966. *Unaided*, China sent a satellite to space in 1970.

To return to the World Bank study, it noted that the Chinese, even 'the very poor', 'all have work; their food supply is guaranteed through a mixture of state rationing and collective self-insurance; most of their children are not only

at school, but being comparatively well taught; and the great majority have access to basic health care and family planning services.²

The other model was followed by the Indian ruling classes after transfer of power. The imperialist capital that dominated the Indian economy and drained away its wealth was not expropriated. Nor was the capital of the compradors nationalised. Feudalism was not abolished: there were some cosmetic changes. The structural barriers to India's development were not removed; rather, as we shall see, they were vastly strengthened. The character of the Indian state, which emerged in 1947, restricted its choice of the model.

As KS Shelvankar put it, 'The real cause of India's poverty must be sought not in disease or illiteracy, which are but symptoms, nor yet in Indian customs and beliefs, nor again in the population figures, but in the economic organisation on which the whole life of the country is based.'³ The economic organisation of the colonial era had not been smashed. As we have seen, it was the 'flunkies' of imperialism – the compradors and the feudals (or semi-feudals) – who became the ruling classes of India. It was to their interest not to break up the economic organisation which colonial rule had built up, but to preserve and develop it. This economic organisation had continued to breed backwardness and underdevelopment as it did during colonial rule.

Economic development or adoption of a particular model of development is not a mere economic question but also a political and ideological issue. Without resolving it, the economic question cannot be resolved and the country can hardly escape dependence and underdevelopment. The question is, which class or classes hold state power?

The 'Economic Organisation': Chains of Dependence

Before the transfer of power, we have noted, Nehru gave assurances to imperialist capital that it would have freedom to thrive after it. The official memorandum accompanying the Indian government's Industrial Policy Resolution stated: 'The Resolution contemplates full freedom for foreign capital and enterprise in Indian industry....'⁴ An official statement issued by the Indian government in September 1949 declared: 'The policy of the Government of India was to allow foreign capital to come in to operate freely in the industrial field.... Every attempt must be made to secure the maximum possible influx of foreign capital in the shortest possible time.'⁵

In a leading article, the Birlas' *Eastern Economist* wrote that 'India for many years to come will need foreign capital and technical skill which must come mainly from the United States and Great Britain ... it is clear from the *Eastern Economist*'s recent calculations so far as India is concerned that without foreign

investment, it is quite impossible now to maintain our standard of life [already among the lowest in the world].... India's hunger for food this year is great, but *her hunger for capital* – if less evident – is nearly as deep.⁶

Significantly, the Engineering Association of India was eloquent on the 'constructive' role of foreign capital in the development of India's economy. It placed the responsibility of making India 'industrially great' on the shoulders of the monopolies of the UK and the USA. In its written evidence before the Fiscal Commission 1949-50, it stated:

*...industrially advanced countries like USA and UK should undertake the obligation of making India industrially great. The exigencies of the situation in South-East Asia require it and comparative inability of the Western powers to be of effective help in South-East Asia demands that India should be made strong in order that she may act as a bulwark against the rising tide of Communism in this part of the globe.*⁷

The Indian big bourgeoisie was not only quite willing that India should remain a satellite within the world capitalist-imperialist system, but was also eager to serve as their henchman fighting, the people of the colonies and semi-colonies in South-East Asia to prevent them from overthrowing imperialist rule and building Socialism.

What the Indian ruling classes were seeking was to develop the Indian *industry not on autonomous, independent lines but by depending on imperialist crutches. They wanted the imperialist capital of the USA and the UK to play the role of a catalyst in India's industrialisation. 'Proposals were being considered', wrote Natarajan, 'to import every year more capital than the British imperialists had invested in India in a hundred years.'*⁸

Imperialist countries do export capital, but not for charitable purposes. They export capital as a method of pumping surplus out of underdeveloped countries like India – not as a 'channel through which surplus is directed into them'.⁹ It not only impoverishes the capital-importing country economically but has, as we shall see, political and military repercussions also. In the process of importing capital, the only class in a country like India, that enriches itself, is the comprador big bourgeois class.

During colonial rule India was converted from a country where there was a union between industry and agriculture into what Montgomery Martin called 'the agricultural farm of England'. India woefully lacked industries which produce means of production. There was almost no machine-building industry. The Fiscal Commission 1949-50 stated: 'Machinery and machine tools, non-ferrous metals, electrical engineering, automobiles and tractors, prime movers and heavy chemicals are some of the basic industries which are either

non-existent or still in their infancy.¹⁰ But, because of class interests, the Indian ruling classes hugged the chains that bound them. Instead of proposing that India should build its industries, including machine-building industries, along independent lines, the Commission repeatedly emphasised the need for foreign capital and technical knowhow. It prescribed for the Indian big bourgeoisie a role they had been playing before – a role complementary to that of imperialist capital.

Imperialist capital flows into India mainly in two forms – private direct investment and loan capital, which is euphemistically called 'aid' (today speculative capital is also entering India. Foreign financial investors are investing thousands of crores of rupees in Indian share markets for the purpose of gambling). Loan capital is bilateral (that is, from a particular imperialist country) or multilateral, that is, from institutions like the World Bank or its sister organisations, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the like, which were set up by the USA and other imperialist countries as watchdogs of their interests and which they are able to dominate.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

Transnationals with their national centres in imperialist countries, like ICI and Unilever, had set up branches and subsidiaries in India even before 1946. And towards the end of Britain's direct rule, deals were being struck for joint collaborative ventures like ICI-Tata and Nuffield-Birla. From the time when India's Second Five Year Plan began to be implemented, large amounts of foreign private capital started pouring in. Transnationals wanted to use India not merely to make super-profits but also as a continuous sales outlet for their machinery, components, semi-processed raw materials, etc. The type of large and medium industrial unit most common in India and most favoured by both transnationals and Indian business magnates is their joint venture. This is the type that the Indian planners have consistently promoted. The First Five Year Plan held that such joint enterprises were 'suitable for securing the employment of equity capital'. Michael Kidron wrote: 'Since the second half of the fifties, particularly after 1957, the Government have insisted on joint collaboration in new ventures, ... Another and one that limits approval normally to joint projects, is the desire to graft foreign management and technical skills on to Indian industry.'¹¹ Joint exploitation of India's material and human resources by imperialist capital and Indian big compradors – while some benefit might trickle down to the people – was the aim of the Indian ruling classes.

It may be noted that the British monopolists were changing their tactics during World War II itself. They were planning to expand the market in India for their capital goods and sophisticated consumer goods and to set up manufacturing units in India in partnership with the Indian big bourgeoisie. The British government too was eager to help in making 'cooperative

arrangements' between them 'for joint cooperative development of Indian industries' and expressed the hope 'of guiding domestic production'.¹²

US monopolies were no less eager to penetrate into underdeveloped countries like India. Leading members of the US establishment proposed as the 'key' to an effective US foreign policy grants or loans to underdeveloped countries. 'Public loans, by helping to create the necessary environment, can pave the way for greatly expanded private investment...'. According to them, 'the basic fact [is] that economic programmes [like extending official loans] are one of our few potentially effective levers of influence upon political developments in the underdeveloped areas.' And they held the view that the participation in the economic development of an underdeveloped country would be beneficial to the USA from the military point of view.¹³

A former President of the World Bank, AW Clausen, also said: 'All the facts are there to prove that it is in America's self-interest to support the international agencies [like the World Bank] ... And if we don't produce this expanded level of support - comes the revolution.... We have to do it or else we will destroy ourselves.'¹⁴ Imperialist assistance strengthens the hands of the ruling classes of a country like India in frustrating attempts of their people to upset the imperialist apple cart.

The collaborations between imperialist monopolies and Indian business magnates are either financial-cum-technical or purely technical. The control of a joint venture usually rests with the foreign collaborator. *Joint International Business Ventures*, a Columbia University project, stated: 'Advanced technical knowhow and continuing research give [foreign] investor companies effective control of joint ventures without majority ownership or legal control of the board.'¹⁵ Michael Kidron also observed: '...the technologically progressive firm would seem securely in control of a joint venture in a technologically intensive industry whatever its financial stake.'¹⁶ The Indian business magnates seek quick profits. They spend a minimal amount on Research and Development. They prefer to buy technology at enormous costs (to which we shall refer later) and with restrictive clauses rather than to innovate new products and technological processes. In these days of fast technological obsolescence, the technological dependence of the Indian collaborators is perennial. Though tens of thousands of collaborative agreements have been entered into, the gap in technology between advanced capitalist countries and India gets wider and wider with the passing of years.

Imperialist monopolies are not content with superprofits, dividends, royalties, lump sum technical fees, etc. The subsidiary of a transnational or a joint venture controls and transfers resources to the parent company. These resources are several times the declared profits and royalties, by over-invoicing

imports of machinery, components, spare parts, etc., and under-invoicing commodities or services which it sells to the parent company.¹⁷ Observing that Indian businessmen are 'no strangers to [rather adept at] over-invoicing and under-invoicing and their related arts', Michael Kidron wrote: 'It is none the less true that foreign firms are better equipped for this type of operation at the point where the Government is least able to reach them'.¹⁸

A contributor to the *AICC Economic Review*, an organ of the main political party of India's ruling classes, wrote that there were agreements which gave the foreign collaborators 'almost complete control over the joint ventures' even when the Indian collaborators held the major share.¹⁹

Bhabatosh Datta, who was a reputed economist, said: 'The foreign multinationals had powerful allies in the Indian industrial groups and this resulted in agreements detrimental to the interests of the country, while they were highly profitable to the partners on both sides of the frontiers'.²⁰

AID

Apart from direct investment, the Indian ruling classes borrowed (and have been borrowing) huge loan-capital from imperialist countries and the World Bank, the IMF and the like, controlled by them. (Every president of the World Bank is nominated by the US leaders and the president of the IMF by European powers).

Aid is not given as free foreign exchange. Bilateral aid, i.e., from a foreign country, has to be spent on the purchase of goods from it. As Cheryl Payer wrote, '...aid seems to be merely another name for the financing of one's own country's exports.'²¹ Speaking of loans that an imperialist country gives to a financially dependent country, Lenin said: 'the increase in exports is connected with just these swindling tricks of finance capital, which is not concerned with bourgeois morality, but with skinning the ox twice – first it pockets the profits from the loan; then it pockets other profits from the same loan which the borrower uses to make purchases from Krupp, or buy railway material from the Steel Syndicate, etc.'²² Moreover, the aid - recipient country becomes a continuous sales outlet of the imperialist country: it continues to sell components, spare parts, intermediate raw materials, etc.

Bilateral aid is usually both country tied and project-tied while multilateral aid from institutions like the World Bank is mostly project-tied. Tenders for the project have to be invited from all the countries. The tender approved by the government of the aid-recipient country has to wait for the approval of the World Bank. It is a way of helping export of capital. To quote PJ Eldridge, 'A senior Indian official, much concerned with aid negotiations, estimated during an interview that a combination of country tying and project-tying can increase

the cost to India anywhere up to 60% above of what would apply if she received free foreign exchange.²³

India depends heavily on foreign aid to meet her deficit in current balance of payments, to service old debts, even to pay some compensation to her employees while closing down a state undertaking. Referring to the steadily *worsening terms of trade*, an INA report from Geneva, dated February 28, 1977, stated that in 1972, a tractor cost three or four times what it cost in 1962 in terms of raw materials like sugarcane or coffee that the underdeveloped countries had to export to pay for imports from advanced capitalist countries. The same report said that a study prepared by the International Labour Organisation stated that for every dollar given to a Third World country to continue buying from the West, the 'donors receive three dollars in return'.²⁴

For financing her Five Year Plans, India greatly depends on imperialist aid. In the conditions in which the Indian ruling classes found themselves after the transfer of power – a seriously restricted market for industrial goods, absence of an infrastructure for industrial development, absence of capital goods industries – they felt that economic planning was the need of the hour. They held the view that the minimum infrastructural needs could not be left purely at the mercy of the market forces in the stagnant semi-colonial, semi-feudal society. Like the British rulers in the mid-forties and the Indian tycoons who drafted the Bombay Plan (*A Brief Memorandum Outlining a Plan of Economic Development for India*) in 1944,²⁵ they believed that it would be the task of the state to build the infrastructure – transport and communications, the power industry, mining, etc. – besides the long-gestating capital goods industries and iron and steel. It also built several financial institutions and nationalised the Imperial Bank of India and the leading commercial banks as well as insurance companies to provide money capital to businessmen. This would provide the base on which the Indian business magnates and the imperialist monopolies would build their private empires.

India's 'debt' to imperialist countries continues to mount. Part of the old debts and interests have to be paid back by incurring new debts. The more India pays, the more India owes to imperialist creditors. A time comes when the reverse flow begins. Net aid received is less than the gross aid received in a year. To quote Willy Brandt, then Chairman of the International Commission, which submitted 'Programme of Survival' in 1979, 'Even the World Bank receives more from its clients than it gives. The whole situation is perverse: as if blood transfusion were running from patient to donor.'²⁶

DR Gadgil, once vice-chairman of India's Planning Commission, pointed out that continued dependence on external aid 'mortgages our future to the

giver of aid and as recent experience has painfully outlined, it gives outsiders enormous influence in shaping our economic policy.²⁷

Aid is intended to 'sustain a socio-political structure which is the cause of stagnation and poverty' and inhibits development in the aid - recipient countries. It helps to maintain governments subservient to imperialism and plunder the people in various ways and ensure massive outflows of wealth to imperialist countries. Speaking of Latin America, Andre Gunder Frank said: 'As Foreign Minister Valdes [of Chile] told [US] President Nixon, and as the US Department of Commerce and ECLA [Economic Commission for Latin America] have documented extensively, it is precisely the foreign investment and aid or external assistance which has generated not only Latin America's contemporary colonial structure, commercial and balance of payments crisis, but also the underdevelopment-generating domestic economic and class structural aberrations.... The more "external assistance" from the imperialist metropolis, the more underdevelopment for Latin America.'²⁸ What Frank said of Latin America is no less true of India.

Aid has not only economic uses but also political and military applications. Nelson Rockefeller, then head of the International Development Board of the USA, wrote in a confidential letter to US President Eisenhower: 'The essence of this [foreign] policy should be that the development of our economic relations with these [underdeveloped] countries would ultimately allow us to take over key positions in the native economy.... By this means we can hope to divert the foreign policy of these countries in a more desirable direction.'²⁹

In his testimony before the US House Foreign Relations Committee on the Mutual Security Programme in 1951, Paul Hoffman, a former Marshall Plan administrator, said: 'Military aid and economic aid are, under present conditions, essentially the same.... The two kinds of aid are inseparable. Both are really economic assistance; but both are principally for a military purpose.'³⁰

What WW Rostow, head of the Policy Planning Division of the US State Department during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations wrote is illuminating: 'Economic aid in the Eisenhower administration, during the years before Sputnik, had one overriding purpose: to assist the nation's Eurasian allies in maintaining deterrent forces on a scale sufficient for the United States to cut down its own ground forces and concentrate on weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery, and the means of defence against them.'³¹

At a press conference in March 1962, US President John Kennedy said: 'I believe this [foreign aid] programme is just as important as our national defence. Over half of it is directly tied to arms assistance, which means that it represents an additional appropriation, in a sense, for the Pentagon.'³²

Technology

Regarding India's technological dependence on imperialist countries, a few more words may be deemed necessary. Under technology collaboration agreements transnationals do not make an outright sale of their know-how; instead, they license to their Indian collaborators the use of their know-how and patents for a fixed period in lieu of lump sum technical fees, royalty and so on. Collaboration agreements are full of restrictive clauses, under which the Indian collaborator is not permitted to improve upon the technology or to transfer it to any other company. But the transnational can license the same technology to other firms in India and elsewhere and receive from them similar lump sum technical fees and royalty. For instance, the German transnational Siemens AG licensed its technology regarding the product 'electric push button telephone' to at least ten firms in India by 1989. Thus, the import of the same technology by India is repetitive and expensive. Besides, in order 'to systematise a continual control of know-how,' the transnationals seldom impart the knowledge of the entire production process to the Indian collaborator. As Kidron says, 'the diffusion of skills that does take place is largely fortuitous.'³³

Dr RA Mashelkar, Director-General of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, said: '...operating imported and "screw-driver technologies", as we have done in most cases, has been detrimental in many ways. This has killed the instinct for innovation, ...We, therefore, will have to recognize that there is no easy purchase of high technology any more and what will be given to us will be just left-overs.'³⁴

Writing in *Foreign Affairs*, a prestigious journal in the US, Leo Model stated: 'Technical information is provided for the subsidiaries at second hand. This cuts off foreign scientists and technicians from the best opportunities for industrial research in their own countries. In fact, the problem is one of national concern.'³⁵

Indian business magnates prefer to buy technology rather than develop it. They spend very little on research and development. According to a Reserve Bank of India survey of 1,885 private sector companies, constituting 57.1 per cent of all non-government, non-financial public limited companies in terms of paid-up capital at the end of March 1989, these companies had a total turnover of about Rs 69,000 crore in 1988-89, but invested just Rs 47 crore in that year, i.e., 0.07 per cent of their turnover in R&D. Their advertising expenses were about ten times their R&D expenditure.³⁶

Furthermore, according to an FICCI study, the funds spent by Indian business magnates on R&D were mainly for resolving the immediate problems of production and technology absorption. On the other hand, advanced capitalist countries spend four to seven per cent, at times even 12 per cent, of their turnover on R&D.

Technology is one of the levers which imperialist countries use in order to strengthen the chains of India's dependence on them. This dependence is one of the causes of India's underdevelopment and backwardness.

Development Planning and the Socialist Pattern of Society

A few more words about India's 'development' planning. Planning was undertaken by the Indian ruling classes in 1950. An economic plan is intended to guide and direct the economy. But it may be noted that much of the Indian economy has been beyond the control of the planners and the authorities who are expected to have the will and the power to carry it through. When the Planning Commission was first set up, it was declared that the Commission would take as its basic terms of reference certain Directive Principles of State Policy, embodied in the Indian Constitution. These principles gave all citizens 'the right to an adequate means of livelihood', and declared that 'the ownership and control of the natural resources of the community' would be 'so distributed as best to subserve the common good' and 'that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment'. But existing foreign capital was, at the same time, given the freedom to operate and the maximum possible influx of foreign capital was welcomed. Semi-feudal relations prevailed in India's vast rural areas. In such circumstances planning had a very much restricted scope. The noble principles, which the plans were supposed to fulfil, were rather of the nature of deceitful propaganda.

Paul Baran said that 'no planning worth the name is possible in a society in which the means of production remain under the control of private interests which administer them with a view to their owners' maximum profits....'³⁷ The ruling classes, no doubt, set up a regulatory mechanism - a system of controls over capital issues, licensing of new enterprises and of large extensions of existing ones, controls over allocations of foreign exchange and over import and export, and price and physical controls. It was claimed that this would guide development along the desired channel. It may be remembered that the different controls by the State, even State management and State ownership of many industries were urged by the tycoons themselves in the Bombay Plan as well as by the British rulers in the mid-forties, as specified in the bare outlines of their proposed plans. The controls, licences and State intervention were essential in the interest of the tycoons themselves and these, no doubt, served their interests well in practice. These controls and the licensing system bred huge corruption.³⁸

The plans envisaged a public sector besides the private sector. Nehru started declaiming from November 1954 that it was their policy to build 'a socialist

pattern of society' in India. This goal was reaffirmed again and again, for instance, at the annual session of the Congress at Avadi. GD Birla said on the occasion of an FICCI luncheon: 'industry should welcome [this brand of socialism] in its own interest.'³⁹

In India, as in many other countries, there exists a mixed economy – a private sector co-existing with a public or state sector. The demand for a public sector was raised by the tycoons themselves in 1944 when they drafted the Bombay Plan. They needed a public sector for they expected it to build the infrastructure – roads, transport, communications, power industry, etc. – and long-gestating basic industries and public financial institutions which would provide them with money capital. Addressing the Indian Merchants' Chamber, Bombay, Madhavsingh Solanki, union minister for planning said that public and private sectors are so designed as to complement each other. The private sector's success has been largely due to the difficult job being performed by the public sector in creating the necessary infrastructure and basic inputs to the economy.⁴⁰

In his address to the FICCI in March 1955, Nehru said: 'do not be afraid of the phrase "socialist pattern of society" which was often interchanged with the word "socialism". By adopting this ideal and working for its fulfilment, you will serve the country, and benefit yourselves.'⁴¹ His worthy daughter, Indira Gandhi said to Kuldip Nayar in the early seventies, 'We spoke of Socialism because that was what went down well with the masses.'⁴² And, ironically, during her Emergency rule, on January 3, 1977, India became, through a mere amendment of the Indian Constitution – just a stroke of the pen – a 'Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic'.

This kind of Socialism did not aim at abolition of private property – confiscation of neither imperialist capital nor the capital of the big compradors nor the property of the feudal or semi-feudal landlords. Instead, this Nehruvian socialism was to see that they waxed fatter and fatter. TT Krishnamachari, then India's Finance Minister, told the American Council of Foreign Relations during his visit to the USA in October 1957: 'When we talk of the role of a socialist state, we speak essentially... of the state to step in and fill such gaps in the economic structure as cannot be filled by private initiative and enterprise.'⁴³

To quote AH Hanson, 'The urban bourgeoisie resists nationalisation; the rural resists cooperative farming. Both are highly resistant to taxation. Both oddly enough accept the 'socialist pattern', the former because it extends the infrastructure of the economy, opens up new markets, and limits competition. The latter because it provides seeds, water, fertilisers, credit, and other valuable services. In many respects, indeed, the urban and the rural bourgeoisie would seem to be the main beneficiaries of "socialism"...'⁴⁴

The imperialists also welcomed this brand of 'socialism' and contributed to its progress. A memorandum, dated January 8, 1974, issued by the United States Information Service, stated: 'Contrary to the view widely held in India, US aid to India was concentrated in the public rather than the private sector.' In support of this statement, this memorandum presented a table (Table No. 1) and asserted that 'direct US assistance to India over the 21 years [1951 to June 1972] has totalled \$10 billion. Ninety per cent of that aid has gone to the Indian public sector, ten per cent to the private.' It added: 'As shown in Table 3, the United States financed the equivalent of 21 per cent of the total public sector capital formation during the 1960's....' Other imperialist countries like Britain and West Germany made their contributions by building, for instance, the Durgapur Steel Plant and the Rourkella Steel Plant, respectively, in the public sector. The erstwhile revisionist Soviet Union and the World Bank did not lag behind. Every manufacturing unit in India's public or 'socialist' sector has been set up with the technology and loan-capital from imperialist countries.

The main beneficiaries of Nehruvian socialism were the Indian business magnates and the imperialist monopolies. The Sixth Five Year Plan 1980-85 stated: 'The industrial policy of the Government accepted the important role of the private sector and an elaborate network of institutions has been established to support it and regulate its activities. A major component of the support system is the network of development banking institutions which have been established to finance private investment in industry.'⁴⁵ The Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI), the Industrial Finance Corporation of India (IFCI) and the Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI) (with substantial foreign equity) provided the investors in the private sector – joint ventures as well as subsidiaries of foreign monopolies – the much-needed money capital, while public sector commercial banks gave them working capital. GD Birla rightly said that the public sector was going to 'act as a generator of private enterprise'.⁴⁶

The business magnates wielded considerable influence on the development banks as well as the public sector commercial banks. Besides their representation on different advisory councils and committees of the Indian government, they adorned seats on the boards of directors of those banks and other financial institutions, including the Reserve Bank of India and the State Bank of India (central as well as local boards). Lal Bahadur Shastri, who succeeded Nehru as India's Prime Minister in 1964, appointed a Business Advisory Council, which included not only the president of the FICCI and other representatives of Indian business but also representatives of foreign industrialists.⁴⁷

While the Five Year Plans claiming to build the 'socialist pattern of society' contributed to the fabulous enrichment of a handful of industrialists, the burden

of financing them fell mostly on the basic masses of the people. It was through additional doses of indirect taxation and deficit financing, besides loans from imperialist countries (the overwhelming burden of all of which had to be borne by the impoverished people), that the edifice of Nehruvian socialism was being built. A comment by Chester Bowles, US ambassador to India and Nehru's friend and adviser, on Nehru's 'socialistic pattern of society' is remarkable for its shrewdness. He observed that 'upon close examination his [Nehru's] concept of a mixed economy and welfare state turns out to be hardly more radical than the economic programme of Winston Churchill's Conservative government in England'.⁴⁸

According to Wilfred Malenbaum, the private sector 'generated 92 per cent of India's gross product' before planning was undertaken. Throughout the 1950s the ratio was above 90 per cent and during the 1960s did not go below 85 per cent. On the other hand, as Malenbaum said, the ratio in Japan was below 80 per cent and in the United States below 75 per cent.⁴⁹

The rhetoric about socialism or the 'socialistic pattern of society' was purely Indian of the Congress variety, but the plans were no independent achievements. From the very beginning, as Chester Bowles, US ambassador to India in the early fifties and again in the sixties, wrote, 'under the leadership of Douglas Ensminger, the Ford [Foundation] staff in India became closely associated with the Planning Commission...'⁵⁰ The Ford Foundation, which became an international organisation in 1949, assumed the role of supplementing the role of the US State Department to throw back Communism and build up and ensure the worldwide hegemony of the USA. The US imperialists regarded India as 'the key point in the entire east', as a counterpoise to Socialist China. We shall refer here briefly to the importance attached to the Ford staff by Nehru and others and the collaboration between it and the Planning Commission. As George Rosen, an American economist, hired by the MIT Centre for International Studies, who came to India and worked here, has said, 'Paul Hoffman [the president of the Ford Foundation] and the Ford Foundation group had been welcomed eagerly by all levels of the Indian government, including the prime minister and the Planning Commission, on their 1951 visit....Nehru had designated the Planning Commission as the Ford Foundation's point of contact with the Indian government on substantive matters.... Because of Nehru's interest in the ideas emanating from the Ford office in New Delhi, Ensminger had access to the prime minister on matters of importance. The Foundation office in Delhi was regarded as a participant in the generation of ideas and in developing new programme strategies over and above its role in carrying out and evaluating projects it had assisted... the Foundation office and the Planning Commission worked jointly on developing ideas, for submission to the Foundation....'⁵¹

According to Rosen, the American expert had greater influence than a highly competent Indian expert and had access to highly classified documents – a privilege which his Indian counterparts did not enjoy.⁵² The Ford Foundation had a very important role to play in the implementation of the Community Development Programme which was an integral part of India's early plans. The US Aid for International Development (USAID) and Rockefeller Foundation lent it their support.⁵³ In 1982, Ensminger said to Rosen: 'I fed programme ideas into India through the same channels [Indian officials]. To keep me informed the Planning Commission sent me ... its working documents ... with an understanding that ideas and suggestions from me were always welcome. The Planning Commission always expected feedback of my critical observations following a field trip – and this I did.'⁵⁴

I would like to briefly refer to the contributions of another US institution to the joint ventures which were India's Five Year Plans. The Center for International Studies, set up by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1951, selected India as its only field of activity. It came to be headed by Max Millikan, the deputy director of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), who shifted from the CIA to become director of the Center. It was funded by the US Government, especially the CIA and the Ford Foundation.⁵⁵ The Ford Foundation and the MIT Center operated as 'quasi-official advisers to the Planning Commission' and played an important role in the formulation of India's plans. 'The major economic activity in which the foreign economists and Indian policymakers cooperated', said Rosen, 'was in preparation of Indian plans and in estimating the amount of foreign aid that might be expected in realising these plans.... The Center's efforts did contribute to the American and World Bank policies with respect to India as well as to the Indian Government's internal policies.'⁵⁶

When in 1957-58 the Indian government faced an acute foreign exchange crisis and the fate of the Second Five Year Plan (1956-57 to 1960-61) became uncertain, 'US aid became massive, not only in absolute terms but relative to the size of the Indian Plan and the possibility arose for greater involvement with the whole planning process. A large flow of American experts came on the eve of the Third Plan [1961-62 to 1965-66] – among them Millikan, Rostow, and [JK] Galbraith and, through them and otherwise, the US came to have a big hand in the size of the Third Plan and in many constituent elements of it.'⁵⁷

Significantly, in April 1961, when Galbraith saw Nehru after assuming office as US ambassador to New Delhi, Nehru 'asked that my new role not prevent me from continuing as economic adviser to his government. I told him that it wouldn't but that my voice might now be a trifle muted.'⁵⁸ Such was the abject dependence of Indian rulers on US imperialists. Galbraith, Millikan, Rostow,

Ensminger, the Western economists ('agents of change') and a lot more from the USA helped Nehru build the 'socialist pattern of society'.

And then there was the World Bank, the watchdog of the interests of the imperialist powers, especially the USA. It had 'an established consultative status on the Planning Commission.'⁵⁹ It closely scrutinised every plan and monitored its progress. It scrutinised even the annual budgets of the Indian government and, on its recommendations, the Western powers provided loans on which the Indian plans were heavily dependent.⁶⁰ At the initiative of the USA, the Aid India Consortium – a consortium of Western powers with the World Bank to coordinate between them – was set up in 1958 to provide the much-needed loans to the ruling classes of India to execute their 'socialist' plans. Loans were sanctioned on an annual basis by the World Bank and individual Consortium members after a thorough review and approval of a plan and its progress. Hazari and Mehta wrote:

'As an international agency which is a large creditor in its own right, and as broker and coordinator for Western aid to India, IBRD [International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, of which the World Bank is the main constituent] has assumed a key role in Indian development'.⁶¹

Besides the World Bank and the USA, other Western powers and the Japanese do monitor the implementation of the projects and play their role in shaping India's plans and in determining the direction of India's economy.⁶² 'All donor countries', as Eldridge wrote, 'maintain control in one form or another'.⁶³

Major policies guiding the Indian economy were drawn up in Washington by the imperialist powers and the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) (now renamed World Trade Organisation), etc., set up to look after the interests of the imperialist powers. These policies provide the frame into which Indian plans were fitted.

And then there was the erstwhile Soviet Union, once one of the two superpowers, who also made its contribution to the shaping of India's plans. As both the USA and the Soviet Union regarded Socialist China during Mao's time as the common enemy, 'certain fundamental interests of the US and USSR' appeared to coincide in regard to the Indian subcontinent.⁶⁴ The Soviet Union also tried to perpetuate a kind of colonial relationship with India, especially in matters of trade and investment.⁶⁵ As the Soviet Union was a giver of substantial aid and became the main supplier of military hardware from about mid-1965, certain elements which would serve its interests were embodied in the plans but with no significant change in their character.

Soviet Aid

India began to receive Soviet aid from 1955, when India and the erstwhile Soviet Union signed an agreement to build the Bhilai steel plant. Later, several 'aid' agreements were signed between the two countries. Though Soviet aid was offered to the Indian business magnates like the Birlas also,⁶⁶ it went mostly to the construction of public sector projects – oil refineries, steel plants, engineering industries, power projects, etc. Towards the end of the fifties, with the onset of Moscow's cold war with Socialist China,⁶⁷ (which threatened to be a hot war at the end of the sixties), and as its contradiction with the USA became secondary, its aid to India took a qualitative leap. Moscow began to provide India with military assistance – military hardware, including high-altitude helicopters and heavy transport planes for use in the Himalayan region as preparation for the coming war with China. Soviet pilots began to instruct their Indian counterparts on how to operate them. Chester Bowles observed: 'The motivation of the USSR in assisting India has, since the end of the 1950s, been primarily based on the Soviet estimation of India's geopolitical importance as a *partial balance to the political influence and potential might of China*.'⁶⁸ To quote Bowles again, 'In regard to the Indian subcontinent, certain fundamental interests of the US and USSR appear to coincide.'⁶⁹

From about the mid-fifties, the Soviet rulers became eager to collaborate with the US imperialists in nurturing the Nehru regime as a counterweight to Socialist China as well as in exploiting the Indian people and to bind her with economic and military chains. The Soviet aid was intended to supplement US aid, as Khrushchev himself said. In June 1960, Khrushchev told Morarji Desai, then India's Finance Minister: 'We help you in order that the Americans might give you more aid. They will give you more aid as soon as we give you aid.'⁷⁰

Dilip Hiro rightly said: '...since the mid-1960s [rather, from the beginning of the decade], with minor exceptions, the two superpowers have followed complementary, rather than competitive, policies towards India.'⁷¹ 'By the late 1960s', wrote Hiro, 'Russia had become India's largest supplier of arms.'⁷²

CL Sulzberger, a noted American journalist, commented in the *New York Times* issue dated February 19, 1972: 'Russia has taken over the function, once assumed to be America's, of developing in India a counterpoise to the Chinese might in Asia.'⁷³ In 1974, the World Bank, then headed by Robert McNamara of Vietnam fame, directed 'an appeal to the Soviet Union to "bail [India] out of a critical economic crisis that could lead to political chaos".'⁷⁴

At one time the ideological fairy tale was spread widely that the erstwhile USSR's aid to India was unselfish; that the Soviet aid-givers' purpose was to enable a 'newly independent country' like India to achieve economic

independence and to help her to break the shackles of imperialist capital. Soviet writers like RA Ulyanovsky and the leaders of the CPI and the CPI(M) were tireless in propagating this myth and claimed that the Soviet Union was guided by socialist principles 'in rendering assistance to the economically backward countries'.

In fact, the character of Soviet aid did not differ from that of the aid from the West or from Japan. Like other imperialist aid, it was loan-capital exported by the erstwhile Soviet Union and served the same purposes – economic, political and military. One of them was to develop and expand markets for Soviet machinery, technology, etc., and use India as a raw material appendage. From the fifties, the Soviet rulers were intent on breaking into Indian market to which previously they had no access. The Indian rulers were not unsympathetic. Nehru paid a visit to Moscow in June 1955. On leaving the USSR, Nehru 'saw his task as being that of conveying to the Western Powers his understanding that there had been a real change in Moscow'. On June 27, 1955, he conveyed in his letter to US President Eisenhower his impression 'that a marked change had come over Soviet policy and that this was not a mere temporary phase.'⁷⁵ And on the last day of his visit to India, Khrushchev told Nehru, 'We want to be friendly with you but not to separate you from your other friends. We want to be friendly with your friends.'⁷⁶

Soviet rulers used aid as an adjunct to trade. Their penetration into India was helped by the refusal of the USA and the World Bank to provide aid for some public sector projects like the Bokaro Steel Plant. In the course of time, India became by far the most important Asian target of Soviet aid – economic and military.

Like aid from the imperialist West, Soviet aid was also tied to projects. Machinery, components, spare parts, technology, etc. – often shoddy and obsolete – had to be purchased from the Soviet Union at prices higher than international prices.⁷⁷ The Soviet Union maintained a monopoly of the work of designs and supply of machinery, machine tools, processed industrial raw materials for the enterprises set up with its help. For instance, while building the Bokaro Steel Plant in the sixties, the Soviet authorities refused to associate Indians with the work of designs and insisted on having entire control over the steel works during the period of its construction.⁷⁸ 'One of the effects of this policy', write Mehrotra and Clawson, 'is to prevent the growth of Indian technology and knowhow.'⁷⁹

Soviet aid was actually investment. The Soviet Union charged interest for its loan and royalty for the knowhow. Soviet experts who came to India had to be paid fabulous remuneration. Soviet machinery and components sold at prices higher than international prices. Usually, they sold inferior quality

machinery. Often, products of Soviet-aided projects were purchased by the Soviet Union at prices below the cost of production. In 1972 an agreement was concluded, according to which the Soviet Union was to buy one million tonnes of Bhilai steel at prices 10 to 20 per cent lower than the international prices. Trade between USSR and India followed the imperialist pattern. The former bought cheap primary products like tea and sold them at higher prices to a third country, earning hard currency. The prices of Soviet goods would go on increasing, while those of India's primary products would always depreciate with the passing of years. In 1960, a Soviet truck was exchanged for 2.2 metric tonnes of Indian tea; 5.8 tonnes in 1974.⁸⁰

The erstwhile Soviet Union sold India a huge amount of military hardware. As a merchant of death and destruction it was only second to the USA.

The Soviet rulers were very hard bargainers as regards the terms on which they gave their aid. Nihal Singh writes: 'An even more acrimonious controversy between India and the Soviet Union was caused by the terms that the Soviets set for undertaking a huge steel plant at Bokaro... Moscow declined to share consultation with Indian consultants, forced 300 'experts' on India when Indian engineers were available, and proved adamant on their cost estimates, which were considered too high. Soviet officials made no secret of their annoyance over New Delhi's request for re-examining Bokaro's cost structure. New Delhi felt that it had no option but to accept Soviet terms. Kuldip Nayar has observed: 'However, the fact is - as a Parliamentary Committee has pointed out - Bokaro Steel will produce steel at a cost of about Rs 4,000 (£222) a tonne compared with Soviet estimates of Rs 2,600 (£150).'⁸¹ And Philips Petroleum of Holland charged Rs 393.8 million for a 3.56 million tonne plant at Cochin while the USSR built a refinery at about the same time at Guwahati with a capacity of 2 million tonnes costing Rs 434.5 million.'⁸²

To quote one more instance, in 1962 India entered into an agreement with the Soviet Union for building the Mig-21 project, though the latter had already developed better fighter planes. The project was not completed by 1972-3, as had been agreed to. For several years, India had to purchase high-priced components from the Soviet Union. A Mig-21, when manufactured with certain components and processed materials purchased from that country, cost India more than double the price at which the Soviet Union sold its finished product. The Soviet rulers saw to it that India remained ever dependent on them for their know how and certain equipments.⁸³

Far from attacking the stranglehold of imperialist capital on the Indian economy, as claimed by Soviet theoreticians and the leaders of the CPI and the CPI(M), Soviet aid served the same purpose as imperialist aid and supplemented it. In the course of a speech in the USA in September 1959, the Soviet Prime

Minister N Khrushchev said: 'Your and our economic successes will be hailed by the whole world, which expects our two Great Powers to help the people who are centuries behind in their economic development to get on their feet more quickly.'⁸⁴ This was said after the US military interventions in Greece, China, Iran and other countries and brutal aggressions against and unspeakable savageries in Korea, Vietnam, etc. The complementary nature of Soviet aid was appreciated by Averell Harriman, a leading US politician who, as Eldridge pointed out, 'went so far as to emphasise the need for India to maintain good relations with the Soviet Union, claiming that this was equally to America's interest'.⁸⁵

According to an estimate by *Economic Times*, for every Rs 100 of 'aid', the Soviet Union extorted from India Rs 564.7.⁸⁶

The question of Soviet aid being of a socialist character did not arise, for there had been a great reversal in the Soviet Union. The Soviet bureaucratic bourgeoisie had already restored in the USSR what was essentially capitalism and Soviet economy was ruled by the profit motive. It was the objective needs of capitalism, operating within some limits and from behind a socialist facade, that forced the Soviet ruling class to collaborate and sometimes to contend with the US imperialists to build its own neo-colonial empire.

Besides putting up a joint US-Soviet front against Socialist China of Mao's days and against national liberation struggles in different countries - sometimes camouflaged - the Soviet rulers were also driven by the urge to expand their own sphere of influence. The Indian ruling classes, while using the signboard of non-alignment - when really aligned with both the superpowers - were sometimes able to manoeuvre between them and obtain some advantages. I would like to cite one instance.

Oil refineries set up in India by Esso and Caltex, subsidiaries of US oil majors, and by Burma-Shell, a subsidiary of an Anglo-Dutch oil major, were granted by the Indian government all kinds of concessions. These conglomerates reaped high profits because of their monopoly of the Indian market.⁸⁷ In order to break this monopoly, in 1960 the Soviet Union offered India large quantities of crude oil on a barter basis. But Esso, Caltex and Burma-Shell refused to refine Soviet crude oil and market imported Soviet products like kerosene and automotive diesel oil. With Soviet credit, equipment and technical help two oil refineries - at Barauni and Koyali - were set up and another was built by Romania at Noonmati in Assam. The Russians also extended assistance to the Indian government to undertake an oil exploratory programme and the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) was set up. In ending the outright robbing by the US and Anglo-Dutch oil majors, the joint ventures of the Indian government with Phillips Petroleum and AMOCO (Standard Oil of Indiana) and NIOC (Iran's state oil company) were also helpful.

The Soviet aid was far from disinterested. The Russians with their hegemonic aspirations exacted their pound of flesh. The refineries they built here cost India much more than similar refineries built elsewhere. Besides, as Mehrotra and Clawson observed, 'in petroleum refining, the equipment and production processes which the Soviets offered were not suitable to India's requirements.'^{87a}

A lot of Soviet equipment used, for instances, in the Bharat Ophthalmic Glass plant and in the Indian Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Ltd (IDPL) was badly designed and defective.⁸⁸

The manipulation of exchange rates of the currencies of the two countries has been one of the chief ways of Soviet, and later, Russian plunder. It is a long, devious story into which we shall not enter for lack of space. This strategy enabled the Soviet Union, and later, Russia to buy Indian goods for a song and to sell its goods to India at incredibly inflated prices.⁸⁹ Subramaniam Swamy, then India's Commerce Minister, said to Reuters :

"Today we have a ridiculous situation. The rupee is 24 to a rouble and about 21 to a dollar. But the rouble is trading at 35 to a dollar. We are thus subsidising the rouble 45 times."⁹⁰

The *Statesman* wrote in an editorial that it was not economic considerations but 'the political hand that shaped the relationship' and doubted the usefulness of it.^{90a}

Teresa Hayter, who saw from close quarters the functioning of the aid mechanism in Latin America, says that 'aid is merely the smooth face of imperialism ... in so far as it is effective, its contribution to the well-being of the third world is negative, since it is not in their interest that exploitation should continue.... It may help to bolster up such governments [who tolerate massive outflows of private profits and interest on past debts] by providing a few short-term solutions to their economic difficulties. It may also help to create and sustain, within Third World countries, a class which is dependent on the continued existence of aid and foreign private investment and which therefore becomes an ally of imperialism.'⁹¹

More on the Agrarian System

Before concluding this chapter, I would like to add a few more words on the agrarian system and the industrial sector in India.

During the pre-British days, the agrarian system was feudal. Besides maintaining the princes in the native states as their puppets, the British raised a new semi-feudal structure that would serve the interests of the British bourgeoisie in place of the old one. On the one hand, the peasant's traditional right of occupancy of the land was abolished and land became a commodity.

Furthermore, a new legal system, based on concepts of property and contract, was introduced. Third, India was drawn into the world capitalist market with greater commercialisation of agriculture and greater penetration of commodity money relations than before.

On the other hand, the mode of appropriation of the agricultural surplus was feudal. The extraction of the maximum surplus from the peasant's produce, even a part of the necessary product, by extra-economic coercion, became the basis of the early colonial system of plunder.

In the first few decades of the nineteenth century, India, as noted before, was converted into a raw material appendage of Britain and a market for her growing factory industry. The union of agriculture and industry that existed before was destroyed by force to create a captive market for the products of her new industries. Profits from unequal trade were added to the rent revenue as another main source of colonial plunder. The three different land revenue systems that the British introduced in separate regions of India – zamindari, ryotwari and mahalwari – tended towards one direction, the development of feudal production relations in agriculture on a new basis.

In the new climate created by the British rule, usury had a phenomenal growth. To pay exorbitant land-tax – rent or revenue – and various *abwabs* (illegal but customary, since the British advent, extortions from the peasant, especially from the share-cropper), and in times of harvest failure and for his subsistence even in better days, the peasant had to rely on the usurer. The usurer blossomed out in the course of time as usurer-cum-landlord and wielded decisive control over the life of his victims – owner-peasants turned into share-croppers or landless agricultural workers. As the Bengal Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee 1929–30 said in its report: '...a big share of the income of agriculturists is eaten up by interest and other charges, making repayment of loans very difficult,.... As has been well said, "the cultivator is born in debt, increases his debt throughout his life and dies more helplessly in debt than ever".'⁹² This was true of the large majority of peasants in the whole of India.

Surendra J Patel wrote: '... in 1950–51 land rent and moneylenders' interest came up to the staggering amount of Rs 14,000 million, or roughly a third of the value of the country's total farm produce that year.'⁹³ A large portion of the rest of the value was appropriated by a hierarchy of traders.

The exorbitant revenue demand and payment of it in cash forced peasants to grow commercial crops like cotton and jute in order to provide raw materials for Britain's industry. The peasants in cash-crop growing areas were victims of ruthless exploitation by traders in the market controlled by speculators – the big compradors and British Agency houses and exchange banks. By robbing the direct producers in the name of trade, the fabulous amounts of commercial

profit which the British bourgeoisie and Indian compradors earned were not the normal commercial profit but speculative profit of a colonial and semi-feudal character, obtained by swindling.

There were some very big landlords. At one time Dwarka Nath Tagore, grandfather of Rabindra Nath Tagore, had a zamindari which constituted one-sixteenth of the entire undivided province of Bengal. In UP there were talukdars who had estates of 500 square miles or more.⁹⁴ There was differentiation among the peasants. Rich peasants had more than sufficient land; they worked on land themselves as well as hired farm workers to cultivate their lands. Sometimes they gave part of the land they owned on oral lease to share-croppers and derived a part of their income from rent; often they practised usury. What they lent was more often in kind – rice or other food – than in cash. The middle peasant had enough land to feed himself and his family members. He depended mainly on his own labour and the labour of his family members but he could hire some labour during the heavy seasons. The poor peasant had insufficient land and had to serve as a share-cropper and/or agricultural labourer, besides tilling his own patch of land. Many agricultural workers had tiny plots of land allotted to them by substantial landowners to be assured of their labour when the latter would need it. Most agricultural workers had work only for a few months in the year. A section of them who were employed throughout the year were virtually slaves, working both at the homes of their employers and in their fields.

The system of exploitation was buttressed by the hereditary caste system, a unique Indian social institution, a feature not only of the Hindu but also of the Muslim and Christian communities in India.⁹⁵ Those who owned most of the land and other property and enjoyed social privileges belonged usually to the upper castes. The actual producers of wealth were generally members of the so-called lower castes, outcastes (treated as untouchables) and tribal people. The 'untouchables', besides pursuing their traditional occupations like scavenging and leather-work, had to fulfil certain social obligations to the upper caste people and worked as agricultural labourers during the heavy seasons.

The overwhelming majority of the peasants groaned under the four-fold oppression and exploitation – by the colonial rulers, by the landlords, by money-lenders and by various trader middlemen, many of whom acted as agents of the British or the Indian big bourgeoisie.

With the accession of the native states to India after the formal transfer of power the princes, who had been corrupt and tyrannical to their subjects and puppets in the hands of the British imperialists, retained their palaces, vast lands, jewellery and other possessions – the congealed life-blood of their subjects for many generations – and were rewarded with princely 'privy purses' for ministers, ambassadors, etc.

As noted before, no democratic revolution preceded, accompanied or followed the transfer of power. The old agrarian system remained essentially the same as before. In this predominantly agricultural country, food shortage was acute, bordering on famine conditions and, in some years, famines ravaged some parts of the country. The Indian ruling classes could hardly ignore the severe agrarian crisis. Telangana, which started in 1946, was a warning. The US imperialists, who took keen interest in this second most populous country in the world and neighbour to China, and who had grown wiser and sadder after being driven out of China in 1949, were also worried. Chester Bowles, the US ambassador to India, brought the foremost American experts in land policy, Wolf Ladejinsky and Kenneth Parsons of the University of Wisconsin. He tried to impress on Nehru the urgent need for land reforms, the inadequacy in which Bowles regarded as 'one of the most important weaknesses in the Nehru government'. After making intensive studies of several states, 'Ladejinsky reported that the bitter complaints of the peasants reminded him of similar complaints he had heard in pre-Communist China in 1946. *The land inequalities, he said, were as bad or even worse than he had seen anywhere in Asia.*'^{95a}

The political and economic conditions urged the ruling classes in India to undertake some agrarian legislations, at least to make a pretence of it. The different constituent states of the Indian Union enacted legislations like the zamindari abolition acts and land ceiling acts. Through the zamindari abolition acts the government acquired the interests of 'the topmost layer of a hierarchy of intermediaries' by paying compensation to them (about Rs 640 crore, a fabulous sum in those days, the burden of which mostly fell on the peasants themselves). The zamindars were allowed to retain *khas* lands and resume more in the name of cultivating them themselves (i.e., by hiring agricultural workers and/or by leasing them out to sharecroppers). As a class, the intermediaries between the state and the actual tillers of the soil were not removed. The land ceiling acts gave sufficient time to the substantial landowners to allow them to make suitable arrangements. The acts also made liberal concessions to religious institutions, plantations, sugarcane farms owned by sugar factories, orchards and so on, and left such loopholes that allowed owners of large landed property to retain their possessions. The large landowners had time enough to divide their landed property and hold it in their own, their relatives' as well as under fictitious names.

The Draft Five-Year Plan 1978-83 admitted that 'the land reform measures have had no visible impact on the distribution of rural property.'⁹⁶ Referring to the 'extreme maldistribution of land, with nearly a quarter of the households owning no land at all and another one-fifth owning less than one acre each',

Wolf Ladejinsky observed that ceiling levels as fixed in the different states 'were in themselves a deterrent to the programme's success. This was compounded by legal and illegal land transfers both in anticipation and after the enactment of the ceiling laws, and on the top of that were the numerous exceptions.... Summing it up for India as a whole, by the end of 1970 the 'declared surplus was only 2.4 million acres and 'area distributed' just half of that, or 0.3 of one per cent of the total cultivated land of India.' Ladejinsky warned that even these figures were probably inflated, 'that the quality of some of that land is so poor as not to be worthy of distribution, that an undetermined acreage of the distributed land could fall into the category of wasteland and that a portion of that land was vested in the states rather than acquired from owners under the ceiling programmes ... Looking back, the entire ceiling episode was one of evasions by commission and omission.'⁹⁷

'The village oligarchs', as Daniel Thorner wrote, 'have made a mockery of this [the land reform] legislation, devising 1001 ways of blocking or getting around the law. Their relations and friends in the State legislatures have eased their task by putting numerous loopholes in the laws or adding crippling amendments.'⁹⁸

Agrarian legislations actually strengthened the positions of the landlords and the upper strata of the peasantry.⁹⁹ There was some redistribution of landed property among 10-15 per cent of the rich landowners. While some reduction of very large holdings did take place, those of the upper strata of the peasantry generally tended to increase.

On the other hand, the right of the landlords to resume land for personal cultivation, i.e., cultivation with the help of agricultural workers or others, was used by them to evict millions of peasants from the lands they had been cultivating for generations. Landlords also had such lands recorded as their *khas* or *benami* lands and drove underground informal crop-sharing arrangements. They did not fail to take advantage of the enormous pressure of population on agriculture in the absence of alternative avenues of employment and the helplessness of numerous landless peasants. ML Dantwala stated that in the decade after the transfer of power, more peasants had been evicted from their lands than during the last hundred years of direct British rule.¹⁰⁰

An article in *Aspects of India's Economy*, edited by Rajani X. Desai, correctly stated:

'A 1937 study of pre-liberation China estimated that the poorest 57.1 per cent of rural Chinese households held 23.5 per cent of the crop land, while the richest 2.6 per cent owned 28.7 per cent. But India's picture is worse. According to the 1981 Census, 74.5 per cent of the operational holdings make up 26.3 per cent of the cultivable land,

while the largest 2.4 per cent of the agricultural holdings make up 22.8 per cent. Since three decades of land reform were already behind this Indian record, the bigger landlords had already had a chance to divide their holdings in benami lots. The 1981 Census description, therefore, if anything, disguises the extent of inequality.¹⁰¹

I would like to quote a rather lengthy passage which KD Malaviya, a former Congress minister of India, wrote in 1964:

'The numerous official and unofficial surveys (carried out during the last 10 years) of the results of the implementations of agrarian laws, the working of Community Projects and other national development services and farm co-operatives, show irrefutably that it is the upper strata and not the masses of the rural population that have mostly benefited.

'This top group (8-10 per cent) of landowners constitutes the dominant class in the countryside - former zamindars, *talukdars* and *malguzars*, etc., who still held huge areas as *sir* lands, and are supposed to cultivate them personally, the big landowners of ryotwari areas, and the privileged top layer of tenant farmers, who, in the majority of cases, in reality do not themselves work on the land but obtain huge unearned incomes like old parasites through illegal subletting and rack-renting and exploitation of agricultural labourers. All of them are almost invariably bound up with urban, commercial and usury capital. The basis of their economic power is their ownership of more than half the land under cultivation, while more than 80 per cent of the actual tillers own less than 15 per cent of the cultivated land.

'These big landowners control the co-operative societies, they dominate panchayats and local councils, and they obtain the greatest benefits from the Community Projects and other such State measures....

'The numerous village studies made during the past decade have shown convincingly that in carrying out the agrarian reforms the basic aim of Congress - the transfer of the land to those who till it - has not been achieved. These studies show irrefutably that the process of the concentration of economic might in the form of land, cattle, implements, capital, etc., at one end of the social ladder, and poverty at the other is still continuing. Some 7 to 8 per cent of the rural population own half the land while more than 80 per cent of the rural population have either no land at all or have a plot of less than two acres, which means they live in hopeless poverty.¹⁰²

The World Bank, in its working paper entitled 'Land Reforms' and distributed in its annual session in 1974, stated:

'Security of tenure appears in general to have worsened, however. Actual rents have not come down, In some States they have increased.... Unreported casual tenancy and share agreements have multiplied.'

The Bank further suggested:

'it will be better to legalize some forms of tenancy which exist on a large scale and to promote more efficient types of tenancy contracts.

All kinds of tenants should also be registered.'¹⁰²

It is this suggestion of the World Bank that the CPI(M)-led government in West Bengal implemented, though not fully and, besides self-praise, earned the praises of others.

The basic problem – the problem of ownership of land – was not solved by the agrarian legislations. There was no fundamental change in the property structure of the rural society. The land reforms were intended not to liquidate the colonial legacy but to curb its grosser manifestations.

The land reforms were intended to serve another purpose, no less important; it was to sow illusions among the peasantry and divert them from the path of class struggle. In one of his speeches at the Nagpur session of the Congress, held towards the end of the fifties, then India's Prime Minister Nehru, said that 'though the imposition of ceiling would affect only an infinitesimal minority of landlords, and though its actual practical gains would not be much, the sentimental gains would be tremendous.'¹⁰³

Distribution of land among the peasants, who till it, by the peasants themselves (experience shows that distribution of land from above can hardly be carried out) is not actually a reform but a revolution, an agrarian revolution, a democratic revolution, which cannot be carried out within the present state structure. Led by the proletarians and semi-proletarians of the urban and rural areas, the peasantry can confiscate all lands of the landlords and excess lands of the rich peasants and then distribute land among the peasants and landlords on a more or less equal per capita basis. Real land distribution can be carried out not from the top but from below. Without this agrarian revolution, there can be no industrial regeneration, nor regeneration in any sphere of life. Without this revolution, the country is doomed to backwardness and underdevelopment, whatever technocratic solutions of the food problem like the 'Green Revolution' may be attempted. They only strengthen the grip of imperialist capital.¹⁰⁴

More on the Industrial Sector

As noted before, in 1950-51, less than two per cent of the total working population was employed in the factory industry and its share in the national income was a mere 5.8 per cent. Even compared to many Third World countries, India's industrial development was retarded. As BR Tomlinson writes, 'even by 1947 the value of average per capita output of manufactured goods was a quarter that of Egypt and one tenth that of Mexico'.¹⁰⁵

With the formal transfer of power in 1947, the colonial state was not dismantled. Imperialist capital that had dominated Indian industry, commerce, banking, etc., was not confiscated; rather, more of it was sought after. Multinationals, especially US multinationals, swooped upon India. The same lop-sided, distorted economy, an appendage to the economy of the metropolitan country, continued to prevail.

In the AICC Economic Review, which was an organ of the main political party of India's ruling classes, a contributor wrote that the Indian industrialists did not show much concern about the quantum of royalties, the amount of know how fees, prices of the capital goods, technical control, etc. What they were interested in was that the amount of their equity participation in the enterprise should be as big as possible. There were agreements which gave the foreign collaborator almost complete control over the joint ventures, even when Indian collaborators had the major share of the equity. To quote him, 'It is known, however, that the cost of equipment brought in this way [as part of a turn-key job] is higher than it should be, in several cases more than 100 per cent. The Indian participants in their zeal and hurry to get some sort of foreign name in the proposed joint ventures rush and bring in some foreign firms so that the shares of the ventures are appreciated right at the beginning in the Indian markets... the Indian unit has to be entirely spoon-fed for any further technical developments by the foreign participant. All technical progress thus is at the mercy of the foreign participants.'¹⁰⁶

The interests of the dominant section of the Indian ruling classes – the big Indian comprador bourgeois – and those of the monopolies of imperialist countries converged as in the days of direct colonial rule. Both were seeking to fleece the Indian people. 'External assistance' was provided to the Indian ruling classes to overcome their difficulties; otherwise, the very system was likely to be challenged.

Huge Indian capital contributed by Indian financial institutions, besides banks and Indian shareholders, was subordinated to foreign imperialist capital to finance the growth and expansion of foreign-controlled companies in India. According to a study of 50 largest foreign subsidiaries (companies with foreign equity of 50 per cent or more) existing in March 1975, and accounting for about 82 per cent of the assets of all foreign subsidiaries, foreign sources contributed only 5.3 per cent to the growth of these MNC-affiliated companies in India during 1956-75. The balance was raised from accumulated depreciation, retained earnings, locally raised loans, Indian share capital and other Indian sources.¹⁰⁷

Despite, rather because of foreign private investment and aid, India has retrogressed over the years compared not only with advanced capitalist countries but also with the rest of the Third World as a whole. There has been much greater reverse flow than the total foreign investment and aid. With a

population which is nearly one sixth of the entire world population, India's share in the world GDP fell from two per cent in 1950 to 1.4 per cent in 1980. As Surendra J Patel wrote, 'The decline has been greater when compared with the Third World GDP - falling from 10 per cent in 1950 to only 5.4 per cent in recent years.' 'India's share in world agricultural output', stated Patel, 'declined from 11 per cent in 1900 to nine per cent in 1980 and in Third World agriculture from 25 per cent to 17 per cent during the period. India's share in world industrial output fell from 1.2 per cent in 1950 to less than 0.5 per cent in 1980 and in Third World output from over 12 per cent in 1950 to only three per cent in 1980.'¹⁰⁵

Harry Magdoff observed:

'With debt, as with foreign investment by the multinationals, while the foreign funds might be used for developing productive resources, the net result, in the short as in the long run, is (1) a transfer of economic surplus from the underdeveloped countries to the centers of capital and (2) an entrenchment of dependent ties from the weaker to the stronger nations. Thus, the third world as a whole remains, as it has throughout the history of capitalism, locus for capital accumulation and profit-making by giant corporations and financial institutions of the advanced capitalist nations.'¹⁰⁶

To quote Harry Magdoff again,

'Typical of countries that sank into unending debt were those that were colonized or became informal outposts of empire. There the long history of colonialism and economic penetration resulted in one-sided distorted economic formations. As a rule, the landed aristocrats retained control over tillable land as well as a good deal of political power, enabling them to stand in the way of the kind of agricultural revolution that has always been the precondition of successful capitalism. In these countries the patterns of economic growth - in natural resource extraction, industry, and foreign trade - were and continue to be determined by foreign investment and loans. The emerging business community in the environment was one that fitted into the new patterns, and accordingly lacked the motive or strength to struggle for economic independence. This kind of capitalist class works in tandem with foreign investors and bankers for the sake of its own prosperity and relies on cooperation with the landed aristocracy to keep the impoverished masses in hand. Because of the high degree of dependency on the technology, frequent recourse to borrowing abroad. And that in turn reinforces the dependent relationship.'¹⁰⁷

Magdoff added: '...the ultimate brunt of the debt entrapment [as well as the huge foreign investment] has always been borne by the lower classes.'¹⁰⁸

Speaking of Latin America, Eduardo Galeano said: 'Latin American underdevelopment is not a stage on the road to development but the counterpart of development elsewhere....'¹¹² He also observed: "In these lands [Latin American countries] we are not experiencing the primitive infancy of capitalism but its vicious senility."¹¹³

The same was the experience of the Indian people. On one side, the imperialist monopolies and their Indian compradors grew fabulously rich; on the other, there was stark poverty, hunger, unemployment, malnutrition, stunted growth and disease of the large majority of the people. Human resources remained unutilised and wasted in this country as in few other nations.

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The Communist Movement in India: Split and Ideological Issues

The history of the CPI (and later, of the CPI-M as well) has been a history mainly of opportunism except for brief spells in 1927-8 and 1934-5. In 1944, PC Joshi, then General Secretary of the CPI, spoke of Congress leaders as the Communist leaders' 'political fathers' and of his partymen as 'Communist Congressmen'.¹ This description was very apt in respect of the CPI leaders but not of ordinary communist cadres. Thousands of people, with their dedication, courage and sacrifice instinctively led many struggles of the people against imperialism and its domestic allies, among whom were top Congress leaders. We have noted by people like Joshi for lack of sufficient political education. We have noted that in post-World War II days, many struggles of the people against the British Raj and its underlings were led by communists but it was for the CPI leadership that counter-revolution was able to triumph.

There was a phase, 1948-9, when the Party was led along a militant line. At the second congress of the Party, BT Ranadive became the general secretary of the Party and PC Joshi criticised himself as having 'confused and corrupted the Party', as a 'betrayal', a 'coward', a 'petty-bourgeois vacillator', an 'arch-bureaucrat' and 'the embodiment of right reformism'.²

From Joshi to Ranadive - it was a leap from rank right-opportunism to extreme left-adventurism and betrayal of agrarian revolts, especially the Telangana struggle. Under the influence of the Yugoslav theoretician Kardelji, the new line of intertwining the two stages - the democratic and socialist stages - was adopted. The democratic revolution in a country under the direct or indirect rule of imperialism is directed against imperialism and feudalism, whereas socialist revolution is directed against the rule of capital. They are two entirely different stages. One precedes the other: the socialist revolution can be accomplished only after the tasks of the democratic revolution have been

fulfilled. To talk of accomplishing the two revolutions at one stroke was sheer phrase-mongering. 'The "theory of a single revolution",' as Mao Tsetung said, 'is simply a theory of no revolution at all...'³

So, instead of revolution, what Ranadive achieved was a complete mess both in the political and in the organisational sphere. Ignoring the concrete conditions, he advocated an adventurist line pinning faith in 'bold lead' and 'militant action', whether in the streets or in prison, in meetings or in demonstrations. The use of bombs and acid bulbs was the main feature of 'militant actions'. The Party was banned in some states like West Bengal. In February 1949, Ranadive gave a call for an All India Railway strike, though the conditions were very adverse. He wrote rousing articles in which he anticipated that the strike would kindle a prairie fire of struggles, which would culminate in a countrywide insurrection and seizure of power.⁴ The proverbial mountain produced not even a mouse: there was no strike by railwaymen anywhere in India.

Ranadive later admitted that while he was practising left-adventurism in urban areas, he was pursuing a right opportunist path in respect of agrarian struggles. In areas where agrarian struggles were going on, he broke up the alliance of the poor peasants with their rich counterparts and discouraged the comrades from developing them to a higher stage. In his self-critical reports later, he accused himself of underestimating the importance of Telangana. And he poured much abuse and scorn on Mao Tsetung. Though he spoke of the democratic and the socialist stages being interlaced he became from 1949 onwards an advocate of the proletarian revolution.

Relying on one or two Politburo (PB) members, Ranadive arrogated to himself the right of determining the Party's policies, liquidating elected State Committees and setting up new ones with men of his choice, censuring CC and PB members, etc. No Central Committee (CC) meeting was convened during his reign of a little more than two years and PB meetings were rarely held.

Great discontent was brewing within the Party when, on January 27, 1950, an editorial article entitled 'Mighty Advance of the National Liberation Movement in the Colonial and Dependent Countries' appeared in the Cominform journal *For a Lasting Peace, For a People's Democracy*. (The Cominform, or the Communist Information Bureau, was established at a conference in Poland, comprising representatives of nine Communist or Workers' Parties - those of East Europe including the CPSU(B) and of France and Italy - in September 1947). It approvingly quoted Liu Shao-chi who had said in his speech at the Peking Trade Union Conference of the Countries of Asia and Oceania: 'The path taken by the Chinese people... is the path that should be taken by the people of many colonial and dependent countries in their struggle for national independence and people's democracy.'⁵

Fanned by the Cominform article, the discontent and anger of the Party members burst forth. At first, Ranadive tried to wriggle himself out of the uncomfortable situation; then he staggered and fell when his chief accomplice, Bhowani Sen, submitted a self-critical report dated May 16, 1950. Ranadive made his own self-critical reports – written and oral – in the same month. In these self-critical reports, he abashed himself as low as possible. The sum and substance of these reports was that 'I have stabbed the Party in the back'.⁶

Most of the members of the Central Committee elected at the second congress of the Party met from May 20 to June 1, 1950. The reconstituted CC elected Rajeswara Rao general secretary of the Party.

A member of the PB during Ranadive's time, Rajeswara Rao was a leader of the Telangana struggle. He upheld Mao Tsetung's theory of New Democracy and distinguished between the democratic and socialist stages of revolution. The reconstituted CC paid homage to Mao Tsetung and the three documents in which Ranadive had slandered Mao and formulated an adventurist line – 'Strategy and Tactics in the Struggle for People's Democratic Revolution in India', 'On the Agrarian Question in India' and 'On People's Democracy' – were all withdrawn.⁷ The new committee also circulated a letter among all Party members and sympathisers, in which it upheld the Cominform article and condemned the old PB and its political line and methods. It said that '*British imperialism bestowed sham independence on India*' and that it was not the entire native bourgeoisie but 'the big bourgeoisie, which is closely linked with feudal elements and usurious capital and which from its very inception had been closely bound up with British imperialists'.⁸ Referring to the 'transfer of power' 'junior partners of imperialism'.⁸ Referring to the Cominform article and the manifesto of the Peking Conference of Trade Unions, the letter stated that China's path would be India's path. It added that India's revolution to liberate the country from the yoke of imperialism and to abolish feudalism would be accomplished 'by means of guerrilla warfare in the countryside, the formation of liberated bases in the countryside and liberation armies – culminating in the seizure of power all over the country'.⁹

The reconstituted CC held that 'The objective conditions for starting guerrilla resistance are there taking India as a whole, leaving aside some areas. The only thing required is for the Party to utilize them.'¹⁰ The letter also added: '...the situation is ripe for the smashing of the ruling class by armed action of the people and for people taking their destiny into their hands.'¹¹

The new CC made certain specific formulations. It correctly pointed out that India's independence was a sham and that there were two sections of the Indian bourgeoisie – the big bourgeoisie with its interests dovetailed with those of imperialist capital and with close ties with the feudal or semi-feudal class,

and the national bourgeoisie seeking independent development. It rightly formulated that the agrarian revolution was the axis of the Indian revolution.

But the estimation made by CC of the existing situation was purely subjective. It acknowledged that many years of opportunism during the Joshi period followed by more than two years of reckless adventurism had left the Party in shambles. Mass organisations under the Party's leadership were shattered. But to claim that the Congress government was already exposed to the masses as 'the government of bloodsuckers' and that 'their old illusions' about the Congress had been 'completely shattered' and that 'the question of armed resistance was on the agenda', was quite rash. Besides the masses, even CPI leaders like Ajoy Ghosh, SV Ghate, SA Dange and a lot of others still cherished 'illusions' about the Congress leadership, especially Nehru, and they were never cured of their old malady of opportunism. (We shall see that from the early sixties, Rajeswara Rao himself pursued an opportunist and revisionist line under the leadership of Dange.) What was necessary at the moment was for the leaders and cadres to learn continually in order to have some grasp of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung thought and of the history of our country, in order to build a well-organised Party on a sound ideological and political basis, to investigate the actual conditions of our society, to awaken people to the causes of their misery through propaganda, mass organisations and class struggles and to mobilise them for the armed struggle. All this required patient, persevering, painstaking work. To give the call for armed struggle in different parts of India at the time meant refusal to do the preparatory tasks.

It is true that the armed struggle that Party units were waging in Telangana had to be defended and carried on. Extreme feudal oppression prevailed in Telangana, the Telegu-speaking region of the old Hyderabad State, ruled by the Nizam. The struggle in Telangana was the first armed peasant struggle led by the CPI. In the early forties, the Andhra Mahasabha, which had been leading a movement against feudal excesses, came under the leadership of the communists who transformed it from a liberal organisation to a militant united front of peasants, the youth, traders and other middle class people against the Nizam and feudal oppression. The movement spread in Warangal and Nalgonda districts and to some parts of Khammam. Volunteer squads were trained to fight the landlords' armed gangs.

About the time of the 'transfer of power' in 1947, the CPI joined the State Congress in the struggle for the accession of the Hyderabad state to the Indian union. By that time, the peasantry in the areas of struggle had been able to bring about an end to *vetti* (forced unpaid labour), illegal exactions and compulsory grain levies and 'started to occupy the lands seized earlier by the landlords and *desmukhs* [big landlords]'.

The Nizam cherished the ambition of having Hyderabad as an independent state. The bulk of the Muslim minority (constituting about 12 per cent of the population) wanted Hyderabad to become an independent Muslim state. Under the patronage of the Nizam, a Muslim organisation called Majlis-I-Ittehad under the leadership of Kasim Rizvi organised *razakars*, whose strength grew to about 1,00,000 by August 1948. This organisation sought to create, with the help of the Nizam's police, a reign of terror in the villages – plundering and killing suspected, potential agitators and raping their women.

By that time the CPI organised village defence squads with about 10,000 members and regular guerrilla squads with more than 2,000 members to fight the *razakars*, the Nizam's police and armed forces as well as the landlords' thugs. About 3,000 to 4,000 villages in the Nalgonda, Warangal and Khammam districts were liberated and administered by *gram rajyams* set up by the peasants.¹² These *gram rajyams* distributed among the poor and landless peasants the lands seized from the landlords, besides grain, cattle, agricultural implements, etc. The armed peasant struggle continued to surge forward to parts of Adilabad, Karimnagar and Medak districts and threatened to spread 'to the whole of Telangana and beyond'.¹³

It was at this stage – on September 13, 1948 – that the Nehru government's army marched into the Hyderabad state on the plea of curbing *razakar* atrocities and forcing the Nizam to accede to India. Actually, it was the fear of the armed peasant struggle spreading to neighbouring areas and creating a liberated base in the heart of the country that impelled the Nehru government to send 50,000 troops to wipe out the peasant raj that had been established.¹⁴

Within less than a week of the entry of the Nehru government's troops, the Nizam surrendered and banned the *razakars* who fled, leaving behind their arms and ammunition. Within a year, the Nizam became *Rajpramukh* of the Hyderabad state, with all his palaces, vast lands, jewellery (the congealed blood of generations of peasants) and other possessions untouched. The guns of Nehru's troops, as planned, were turned towards the struggling peasantry and the communists.

The Telangana struggle faced dangers from three directions. First, there were illusions about the Congress among many of the peasants and communists. In the beginning they felt happy as the Nizam's rule and the atrocities of the *razakars* ended. A large number of squads dumped their arms and went back to their villages.¹⁵ (It may be noted that no regular army had been organised with a central command – of which the guerrilla bands might be units – though there was opportunity to do so.) Soon after, when the atrocities of the Indian army surpassed those of the *razakars* and the big landlords started returning, all the small landlords, rich peasants and the small bourgeois elements, who

had been allies of the fighting peasantry, withdrew their support and even helped the marauding army. Second, the peasants in areas of struggle faced ruthless repression by Nehru's army which was far more well-equipped than the guerrilla bands. Third, the Party and the Andhra Mahasabha were themselves split on the question of continuing the armed struggle. A section of the leadership – Ravi N. Reddy, B Yella Reddy and so on – openly demanded abandonment of the struggle and went on slandering it as individual terrorism. Others, like Sundarayya, Basavapunniah and DV Rao were in favour of continuing the struggle – not as a liberation struggle but as a struggle to defend the gains of the uprising – the lands seized and distributed among the peasantry and their security.¹⁶

Confronted by the powerful enemy, the struggle went on spasmodically and even spread to parts of other districts of Telangana like Adilabad, Karimnagar, Nizamabad, Medak and Mahbubnagar.

The draft resolution of the Andhra PC secretariat, 'The Present Stage and Strategy of the Indian Revolution: Is it Socialistic or New Democratic?', circulated among the ranks by the CPI leadership in July 1948, made many correct formulations. It upheld Mao Tse Tung's theory of New Democracy. Telangana, no doubt, blazed a new path in the history of the Indian communist movement. The central leadership of the Party harmed the cause instead of helping it. The struggle also suffered from some inherent weaknesses. The Andhra leadership was not enthusiastic about the seizure of the lands of the landlords and their distribution among the landless and poor peasants. But, with the progress of the struggle, the fighting peasantry was not satisfied with the occupation of wastelands, prevention of eviction and restoration of lands that had been illegally seized by landlords. At their more and more insistent demand that surplus lands of the landlords should be taken over, the ceiling of lands that the landlords could retain was at first fixed at 500 acres, then reduced to 200 acres and finally to 100 acres of dry land and 10 acres of wet land. This did not aim at abolition of feudalism but its restrictions. In China, all lands of the landlords and surplus peasants and landlords were confiscated and then distributed among all the people on a fairly equal per capita basis. 'It is important to note here', wrote Sundarayya, 'that the taking away of the surplus land and its distribution were resorted to, when the pressure from the fighting masses became insistent, and permission for it was obtained from the Polit Bureau, with some reluctance, during the latter part of 1947.'¹⁷ Sundarayya acknowledged that the sweep of the struggle would have been much greater if the leadership had boldly implemented the land distribution programme.¹⁸ It was the class character of the leadership that acted as a constraint on the development of the full potentialities of the historic struggle. Several leaders of the struggle, like

Ravi Narayan Reddy and B Yella Reddy were themselves big landlords.¹⁹ Ravi N Reddy and a number of other leaders even condemned the seizure of land and distribution among the poor and landless peasants.

A considerable section of the leaders of the struggle as well as many leaders like Ajoy Ghosh, Dange and Ghate demanded withdrawal of the struggle after Nehru's army marched into Hyderabad. The struggle was also attacked from within by powerful elements, including the All-India Kisan Sabha led by ZA Ahmed. While the leaders who continued the struggle to defend its gains were being hunted by Nehru's mercenaries, the all-India leaders who insisted on the immediate withdrawal of the struggle functioned from their Bombay headquarters legally and propagated their views openly.

From the beginning there was no solidarity action anywhere in support of the Telangana struggle. Yet, as Chester Bowles, US ambassador and Nehru's friend, wrote, 'Despite firm Indian army occupation, newly built roads which for the first time permitted rapid patrolling by armoured cars, concentration camps filled with captured Communists, police outposts every few miles and in some places very ruthless suppression, guerilla fighting continued spasmodically until the Communists themselves changed their program of violence two years later.'²⁰ Again, he said: 'And for those who think that ruthless force alone will do the trick, Telingana [Telangana] of Hyderabad, the scene of the biggest Communist rebellion, testifies that all the troops and tanks of the Indian army could not wipe out the popular support of Communists who for the first time, distributed land among those who had none.'²¹

Even under military rule, the big landlords dared not enter the villages to get back their lost lands. 'The Government could not stabilize itself in the countryside even after one year', said Sunderayya.²²

Rank and file communists and peasant men and women showed exemplary bravery. The crimes committed by Nehru's forces were legion.²³ To quote Sunderayya, '...the entire region was subjected to brutal police and military terror rule for full five years, initially by the Nizam and his *Razakars*, armed hordes and, subsequently, by the combined armed forces of the Union Government and the State government of Hyderabad.'²⁴

What Nehru's troops and tanks could not do, the leadership of the CPI carried out. It was a blunder on the part of the new CC headed by Rajeswara Rao to issue an immediate call for armed peasant struggles in India wherever possible, instead of first building up support in urban and rural areas for Telangana and doing patient and painstaking work to rouse and mobilise the people for more Telanganas. Opportunists like Ajoy Ghosh, Dange and Ghate took advantage of the situation and a bitter factional struggle started within

the Party. It was decided to seek the help of the CPSU(B) and Stalin. Rajeswara Rao, Basavapunniah, Ajoy Ghosh and Dange went to Moscow for Soviet leaders' advice to resolve their internal contradictions.²⁵

The political bankruptcy of the CPI leadership was once again exposed. It is for a communist party to formulate its own line and policies, for every country has its own specific features. It is the task of the party to study, investigate and analyse the conditions of the country and integrate the teachings of Marxism-Leninism to the concrete conditions. Dependence on foreign mentors never helps but hinders the development of a party. It ever remains immature. The dependence on foreign mentors has been a chronic disease from which the leaders of the Indian communist movement have long suffered.

The party leaders returned in early 1951 after consultations with Soviet leaders including Stalin. At first, the central committee decided early in June 1951 to withdraw the Telangana struggle after a negotiated settlement. The CC's main terms for a settlement were: first, the lands distributed among the peasants should not be taken back; second, all those who were convicted or detained should be freed, all court cases should be withdrawn and collective fines should be cancelled; and third, all armed forces and home guards should be withdrawn from the area and the ban on the CPI and the Andhra Mahasabha should be removed. The CC assured the Nehru government that the Telangana struggle 'was neither begun nor continued to overthrow the Nehru government but to do away with feudal oppression'.²⁶ When the official response was far from helpful, AK Gopalan made a statement on behalf of the CC and the Andhra Committee of the CPI on October 23, 1951, advising 'the Telangana peasantry and the fighting partisans to stop all partisan action and to mobilise the entire people for an effective participation in the ensuing general election to rout the Congress at the polls'. Before concluding the statement, Gopalan added: 'As the Communist Party has repeatedly emphasised, the question of Telangana is actually the question of land [and not of state power].'²⁷

One may ask: 'Can the poor and landless peasants – the overwhelming majority of the peasantry – obtain land without having state power?'

Since the withdrawal of the Telangana struggle and leaving the peasantry at the tender mercies of the Nehru government, the undivided CPI leadership (and the CPI(M) leadership sometime later) have been, on the eve of general elections, issuing rousing calls to the people to 'rout the Congress' at the polls (almost in identical language). They have chosen to follow the parliamentary way and rejected the revolutionary path. There is nothing wrong in taking part in parliamentary elections to propagate revolutionary politics, to awaken and mobilise the people and promote the cause of revolution. But if a party chooses the parliamentary path, as opposed to the path of revolution, if it propagates

among the people that the winning of parliamentary elections will lead to the establishment of a people's government, it is no longer a communist party. For, Marxism-Leninism teaches us that only mobilised people can overthrow the existing ruling classes and seize power – not by parliamentary means but by force, by revolutionary means, under the leadership of a revolutionary party. After Telangana – which was led by the local communist leadership – the CPI and, later, the CPI(M) rejected the path of revolution, whatever might be their brave declarations, and were communist parties in name only.

The CPI's 1951 Programme

The CC met in May 1951 for further policy discussions and tentatively approved the draft *Program of the Communist Party of India*, published by the PB in April. 'Tactical Line', drafted in consultation with Soviet leaders and adopted by the CC in April, was circulated illegally. A legal version, 'Statement of Policy of the CPI', like the Programme as amended, was adopted at the All India Party Conference in Calcutta held on October 9-15, 1951.

At the CC meeting in May 1951, the resignation of Rajeswara Rao as general secretary was accepted and Ajoy Ghosh became secretary of the secretariat. A few months later, he formally became general secretary of the party.

The programme declared at the end '*India is the last biggest dependent semi-colonial country in Asia...*' It said that the Indian government was a 'government of landlords and princes and the reactionary big bourgeoisie collaborating with the British imperialists...' It pointed out that the Indian economy, India's foreign policy, the Indian armed forces were all under the control of British imperialism; 'the key part of our independence is still left in the hands of British imperialism'. India also faced the danger of US imperialism's increasing penetration. Though election needed to be taken advantage of, it would be deceiving the people to say that elections alone...can end the landlord-capitalist rule in the country and the imperialist hold over its life. It advocated self-determination for all nationalities in India, 'abolition of landlordism without compensation', protection of the national industry against foreign competition, withdrawal of India from the British Commonwealth of nations, 'confiscation and nationalisation of all factories, banks, plantations, shipping and mining owned by the British in India' and an independent foreign policy.

Curiously, the Programme, though quite advanced in many respects, did not call for the confiscation and nationalisation of the enterprises of the reactionary big bourgeoisie collaborating with the imperialists, the most important native prop of imperialism. And when the Programme referred to the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, it ignored the teachings of Mao Tse Tung, who had developed and enriched Marxism-Leninism and

whose teachings, especially on revolutions in colonies and semi-colonies, no Communist Party in such countries – worth the name – can ignore. DD Kosambi observed: 'As late as 1951, the CPI portentously reserved final judgement upon the Chinese revolution, on the grounds that the whole might turn out to be reformist in character, compared with the purity of the struggle in India.'²⁸ Later, the CPI (and the CPI-M) turned out to be the inveterate enemy of all what Mao represented.

'Tactical Line'

'Tactical Line', adopted in April 1951 and circulated secretly, said that the immediate objective of the CPI – the abolition of feudalism and the 'achievement of full national independence' – could not 'be realised in a peaceful, parliamentary way' but 'only through an armed revolution of the people'. It pointed out that the Indian revolution would not develop and win a resounding victory like the Russian or the Chinese revolution. Because of the specific conditions in India, it was the combination of the peasant partisan warfare in the countryside and the mass actions of the workers in the cities that would ensure the victory of the Indian revolution. Close alliance between the working class and the peasantry would be the condition of victory.

The 'Tactical Line' emphasised that the peace movement should be carried forward to isolate the Anglo-US warmongers and preserve world peace. The peace movement should support all those specific acts of the Nehru government, which 'hamper the plans of the warmongers' and, at the same time, expose 'the half-hearted and vacillating nature of the government's policy'. It said that the Nehru government's policy was 'essentially a policy of manoeuvring between the main enemy of peace – the United States of America – and its junior partner, Britain on the one hand, and peace-loving countries on the other'.

The document stated that the Chinese revolutionary forces 'were repeatedly encircled by the enemy. Time and again, they had to break away from this encirclement and threat of annihilation and migrate to new areas to rebuild again. It was only when they made their way into Manchuria and found the firm rear of the Soviet Union that the threat of encirclement came to an end and they were able to launch that great offensive which finally led to the liberation of China. It was, thus, the support given by the existence of a mighty and firm Soviet rear that was of decisive importance in ensuring victory to the tactic of peasant partisan warfare in the countryside in China.'²⁹ This was repeated with some verbal changes in 'Statement of Policy of the Communist Party of India.'³⁰ In his *Telangana People's Struggle and Its Lessons*, Sundarayya quoted the lines from the 'Statement of Policy' without making any change or comment on them.

The ignorance of the leaders of the CPI (and the CPI-M) about China is astonishing. But nothing that falls from their lips or issues from their pens need cause any surprise. We shall not dwell on the long history of the Chinese revolution and the 'decisive importance of the mighty and firm Soviet rear' which contributed to its victory. We shall also not enter into the long history of the 'mighty and firm' support of the Soviet Union to the Chinese Communists from the late thirties to the late forties but note only a few bare facts.

First, the main Chinese Communist forces defeated the first four 'encirclement and suppression' campaigns launched by Chiang Kai Shek. They were defeated in Chiang's fifth 'encirclement and suppression' campaign when Stalin's men in China and Otto Braun, the German military 'expert' sent by the Comintern rejected Mao Tse Tung's strategy of mobile warfare (combined with guerrilla warfare) and forced the Communist forces to confront Chiang's vastly superior forces in positional warfare. In October 1934, the major Communist forces left Kiangsi in the south, started on a long march covering 12,500 kilometres across eleven provinces and snow-capped mountains, broad rivers and grasslands, frustrating the enemy's attempts at encirclement, and triumphantly reached, not Jap-occupied Manchuria in the *northeast*, but the revolutionary base in Shensi in the *northwest* – far, far from Manchuria. On the way, at Tsunyi in the Kweichow province, Mao's political and military leadership was firmly established at an enlarged conference of officers and PB and CC members.

In the meantime, in March 1935, the Soviet Union sold the Chinese Eastern Railway in Manchuria to the Japanese and their Manchurian puppets. Soviet Prime Minister Molotov wrote: 'On all other practical questions the Soviet Union has also hitherto found ways of reaching agreements with Japan.'³¹ In a declaration issued by the Soviet and Japanese governments in 1941, the Soviet Union and Japan pledged themselves, respectively, 'to respect the territorial integrity and inviolability of Manchukuo [the Japanese name for Jap-occupied Manchuria]' and to respect the inviolability of the Mongolian People's Republic. On August 14, 1945, the day Japan surrendered, the Soviet Union entered into a Treaty of Friendship and Alliance with Chiang's government, which the Soviet Union recognised as the 'National Government' of China. The treaty would remain in force for 30 years. By that time, the Chinese Communists had established eighteen liberated areas in north and central China with a population of 100 million. They had by then amassed an army of one million and people's militia of two millions. Soviet Foreign Minister V Molotov promised Chiang's Foreign Minister to render Chiang-ruled China *moral* support and *assistance* with military equipment and other *fraternal* resources – 'fully to the National Government as the Central Government of China.'³² Despite the Soviet Union's

moral and military support and other 'fraternal resources' and despite huge armed and diplomatic support of the US imperialists for Chiang, the butcher of China, the revolutionary civil war ended in the countrywide victory of the Communists led by Mao. We shall leave this topic with what Mao said at the Chengtu Conference on March 10, 1958: 'The Chinese revolution won victory by acting contrary to Stalin's will.'³³

Some time ago, I read in *Revolutionary Democracy* (September 2006, published from New Delhi), the 'Record of the Discussions of JV Stalin with the representatives of the CC of the Communist Party of India Comrades Rao, Dange, Ghosh and Punnaiah' on February 9, 1951. Stalin is reported to have said: 'Yan'an was encircled and the Chinese left that place with large casualties. This would have continued for a long time if the Chinese Communists had not decided to cross over to Manchuria. Moving into Manchuria, they rapidly improved their own position, they found a rear in the form of a friendly state ... And only after this, as the Chinese rested, they had the possibility of going over to the offensive from the north to the south. Such is the history.' The truth is, such is not the history.

In a note appended to the record of the conversation, it is stated that this record has been 'Published with the kind permission of the authorities of the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History' and that it has been 'Translated from the Russian by Vijay Singh', editor of *Revolutionary Democracy*.

CPI Pledge to Nehru and the 'Election Manifesto'

The question of withdrawing the Telangana struggle while leaving the fighting peasantry at the tender mercies of the Nehru government was neatly solved. Now the question was to lift the Party from illegality and mobilise all its forces to fight the elections. In mid-July 1951, at about the time the party was adopting their 1951 Program and Tactical Line, they sent a delegation to Nehru 'to convince him that the party had given up the revolutionary strategy, that it had adopted a new programme supporting the progressive elements of his foreign policy and finally to claim the right to participate in the forthcoming general elections.'³⁴ The CPI's election manifesto was ready by August 1951; earlier, in April, the CC took steps to form, if possible, united fronts with other 'left' parties to fight the elections together.³⁵ The election manifesto raised the slogan of *People's Democracy and asked the people 'to replace the present government by a government of people's democracy.'* The manifesto ended with the slogan:

- All to the polls!
- To rout the Congress!
- To make the people's candidates victorious!
- To establish a people's government!³⁶

Politics of Deception

In 1951 itself, the CPI leaders were riding two horses at the same time. In their *Program* they unequivocally declared that it would be 'a deception of the people to say that elections alone... can end the imperialist hold over its life'. In the Tactical Line, they advocated the necessity of 'an armed revolution of the people'. But in the election manifesto they rejected the revolutionary path and raised the slogan of achieving People's Democracy – by replacing 'the present government by a government of "people's democracy" – through the ballot box!' Their stand would soon be even more unambiguous. They would follow their British mentors, the Communist Party of Great Britain, who adopted the 'British Road to Socialism' – the peaceful parliamentary path to Socialism – in 1951 and anticipated Khrushchev.

The CPI won 29 out of 479 parliamentary seats in the 1952 elections. Out of those 29 seats in the Lok Sabha, 19 were from Andhra Pradesh, including the Hyderabad state and only 10 from the rest of India. The party did comparatively well in the assembly elections in Hyderabad, Madras and Travancore-Cochin. Reviewing the results of the general elections, the CPI leadership said: '...our comrades have to take their parliamentary duties seriously – as seriously as they take their extra-parliamentary work.'³⁷

Third Congress of the CPI

The third Congress of the CPI, held at Madurai from December 27, 1953 to January 4, 1954, readopted the Programme of 1951 with a very minor amendment. As in 1951, the leaders looked both ways, but the emphasis was on the peaceful parliamentary path. While the Programme they again adopted said that India was the 'last biggest dependent semi-colonial country in Asia', the political resolution it adopted spoke of India enjoying 'sovereignty and freedom' and described India as a 'neutral' Asian nation.³⁸ (The fact is, Nehru was asserting at this time that India was not neutral but aligned with the USA and Britain.)³⁹ The resolution also stated that India had to wage a 'struggle for full and unfettered national freedom, which means, freedom from control of the British who continue to be the dominant imperialist power...'⁴⁰

The resolution praised the Nehru government's foreign policy as thwarting the policies of US imperialism and upholding the cause of peace in the world. It also harped on the deficiencies of this policy, which, according to the resolution, was not consistent.⁴¹ It held that Nehru's internal policy was anti-people.⁴²

The perspective that the political resolution drew was not one of revolution and armed seizure of power but one of forming ministries, wherever possible, in coalition with other parties within the present system. Struggles on various

issues – said the resolution – ‘can grow into the common struggle for the replacement of the present government by a government of democratic unity, a government formed by a coalition of different democratic parties and groups on the basis of a common minimum program...which will give immediate relief to the people.... With the strengthening of the mass movement, with the maturing of the crisis in different ways in different areas, situations will arise when this can be raised as an immediate slogan in state after state. It is this perspective that has to guide our activity. The achieving of a government of democratic unity is the objective towards which all struggles of the masses have to lead.’⁴³ All activities of the Party were to serve the cause of elections – the formation of governments of democratic unity. The tactical line of 1951 was buried several fathoms deep.

National Platform for Peace and Freedom

The USA entered into a military treaty with Pakistan in 1954 and provided substantial military assistance to this new nation. This move put some strain on the otherwise happy relation between the USA and India.

In the July 18, issue of *New Age*, the weekly organ of the CPI, appeared an article by P Ramamurthy, a member of the Polit Bureau of the CPI and editor-in-chief of the journal. In this article, he raised the slogan of a ‘national platform for peace and freedom’, the broadest possible front which would include the Congress in order to fight the threat of US domination.

Walter S Robertson, US assistant secretary of state, ‘was reported to have said that the United States must “dominate Asia” for an “indefinite” period in the interest of peace.’⁴⁴ But the Congress government was more interested in fighting Communism in the East and Southeast Asia than in fighting the US drive for world domination. Winston Churchill, the arch-Tory, hailed Nehru as ‘the Light of Asia’. Churchill told Lord Moran: ‘I get on well with him. I tell him he has a great role to play as leader of free [sic!] Asia against communism.’ On being asked how Nehru took it, Churchill answered: ‘Oh, he wants to do it, and I want him to do it.’⁴⁵

The Nehru government’s relations with the Anglo-American imperialist powers were very close, politically as also economically.

The Central Committee of the CPI rejected Ramamurthy’s thesis. But, characteristically, RP Dutt endorsed it in his letter to the CPI, which appeared in *For a Lasting Peace, For People’s Democracy* in October, entitled ‘New Features in the National Liberation Struggle of Colonial and Dependent People’.

The CC of the CPI was divided on political questions. Ajoy Ghosh left for Moscow to seek guidance in July and came back in December 1954. On his return, he wrote in an open letter to Nehru that the CPI would wholeheartedly

support the progressive aspects of India's foreign policy, which had made 'India a world power today', though it had its deficiencies. But the Communists opposed the government's internal policy which furthered the interests of the reactionary classes, denied the people democratic rights, and condemned them to live in want and poverty. Ajay Ghosh criticised Nehru for his denunciation of the CPI and of Marxism as 'outmoded'.⁴⁶ The question is, if the domestic policy was reactionary, could the foreign policy be progressive?

On February 8, 1955 the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union declared that India was no longer colonial India but the Republic of India. It suited the interests of the Soviet foreign policy, after Stalin's death, to characterise India as an independent country. Nehru went to Moscow in June 1955 and received an invitation from British Prime Minister Eden to visit London on his way back to India. The Soviet leaders approved of his acceptance of Eden's invitation, and Bulganin said to him: 'It would be a good thing for the world if the West would understand you as much as we did.'

It became Nehru's task to convey to the Western powers his understanding that there had been a *real change* in Moscow. On June 27, 1955, he wrote to US President Eisenhower: 'My general impression was that a marked change had come over Soviet policy and that this was not a mere temporary phase. This gave me hope for the future...'⁴⁷ Stalin's successors wanted to extend their influence over India and to collaborate with 'war-mongering imperialists'. To quote Gopal, 'As Khrushchev observed to Nehru on the last day of his visit [to India in November-December 1955], "we want to be friendly with you but not separate you from your other friends [meaning the Anglo-American powers]. We want to be friendly with your friends"'.⁴⁸

It needs to be noted when appraising Nehru's foreign policy that in the heyday of *Hindi-Chini bhai bhai*, Panchsheel and Bandung, Nehru was riding not one horse but two – and that was of great advantage to him. Frank Moraes was a member of the first cultural delegation (of which Mrs Pandit, Nehru's sister, was the leader) to China, sent by the Nehru government in 1952. While briefing the delegates, Nehru said: 'Never forget that the basic challenge in South-East Asia is between India and China. That challenge runs along the spine of Asia.' Moraes commented: 'In the light of Nehru's *public* attitude of exuberant friendliness for Communist China at that time, the *private* caveat he uttered for our benefit is revealing.'⁴⁹

Our eminent communist leaders overlook or ignore unpleasant facts – unpleasant to their theses, which their minds spin out. In the early fifties, Chester Bowles, then US ambassador to India, spoke to Nehru about the 'contest between Asian democracy and Asian communism'. To quote Bowles, 'Nehru said that history had selected India as one of democracy's [much-vaunted Indian

democracy with its Preventive Detention Acts and the like is a fatally mutilated one] chief testing grounds. This was a contest which he [as the agent of history] and India welcomed, a challenge which must be met head on... For nearly two hours we talked about the exciting possibilities.⁵⁰ The 'commie' idea, the word which Nehru disparagingly used to mean Communism, was repugnant to Nehru.

Investigation and study to have some grasp of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung thought and of the social conditions of India and the capacity to integrate Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung thought with the concrete conditions of this country were woefully lacking: dependence for guidance of foreign mentors, whose guidance conformed to suit the needs of Soviet foreign policy at that moment, was far more easy.

Andhra Election

Mid-term election was due to take place in Andhra in February 1955. Together with like-minded individuals and democratic parties, Ajoy Ghosh held that 'the winning of such a government of democratic unity is now a concrete possibility.'⁵¹

But on January 26, 1955, the eve of the election, an editorial appeared in *Pravda*, eulogising not only the Nehru government's foreign policy but also its domestic policy. Instead of criticising Nehru as an ally of imperialist powers, it praised his 'outstanding statesmanship' and India as 'a peace-loving state upholding its national independence'. The Telugu translation of this editorial was printed in a leaflet and showered by the Congress all over Andhra. While the Congress won 61 per cent of seats, the CPI managed a miserable 6 per cent. In his foreign policy review on February 8, 1955, Soviet Foreign Minister VM Molotov noted the fact 'of great historic significance that at present there is no colonial India, but instead the Indian republic. More and more rises the international authority of India.'⁵²

The CPI Sinks Deeper into the Morass of Opportunism

Meeting in June 1955, the CC of the CPI discovered a 'growing conflict between the Indian bourgeoisie [the entire class] and imperialism.... By defending its independence, by taking steps to build Asian unity and to establish closer relations with socialist and democratic states, India has strengthened its own sovereignty and freedom.... The emergence of India as a sovereign and independent republic upholding the cause of peace and freedom is a factor of profound significance in the present-day world.'⁵³

The characterisation of India in the Program of 1951, which was re-adopted in 1953, as a 'dependent semi-colonial country' was unambiguously rejected in 1955.

The CC of the CPI also discovered 'a new orientation' in the approach of the planners and decided to offer unstinted support to it. Though conceding that 'Our economy has not been freed from the grip of British Capital', the CC held that the growth of basic industries 'would reduce the dependence of India on foreign countries in respect of capital goods, strengthen the relative position of industry inside India and strengthen our economic position and national independence.'⁵⁴ The fact is, the basic industries in India – as we have noted in the preceding chapter – were not built on autonomous, independent lines but with loans from imperialist countries (or the Soviet Union, which became a social-imperialist country) by their engineers and technicians with capital goods and technology purchased from them at much higher than international prices. India remained ever dependent on them for components, spare parts, etc., and for technological upgradation, when needed. Far from reducing India's dependence, they perpetuated it vigorously. And the plans themselves were no independent achievements. Except for the First Five Year Plan – almost all the projects of which had been planned during the last phase of the British rule in India and some of which were at various stages of execution when the First Five Year Plan was formally adopted – the subsequent plans owed much to the World Bank (dominated by US imperialism) and imperialist agencies and individual economists like the Ford Foundation, the MIT Centre, John Galbraith, etc. Again, the CPI's important decisions were not based on investigation, study but subjective thinking.

The CC held that 'Only the establishment of a government of people's democracy which includes all the democratic classes including the national bourgeoisie [meaning the entire native bourgeoisie], but is led by the working class – can fulfil these tasks [bourgeois-democratic tasks] speedily and effectively.'⁵⁵ So, the CC enjoined the Party to raise the slogan of a government of democratic unity during election battles in the states where it was strong.

Three things may be noted. First, by 1955, the CPI regarded the Indian state as fully independent and sovereign. Secondly, the Indian bourgeoisie as a whole was anti-imperialist. A government of people's democracy could be established by the democratic classes including the entire native bourgeoisie under the leadership of the working class. Thirdly, the CC of the CPI opted for the parliamentary road to People's Democracy and then to Socialism.

In his article 'The Indian Bourgeoisie' in *New Age*, No.12, 1955, Ajoy Ghosh wrote: '...in India the national bourgeoisie included the entire bourgeoisie – big, medium and small, monopoly as well as non-monopoly. Despite the compromise of 1947, no section of the bourgeoisie could be said to have gone over to imperialism, though individuals might have. The contradiction between imperialism and the bourgeoisie as a whole remained.'

The bankruptcy of the leaders of the CPI had its roots in their refusal to investigate whether the Indian bourgeoisie was differentiated between comprador and national or not. This question had profound implications before 1947 and the situation is the same today. A correct answer to this question helps us to understand the true character of the top leadership of the Congress and their politics. It also enables us to understand the real character of the Indian state that emerged in 1947. The fact is, the Indian bourgeoisie was and is differentiated between comprador and national bourgeoisie. The big bourgeoisie, whether commercial or industrial or both, has been comprador and reactionary from its very birth. Its interests are intertwined with the interests of foreign capital and it acts as its intermediary.^{55a} It should be the target of India's new democratic revolution under the leadership of the working class and should not be mistaken as an ally of the revolutionary classes. Mere emphatic assertion without investigation is not only misleading but also extremely harmful to the cause of revolution.

Ajoy Ghosh was again in Moscow from July 7 to September 6, 1955. During the visit of Khrushchev, then First Secretary of the CPSU(B), and Bulganin, Soviet Prime Minister, Khrushchev, addressing a meeting in Delhi, said: 'We hold that India is a great power and it should take one of the first places in the rank of the great states of the world.'⁵⁶

Twentieth Congress of the CPSU

The twentieth Congress of the CPSU was held in February 1956. In this Congress, Khrushchev submitted a report on behalf of the CC of the Party. The report formulated certain theses which repudiate Marxism-Leninism in the name of revising it on the plea of a change in the international situation. The theses uphold peaceful co-existence of the two systems – capitalist and socialist; peaceful competition between them; peaceful transition to Socialism; and the possibility of preventing war while imperialism exists.

Khrushchev said: 'We believe that countries with differing social systems can do more than exist side by side. It is necessary to proceed further, to improve relations, strengthen confidence between countries and co-operate.'⁵⁷ According to him, in the peaceful competition between the two systems, the socialist system would convince the working masses 'of the advantages communism brings and they would take the road of struggle for the construction of socialist society peacefully'.⁵⁸ Khrushchev repudiated the Marxist-Leninist theory that without revolutionary war against the oppressor ruling classes, there could be no transition to Socialism. He said that in the new situation that had arisen it was 'possible to go over to socialism by using parliamentary means'. He also argued: '...the working class, by rallying around itself the toiling peasantry, the intelligentsia, all patriotic forces, and resolutely repulsing the opportunist

elements who are incapable of giving up the policy of compromise with the capitalists and landlords, is in a position to defeat the reactionary forces opposed to the popular interest, to capture a stable majority in parliament, and transform the latter from an organ of bourgeois democracy into a genuine instrument of the people's will.⁷⁰

The report of the CC of the CPSU also rejected the Marxist-Leninist tenet that war is inevitable so long as imperialism exists. Khrushchev argued: 'Today there are mighty social and political forces possessing formidable means to prevent the imperialists from unleashing war.'⁷¹ Ironically, immediately after the end of World War II and at the very moment Khrushchev was submitting his report, wars of imperialist aggression and of national liberation against the imperialists were raging. The US, British, French and Dutch imperialists had launched aggression against Greece, China, the Philippines, Korea, Malay, Vietnam, Indonesia, and so on. Wars of national liberation were also being waged by both colonies and semi-colonies. Countries are at war even today for imperialism breeds warfare.

One of the tasks of the Soviet Union, according to the report, was 'To pursue a vigorous policy of further improving relations with the United States of America, Britain, France, West Germany...' and so on.

The struggle against revisionism and in defence of Marxism-Leninism was led by the Communist Party of China. The Albanian Party of Labour also joined the struggle against revisionism. To begin with, as regards peaceful co-existence of socialist states with capitalist states, the CPC held the view that a socialist state, while seeking to co-exist peacefully with a capitalist state on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence (*Panchsheel*) should 'develop relations of friendship, mutual assistance and cooperation' with other countries of the socialist camp, 'oppose the imperialist policies of aggression and war' and 'support and assist the revolutionary struggles of all the oppressed peoples and nations'.⁷² Rejecting the revisionist thesis, the CPC said: 'In the application of the policy of co-existence, struggles between the socialist and imperialist countries are unavoidable in the political, economic and ideological spheres, and it is absolutely impossible to have "all-round co-operation".'⁷³ As regards the possibility of preventing war, wars of imperialist aggression and intervention cannot be prevented but should be resisted so long as the monster exists. But world wars can be prevented, not by appeasing imperialist states but by supporting and helping wars of national liberation, wars of resistance against imperialist aggression and revolutionary civil wars. Marxist-Leninists believe in a world free from war. But war can be abolished not by appeasing imperialism but by launching national liberation struggles and civil wars to achieve socialism and by resisting and defeating imperialist wars of aggression and intervention. Wars

can be also abolished by waging war against it, by abolishing classes, by abolishing exploitation of man by man. War cannot be prevented by quietly submitting to aggressive imperialists.

Peaceful transition to socialism, the achievement of socialism by following the parliamentary road, is an illusion. The question is one of seizure of state power and smashing the reactionary state machinery. The armed forces are the main component of state power. Without defeating the armed forces of the exploiting classes, people cannot seize state power. The exploiting classes will not voluntarily relinquish power. This is the teaching of history and of all great Marxist-Leninists – from Marx to Mao Tsetung.

Quoting Marx's famous words, 'Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one', Engels said that 'it [force] is the instrument with which social movement forces its way through and shatters the dead, fossilised political forms ...'⁶³ '...the liberation of the oppressed class', said Lenin, 'is impossible not only without a violent revolution, but also without the destruction of the apparatus of state power which was created by the ruling class ...'⁶⁴ To quote Lenin again, 'The necessity of systematically imbuing the masses with this and precisely this view of violent revolution lies at the root of the entire theory of Marx and Engels.'⁶⁵ Mao Tsetung said: '... revolution and revolutionary wars are inevitable in class society and ... without them, it is impossible to accomplish any leap in social development and to overthrow the reactionary ruling classes and therefore impossible for the people to win political power.'⁶⁶

To quote Mao again, 'Experience in the class struggle in the era of imperialism teaches us that it is only by the power of the gun that the working class and the labouring masses can defeat the armed bourgeoisie and landlords; in this sense we may say that only with guns can the whole world be transformed. We are advocates of the abolition of war, we do not want war; but war can only be abolished through war, and in order to get rid of the gun it is necessary to take up the gun.'⁶⁷

Revisionism, as Lenin said, is 'a bourgeois emasculation of Marxist truths' and revisionists are conscious or unconscious agents of the bourgeoisie within the working class. A revisionist wind was blowing in various countries, especially in Europe, after World War II. The Soviet Party did not become revisionist and rejected the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism all of a sudden. The emergence of modern revisionism in the Soviet Party was a process that had been going on for quite some time. It may be noted that the CC of the CPSU included all the leaders of Stalin's time except Stalin (who was dead) and Beria (who was executed). Khrushchev himself was a secretary and member of the PB of the Party during Stalin's time. It was he who submitted the report on

Amendments to the Rules of the CPSU(B) at the Nineteenth Congress of the Party held in 1952. In that report, he referred to numerous cases (in ten out of thirty-one pages of the report, Moscow edition) where unscrupulous managers and directors of public enterprises used them as their own personal property. Ownership of property by the people was in name only but not in fact. In his *Report on the Work of the Central Committee, Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik)* to the same congress, G Malenkov also referred to such rogues and scoundrels who used public property for their own profit. By the time Khrushchev came to power, the bureaucratic bourgeoisie of the Soviet Union had consolidated their powers as a class. It is their politics and aspirations which Khrushchev, Kosygin, Brezhnev and their colleagues gave expression to.

I shall quote a few lines from Harry Braverman's *Labour and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*: 'In practice, Soviet industrialisation imitated the capitalist model; and as industrialisation advanced the structure lost its provisional character and the Soviet Union settled down to an organisation of labour differing only in details from that of the capitalist countries, so that Soviet working population bears all the stigmata of the Western working classes. In the process, the ideological effect was felt throughout world Marxism.' Again, he said: '...the organisation of labour in the Soviet Union ... differs little from the organisation of labour in capitalist countries.'⁶⁸ It is this system that made bureaucrats of the managers and directors of state enterprises and gave them enormous power subject only to the distant control of higher bodies.

Palghat Congress of the CPI

The fourth Congress of the CPI, held at Palghat in Kerala in April 1956, hailed the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU as 'an event of the greatest importance.'⁶⁹ Submitting his report on the Soviet Party Congress, Ajoy Ghosh welcomed all of the Twentieth Congress theses that ran counter to Marxism-Leninism. He stated: 'Here certain old concepts were acting as obstacles in the path of further development of the movements. The Twentieth Congress replaces these old concepts by new concepts that correspond to the new historic situation and enable the movement to acquire greater speed than ever before.'⁷⁰ Most of the CPI leaders, with their deepseated opportunism were never Marxists, never Communists, and now they had an opportunity to proclaim from the house-tops the fact that they were embracing modern revisionism and abandoning Marxism-Leninism. Open agents of the ruling classes were far better than masked agents.

The political resolution adopted at the Palghat Congress declared: 'The emergence of India as a sovereign and independent republic upholding the cause of peace and freedom is a factor of profound significance in the present

-day world.⁷¹ Unfortunately, the resolution stated, some top leaders of the Congress party were seeking modification of this policy. India still remained a member of the Commonwealth of Nations headed by imperialist Britain and 'Commonwealth membership subjects our foreign policy to British imperialist influence....' The resolution also regretted 'the dependence on the imperialists for arms and equipment for our defence forces'.⁷²

The government's economic policies pursued till then - said the resolution - had hardly improved the lot of the peasants and workers. The community development projects and national extension service had fulfilled some needs of the villagers. As noted in the last chapter, these were an integral part of India's early plans and undertaken under US inspiration and with US help. They bypassed rural India's basic problem - the problem of land-ownership - and benefited only landlords and rich peasants.

The resolution further stated: 'The basic conflict in Indian society is the conflict between imperialism and feudalism on the one hand and the entire Indian people, including the national bourgeoisie [meaning the entire native bourgeoisie big, middle and small].'⁷³ The resolution discovered signs of 'the growth of conflicts and contradictions between the government of India and imperialism' in the draft proposals for the Second Five-Year Plan. 'The path of independent capitalist development which the Indian bourgeoisie and the government have taken is underlined by the fact that "the rapid industrialisation with particular emphasis on the development of basic and heavy industries" has been declared as the "principal" objective of the Second Plan.' It further said: 'The fulfilment of the target in the industrial sector would contribute to the reduction of India's dependence on foreign countries in respect of capital goods; particularly for light industries, and strengthen the relative position of industry in our economy.'⁷⁴

While discussing the resolution of the CC of the CPI, adopted in June 1955, I referred to the CC's discovery of the growing conflict between imperialism and the Indian ruling classes manifested in the Indian government plan of building basic and heavy industries. Now I would add a few more lines on this brilliant discovery. US imperialists were no less interested than the Indian government in the success of the Second Plan which, according to the CPI, was an attempt to liberate the Indian economy from the shackles of imperialist domination. When there was a financial crisis in the implementation of the Second Plan, some of the biggest transnationals of the USA sponsored a conference in May 1959 to seek ways of overcoming it. Among the US leaders who attended it were Richard Nixon, the US Vice-President and later President; Senator John F Kennedy, soon to be President; John D Rockefeller, the third; Hubert H Humphrey and Averell Harriman. India was represented

by BK Nehru, India's Commissioner General for Economic Affairs in Washington; MC Chagla, Indian Ambassador to the USA, Bharat Ram, HVR Iyengar, then Governor of the Reserve Bank of India; IG Patel, etc. The US leaders expressed their strong determination to see that India's second plan did not founder on the rock of lack of adequate finance.⁷⁵

It may also be noted that in the last years of direct British rule, the British authorities proposed the building of basic and heavy industries under state ownership, in *Second Report on Reconstruction Planning, Statement of Industrial Policy* and similar documents⁷⁶ – not to relax the hold of imperialist capital but to strengthen it.

As usual, the Palghat Congress found both positive and negative aspects in the Indian government's policies. It claimed that the bourgeois-landlord government, 'in which the bourgeoisie is the leading force', sought 'to develop along independent capitalist lines' and to build the state sector necessary for the development of capitalism. It strove to curb feudalism and, thus, there arose conflicts with imperialism and feudalism. The Congress defined the 'basic strategy of the Indian revolution' as one of establishing 'a government of people's democracy' – which would include 'all the democratic classes, including the national bourgeoisie [the entire native bourgeoisie], and is led by the working class. This would accomplish the democratic tasks and lead to socialism'.⁷⁷

On the issue of Kashmir, the resolution said: '...the Communist Party of India considers that both India and Pakistan should settle the issue of Kashmir by taking the present ceasefire line as the basis for demarcation of the boundaries....' The division of Kashmir into India-occupied and Pakistan-occupied parts in blatant repudiation of the solemn promises of the Indian government at the time of Kashmir's accession to India in October 1947, was to destroy the integrity of the Kashmiri people just as the forced partition of Bengal has destroyed the integrity of the Bengali people. This was the same imperialist solution advocated by US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in 1953, to which Nehru seemed to agree.⁷⁸

The Palghat resolution stated that in order to achieve its objective, the CPI would build a national democratic front including the Praja-Socialist Party, the Socialist Party and 'democratic elements inside the Congress' and that it would not be an anti-Congress front.

The Palghat resolution had a very interesting feature. The 'basic objective and the basic strategy' would be 'the establishment of a government of people's democracy', which would obviously replace the existing bourgeois-landlord government with the bourgeoisie in 'the leading position'. And the 'government of people's democracy' would include 'all the democratic classes, including the national bourgeoisie' (i.e., the entire native bourgeoisie), which held 'the leading

position' in the government that was to be replaced. And this establishment led by the working class would not only 'bring [about] the democratic revolution, but also put [the] country on the path to socialism - the only correct path, in the present epoch, for the advance of every country'.⁷⁹ The bourgeoisie, 'the leading force' in the existing bourgeois-landlord government, would accept the leadership of the working class and join the People's Democratic Government, obviously by replacing its own government. And this would lead to socialism. It was a very, very ingenious, easy and simple solution of India's problems! The Tatas, the Birlas, the Chettiers, the Goenkas, etc., would be represented in the People's Democratic Government in India. And the road to socialism would be quite smooth. The bourgeoisie, big and small, would achieve self-effacement- *nirvana* - quite peacefully. It would be a great renunciation - renunciation by the entire class! What a political marvel! Unfortunately, Ajoy Ghosh did not live to bring about this happy consummation and his comrades, denied his leadership, have not brought that day nearer in the course of the last fifty years and more.

Amritsar Congress

An extraordinary Congress of the CPI was held in Amritsar in April 1958. It was written down in the Party's Constitution:

*'The Communist Party of India strives to achieve full democracy and Socialism by peaceful means.'*⁸⁰

The Congress claimed that the CPI was guided by 'the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism',⁸¹ when actually it had regarded them as 'obstacles' hampering its march and rejected them in favour of modern revisionism.

Under the significant sub-title 'Kerala Shows the Way', the main resolution on the 'current Political situation' said: 'The most outstanding event in recent years ... has been the formation of a Communist-led Government in Kerala'.⁸² The CPI's victory in Kerala in the 1957 elections 'was perceived as a spring-board for further conquest'.⁸³

In Kerala as also elsewhere, it was the CPI policy to support 'progressive' Congress candidates in constituencies where it did not set up its own candidates. Kerala became the model, not Telangana. Kerala has been showing the way to the CPI (and the CPI-M) ever since 1957.

The Congress declared: 'The Communist Party of India is pledged to support the unity and solidarity of India and its people forged in the fire of our freedom struggle'.⁸⁴ In other words, the CPI then opposed the right of self-determination by the various Indian nationalities.

Though the leaders were travelling along the same road of peaceful transition, yet a fierce controversy raged within the Party. The issue which divided the Party into two factions was whether it should build a national democratic front (NDF) or a united democratic front (UDF). According to Ajoy Ghosh, Dange and their associates, it should be the NDF which would include a section of Congressmen – led or not led by Nehru; the others held that it should be UDF, and would exclude Congressmen.

Vijayawada Congress

The sixth Congress of the CPI was held at Vijayawada on April 7-16, 1961. The political resolution it adopted was entitled 'National Democratic Front for National Democratic Tasks'. It quoted from the statement of the 81 Communist and Workers' Parties that met in Moscow in November 1960: '*It is the principal characteristic of our time that the world socialist system is becoming the decisive factor in the development of society*'.⁸⁵ One can infer from the title of the resolution the rest of the verbiage.

The two factions fought each other bitterly at the Congress. It was the Soviet delegate to the Congress, Suslov, who saved the Congress and the Party from immediate breakup. Ajoy Ghosh and his associates won the day.

Soon after, Ghosh died and EMS Namboodiripad became general secretary of the Party. The Party constitution that was adopted provided for a National Council, a Central Executive Committee and a Secretariat. The bodies like the Central Committee and the Polit Bureau were abolished. In the new setup, Dange became the Party's chairman.

The Impact of the India-China war of 1962 on the Party

On October 20, 1962, war broke out between India and China. From 1954, India had been following a 'forward policy' in the northeast and in the northwest, most of which was unadministered during British rule and had remained disputed territory. India rejected China's repeated calls for negotiations to settle the boundary issue. Later, VK Krishna Menon, Nehru's Defence Minister until the end of the war in November 1962, told Kuldip Nayar: 'I encroached upon 4,000 sq miles of territory belonging to China'.⁸⁶ Nehru, who was adept in 'riding two horses at the same time' – a fact which was the secret of his success – staggered and fell at the unexpected rebuff from China.

The Himalayan war was a watershed in India's life. It strengthened the political, economic and military grip of the USA and the USSR on India. India's economic crisis deepened. It also marked a crisis in the life of the CPI. Most of the CPI leaders of both factions, who were enamoured of Nehru's foreign

policy and his 'socialistic pattern of society', lent warm support to the Indian Government, some more brazenly than others. As Chairman of the CPI, Dange wrote to Nehru: 'In the post-independence period you have laid the policies of planned development, democracy, socialism, peace, non-alignment and anti-colonialism.... The Communist Party of India pledges its unqualified support to your policies of national defence and national unity.' Ranadive, Namboodiripad, Ramamurthy and Jyoti Basu, the future leaders of CPI(M), supported the Indian Government's stand.⁵⁷ Instead of appearing to be too belligerent, some of them chose to call for negotiations between India and China. But a large section of the ranks were thoroughly disillusioned about the leadership; the air was full of deep resentment and hatred for the national chauvinism and the policy of class collaboration of the leadership.

At the end of the war, the Nehru government put behind bars the leaders and cadres of the CPI who did not unequivocally support their claims. But due to the ensuing confusion, so characteristic of the Indian government, some 'Nehruite communists' were also arrested. But that helped them as well as the government, for after their release they could pose as revolutionary Marxists (persecuted by the Indian government) and deceive the people.

In the meantime, the Dangeite faction of the Party came to have complete control of the Party machinery. EMS Namboodiripad ceased being Party secretary and C Rajeswara Rao was elected in his place. By his action, Rao had repudiated his past when he was one of the main leaders of the Telangana struggle or when he was general secretary of the Party in 1950. Their political convictions were like clothes which they would put on or cast aside as it suited their interests. The Dangeite faction started weeding out members of the rival faction and even some State Committees were replaced by provisional organising committees.

Those who had been arrested towards the end of 1962 were being released from prisons towards the end of 1963.

The Split

Again, the factional war began with venomous attacks on rivals. The released leaders tried to capture the Party machinery. In the meantime, three letters signed by Dange were found in the National Archives by Dwijendra Nandi. In one of the letters, dated July 7, 1924, addressed to the District Magistrate of Kanpur, alleged to have been written by Dange and Nalini Gupta after their conviction in the Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case, they expressed their willingness 'to give an undertaking to Government not to commit any more offences....' In another letter to the Governor-General in Council, also alleged

to have been written by Dange on July 28, 1924, he referred to a conversation he had had with Bombay's deputy Commissioner of Police, who had hinted that Dange might serve as a police agent. Dange offered to the Governor-General in Council the use of his position, 'enhanced by the prosecution', to do what had been expected of him and prayed for release. The petition to the Governor-General in Council was renewed on November 19, 1924.⁸⁸

G Adhikari has raised a relevant question: 'Are we to believe all the alleged statements in the Government of India files in the National Archives attributed to political leaders?'⁸⁹ Indeed, it would be wrong and unjust to accept as authentic every statement in the official files, irrespective of other considerations.

When, in 1964, the above letters were discovered by Nandi in the National Archives and published, Dange, then chairman of the CPI, denied his authorship of them. But Nandi's arguments seeking to prove Dange's authorship were unassailable.⁹⁰

On April 11, 1964, 32 members of the National Council walked out of the meeting. These members of the anti-Dangeite faction had demanded that, pending investigation, Dange should not preside at the meetings of the Council - a demand which was rejected. On April 14, they issued an appeal to party members protesting against various sectarian acts of the dominant section and its stand regarding the Dange letters. The long list of grievances concerned mainly organisational matters while there was also a reference to difference as regards 'the reformist line of general united front with the Congress' (but they had no differences on the question of peaceful transition to People's Democracy and socialism that drew the line between them and genuine Marxists). Reformism, class collaboration, capitulationism to the ruling classes was inherent in the line they followed. They took exception to being called 'followers of the Peking line.' In their appeal to the Party members, they admitted that there were ideological differences among themselves. But they provisionally accepted a draft programme prepared by them. Namboodiripad, who differed on certain questions, had written his own document. They promised to circulate them among the members for their opinions. They proposed to convene a meeting of the representatives of Party members from all over India after two months and then the next Party Congress. But they stated that even at that stage they were prepared to work with the Dangeites in the same Party if the latter changed their organisational methods.⁹¹

The representatives of the two factions met in Delhi on July 4, 1964. The Central Secretariat of the Party (the Dange faction) was represented by Rajeswara Rao, G Adhikari and Bhupesh Gupta and the other faction was led by Harkishan Singh Surjeet, Jyoti Basu and Promode Das Gupta. No political

and ideological issues were raised during the discussion. What were discussed were organisational matters. The main question was: Which faction would have control over the Party Secretariat and the Party machinery. All the proposals of the Surjeet-Basu-Das Gupta faction were rejected by Rajeswara Rao and Adhikari. Finally, Promode Das Gupta asked: 'If we accept Dange as the chairman [whom they were calling a British Government spy], are you prepared to restore the old Secretariat with Comrade EMS as the General Secretary?' This proposal was also rejected.⁹² Politics did not matter: what mattered was control over the party machinery.

Immediately after the 'unity talks' in Delhi had failed, the anti-Dange faction held a convention at Tenali in Andhra. The convention opened with the adoption of a resolution mourning the 'untimely death of late Prime Minister Nehru'. They stated: 'On the ideological questions there are differences amongst us. [the anti-Dangeite faction] ... the convention decided not to clinch this issue [fundamental ideological and political issues raised more than eight years before] in a hurry... "But, at the suggestion of E.M.S. it was decided that the political and ideological issues like forms of transition and peaceful co-existence "should be discussed and clinched along with the Draft Programme".⁹³ On these *main* ideological and political issues, there had been agreement not only among themselves but also with the Dangeite faction, since at least 1956. And at the extraordinary Congress in 1958, as noted before, it was laid down in the very constitution of the Party that the CPI's road to 'full democracy and Socialism' was a peaceful one. There was unanimity among the leaders and violent disagreement among the ranks on these most important issues affecting the character of a communist party.

The convention decided to circulate the draft programme which had already been prepared by them along with Namboodiripad's critique of it among Party members. They decided to hold the Seventh Party Congress in October 1964 in Calcutta and set up an apparatus to prepare for it. Apart from adopting certain other resolutions, they concluded with an appeal to the entire membership of the Party to join them, 'if the Secretariat and its supporters persist in their attitude'.⁹⁴

The CPI(M) Congress and Its Programme

The Congress was held in Calcutta from October 31, to November 7, 1964. Prior to the Congress, the Tenali heroes did not allow opportunities to the ranks for inner party discussions. They only circulated their own Draft Programme and suppressed other drafts that were submitted, and stifled free and frank discussions by comrades on political and ideological issues. On the eve of the Congress, some leaders and cadres of West Bengal were arrested.

We have noted that the Tenali Convention had opened with a resolution mourning the death of Nehru. This Congress also adopted a resolution which said:

'The Seventh Congress of the Communist Party of India expresses its deep sorrow at the death of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, an outstanding leader of the anti-imperialist movement during the days of freedom struggle and the first Prime Minister of India. The role which he played in radicalising the freedom movement and in giving an anti-imperialist and democratic content to the programme of national reconstruction in the post-independence years is universally acknowledged. The Congress pays its respectful tribute to his memory.'⁹⁵ This resolution is an eloquent expression of the 'revolutionary' character of our Tenali heroes.

The Programme adopted began with a section entitled 'India Attains National Independence'. It said that in 1947, 'the first stage of the Indian revolution' – the overthrow of the 'foreign imperialist rule' – was completed.⁹⁶ (This basic premise, as we noted in the first chapter, is wrong. After the transfer of power India did not become an independent, sovereign state.) It asserted that with the victory of the Chinese revolution and the emergence of people's democratic states in eastern Europe, a world socialist camp had come into existence. (This premise, too, was wrong and deceitful. In 1964, no such camp existed. There had been reversals in the Soviet Union and east European states. In these states, the private ownership of the means of production had been abolished but in each of them a bureaucratic bourgeoisie had come to power and collectively owned the means of production. The form remained socialist but the essence had changed. Moreover, there was a very bitter conflict between the Soviet Union and Socialist China⁹⁷ and the question of their belonging to the same camp did not arise.)

The Programme held that the Indian state was ruled by the bourgeois-landlord combine led by the big bourgeoisie. It asserted that while seeking to build 'the people's democratic front to achieve the people's democratic revolution', one must take into account 'the contradictions and conflicts that do exist between the Indian bourgeoisie, including the big bourgeoisie, and foreign imperialists.' The party would 'not hesitate to lend its unstinted support to the government on all issues of world peace and anti-colonialism..., on all economic and political issues of conflict with imperialism, and on all issues which involve questions of strengthening our sovereignty and independent foreign policy'.⁹⁸

In other words, the government against which the CPI(M) would launch the People's Democratic Revolution had a progressive character also, the enemy

was not wholly an enemy. It acted sometimes as an ally when it had to be given 'unstinted support'. The line was the same as they had been following the Ajoy Ghosh-Dange leadership.

The Programme declared: *'The Communist Party of India strives to achieve the establishment of people's democracy and socialist transformation through peaceful means...* However, it needs always to be borne in mind that the ruling classes never relinquish their power voluntarily. They seek to defy the will of the people and seek to reverse it by lawlessness and violence. It is, therefore, necessary for the revolutionary forces to be vigilant and so orientate their work that they can face up to all contingencies, to any twist and turn in the political life of the country.'⁹⁹

Did these sentences imply that the CPI(M) leadership would take to the path of violent revolution if such a contingency arose? Such misgivings were dispelled by authoritative pronouncements made soon after.

In his 'Letter to Nanda', Basavapunniah, a member of the Polit Bureau of the CPI(M), bewailed the fact that though section 113 of their Programme was almost the same as sections 99 and 102 of the Programme adopted by the CPI (the Dangeites) in its seventh Congress in Bombay almost at the same time and though 'the same phrases, almost akin passages' are found in both the Programmes, Gulzarilal Nanda, then India's Home Minister, chose to spread the 'base slander' that the 'Marxist' heroes were advocating the path of violence! To quote Basavapunniah, 'It is true, as Nanda states, that there has been a *new* orientation in the world communist movement on this question [the revisionist formulations announced by Khrushchev in the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU]... It is exactly on the basis of this new assessment that we have introduced this new concept of peaceful transition to socialism in our Party Programme... It [the CPI(M)'s rejection of the new orientation] is an outright slander.'¹⁰⁰

Basavapunniah rightly claimed that there was no difference between them and the Dangeites on the question of peaceful transition to socialism. Ideology did not divide them: rank opportunism did.

Earlier, immediately after the Party Congress, Sundarayya the Party's general secretary, was sent to New Delhi to meet Gulzarilal Nanda to disabuse his mind of the misgiving that the CPI(M) might prepare to make a violent revolution. Sundarayya gave the undertaking to Nanda that though they might raise the slogan of a People's Democratic Revolution, they would 'act as a legal party and function openly'. He assured the Home Minister that they were not even thinking of any sort of armed struggle. So long as they enjoyed all the 'democratic rights' provided by the Indian state [sic!], they were not childish

enough to reject them and go underground. He strongly denied that they were making preparations for going underground in order to build up a struggle of the Telangana type.¹⁰¹

Again, five members of the Polit Bureau of the party – P. Sundarayya, M Basavapunniah, AK Gopalan, P Ramamurti and Harkishan Singh Surjeet – addressed a letter to Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri on January 1, 1965 from prison after their arrests on December 30, 1964 despite all assurances of good behaviour. Referring in that letter to the two paras of section 113 of their Programme, they wrote that an 'identical passage was put forward in the Draft Programme, drafted by P Ramamurti and Bhupesh Gupta for discussion at the Vijaywada Congress in 1961. This was bodily lifted into the alternative draft by SA Dange, G Adhikari and PC Joshi.... It should also be stated that a similar formulation is found in the Draft Programme of the Dangeite National Council and their Bombay Congress did not change the formulation in any way.' They accused Home Minister Gulzarilal Nanda of making the 'slandorous' allegation in his broadcast over the All India Radio on January 1, 1965 that 'the object of our Party is to promote an internal violent revolution....'¹⁰²

Heroics for the consumption of the rank and file Party members turned into a whimper before the leaders' masters in New Delhi! The CPI(M) leaders were as good Khrushchevites as Dange and his followers. They would follow the path of 'peaceful transition to socialism', which was actually one of preserving the existing order. By using the parliament, a political party can change ministers but not the political and economic system which is the source of all wrongs.

Despite promises of good behaviour, many leaders and cadres of the new party were arrested at the end of December 1964 and early in 1965. Some evaded arrest by going underground.

More on the CPI and the CPI(M) in the next chapter.

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87. See Suniti Kumar Ghosh, *The Himalayan Adventure*, pp.62-4.
88. See Dwijendra Nandi, *Some Documents Relating to Early Indian Communists and Controversies around Them*, pp.109-19. See also Nandi, 'Foreword' to the book, pp.37-8.
89. G Adhikari (Ed.), *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, I, p.26.
90. See Nandi, 'Foreword', *op cit*, pp.22-31, 35-40.
91. 'Appeal of the 32 members of the National Council' in Harinarayan Adhikari, *Bharater Communist Andolaner Aro Kicchu Ghatanabali* (Some More Events in the Communist Movement of India), Appendix - I, pp.501-8.
92. 'Report on Unity Tasks', in Harkishan Singh Surjeet, *Resolutions of the Tenali Convention of the Communist Party of India*, Communist Party [later named Communist Party (Marxist)] publication, pp.29-35.
93. Harkishan Singh Surjeet, 'Tenali Convention of the CPI', in *ibid*, pp.4-5.
94. *Ibid*.
95. Cited in Harinarayan Adhikari, *op cit*, pp.62-3.
96. *Programme of the Communist Party of India* (Later the Party, in order to participate in elections and to distinguish itself from the old CPI, was obliged at the behest of the Election Commission to add the word 'Marxist' within brackets after its name), Section 3.

97. See Chester Bowles, 'America and Russia in India', *Foreign Affairs*, July 1971, p.649; Nehru's letter to TN Kaul in Kaul, *Diplomacy in Peace and War*, p.132; Ghosh, *The Himalayan Adventure*, pp.44-50.
98. Programme, Section 108.
99. Programme, Section 113.
100. *People's Democracy* [organ of the CPI(M)], January 30, 1966.
101. P Sundaraya, 'Sundarayya Answers Nanda', *ibid*, September 19, 1965. See also P Sundarayya, M Basavapunniah, AK Gopalan, P Ramamurti and Harkishan Singh Surjeet [members of the PB, CPI - afterwards CPI (M)], *Reply from Prison*.
102. *Ibid*, pp.6, 8.

4

The Deepening Crisis

During colonial rule, India's development was not only retarded but distorted in the interest of British capital. The chronic crisis from which India suffered throughout direct British rule was accentuated during World War II. One of the results of the ruthless plunder of our people by imperialism, big compradors and feudal elements was the Bengal famine of 1943. The prices not only of food but of other essential commodities rose to dizzy heights to meet the demands of Britain's war as well as to satisfy the ravenous greed of Indian hoarders and blackmarketeers. As DR Gadgil said, 'The prices of cloth reached levels more than five times the pre-war level before Government intervened,' and controlled prices were negotiated prices – negotiated between the government and the industrialists.¹

But on March 24, 1947, GD Birla wrote a long letter to C Rajagopalachari, Gandhi's close friend and member of the Interim Government set up by the British in the previous year. Birla demanded the removal of control on cloth.² Gandhi immediately started denouncing controls and rationing and demanded their removal.³ Despite the opposition of non-Congress members of the Government and of many officials, controls were lifted between December 1947 and the following month in a situation of acute scarcity. Immediately, prices soared. Controls were re-imposed between July and December 1948 at new prices – not at the former levels but at the levels they had attained.⁴

Gadgil has given the following table on the rise of prices:

'Movement of Index Numbers

November 1947 and July 1948 (1939 = 100)⁵

Commodity	November 1947	July 1948
Cereal foodgrains	317	474
Cotton manufactures	262	439
Sugar	212	377

On the eve of the transfer of power, wrote Francine Frankel, '*India was still stamped with the sharp disparities of the most deeply stratified society in human history.*'⁶

The partition of India on communal lines and consequent large migrations of the population vastly added to the problem and contributed to the widespread hunger, malnutrition and slow death of the masses.

The rupee, as noted before, was tied to the sterling. When the British government was forced to devalue the sterling in 1949, India had to follow suit to the detriment of interests of the Indian people.

Prices continued to spiral higher and higher. Between October 1955 and August 1957 alone, food prices rose as much as 50 per cent.⁷

Despite food loans of some millions of tonnes from the USA (which became a weapon of imperialism⁸), the food shortage grew worse. The problem was aggravated by hoarders and blackmarketeers – the political base of the ruling Congress party.

The Second Five Year Plan (1956–57 to 1960–61) was foundering on the rock of scarcity, price-rise and inflation. The US imperialists were afraid that India might go the China way. They convened a very high-level conference in Washington – as we have noted before – to help India to overcome the crisis.

But all the foreign aid (a euphemism mainly for loans), all the foreign private investment and the economic planning with Nehru's loud claim of building a 'socialist pattern of society' could not raise India from the quagmire in which it was wallowing. It was the class character of the Indian rulers and their policies of furthering their own interests and those of the imperialists that doomed India to underdevelopment. The structural barriers to India's development – the reign of imperialist capital, domestic comprador capital and feudalism – were responsible for India's abysmal poverty and destitution.

The India-China war of 1962 intensified the crisis.⁹ When China had rebuffed the Indian government's attempts to create trouble in Tibet, India made frantic appeals to the US imperialists for military intervention in their favour. America responded with pilots, military aircraft, etc., and enormous economic aid. The Indian rulers, bewildered and confused, gave up Assam as lost and feared that the Chinese might bomb Calcutta, drop a detachment of paratroopers on Delhi and then head for Madras. After reaching the northern frontiers of Assam, China declared a unilateral ceasefire and started preparations for withdrawal from the disputed area of NEFA. Bertrand Russell – not a communist – commented: 'I cannot think of any other instance in which a victorious army has been halted in this way by its own Government...I was taken by surprise, as was the rest of the world, that they believed sufficiently clearly and strongly that war must be avoided to take such extreme measures,

to make such a sacrifice of their gains.'¹⁰

After China's unilateral ceasefire, the Nehru government issued orders of arrest of those communists who did not support their claims unequivocally. But, due to the ensuing confusion – so characteristic of the Indian government – the large number of arrested communists included some who were 'Nehrute communists'. But that step helped both the latter and the government, for after their release they could pose as revolutionary 'Marxists' and deceive the people.

India's war with China resulted in the tightening of the noose around its neck by the US imperialists and the Soviet revisionists. In the wake of the war there was greater dependence – political, economic and military – on these two super powers. While people starved, military expenditure soared. India's military expenditure rose from Rs 280.9 crore in 1960–61 to Rs 816.1 crore in 1963–4 and to Rs 1,200 crore approximately in 1965–6. Much of it went to purchase military hardware, mostly from the erstwhile Soviet Union and the USA. This added substantially to the drain of wealth from an already impoverished India.

Again, in 1965, India and Pakistan went to war with each other. It caused, besides the slaughter of many innocents – 'still more expenditure, shortages and difficulties'.¹¹

In 1961–2, there was no improvement in the production of food grains; in the next year it declined even further.¹² In 1964–5, the production of food grains totalled 89 million tonnes – much less than the amount needed; in the next two years it came down to 73 million tonnes. One-third of Bihar and 18 districts of Madhya Pradesh were declared as famine-stricken by state governments in 1967. The US imperialists used food as a weapon to force India to adopt the 'Green Revolution' strategy, 'the deadliest strategy', and to devalue the rupee by more than 36 per cent. Even before the steep devaluation of the rupee and the 'Green revolution' strategy were forced on India, even before 'India's China War', no more than 'the top 40 per cent of the total population' could afford per capita monthly expenditure of Rs 20 only. This amount, at 1960–1 prices, was the minimum needed for the purchase 'only of food grains, clothing and fuel sufficient to rise above "abject poverty"'. A per capita minimum consumer expenditure of approximately Rs. 35 per month could provide for a balanced diet (as recommended by the Nutrition Advisory Committee), together with a modest standard of consumption of other items but this did not include any expenditure on health and education.¹³ Frankel has also said that, according to the Planning Commission's estimate, *the per capita daily average income of two thirds of India's population was only 7.5 annas (about Rs 14 per month) – much less than what was required 'to rise above "abject poverty"'*¹⁴ Actually, – more than two thirds of the population could not even afford food grains, clothing and fuel; they lived as half-starved, semi-naked and illiterate persons,

for in calculating the average income, the incomes of the Tatas, Birlas and their tribe, landlords and other fortunate people living in luxury, were taken into account. According to the estimates of the Planning Commission itself, conditions of the overwhelming majority of the people were, to say the least, dismal and inhuman. This was the kind of socialist society the Nehrus were building and the CPI was appreciating.

In 1962, the Indian government set up a group of economists with DR Gadgil, VKRV Rao, BN Ganguli and a few others to study the question of 'nationally desirable minimum level of consumer expenditure'. According to them, a per capita monthly consumer expenditure of Rs 20 (at 1960-61 prices) was the national minimum.¹⁵

In West Bengal, the situation was particularly grim. Millions of refugees had arrived from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). They were victims of the deal in 1947 between the British imperialists, the leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League – in which the Nehrus played the trump card – who had not been rehabilitated. Other policies of the Nehru government, like the freight equalisation policy in respect of coal and iron (but not things like cotton), had a crippling effect on industry in West Bengal. Land reforms proved a mockery. Want of irrigation facilities left agriculture in West Bengal at the mercy of Nature. Shortage of food was particularly acute: the substantial landowners, traders in food grains and rice-mill owners, who formed the support base of the Congress rulers in the rural areas, frustrated the declared policies of the government with impunity and resorted to hoarding and black-marketing.

The government's answer to any demand of the people was indiscriminate arrest and use of the *lathi* (baton) and bullet. In 1959, at the call of the CPI, a peaceful procession of peasants – men and women with infants in their arms – came to Calcutta to demand food from the government. When the procession reached central Calcutta, it was surrounded by the police and the peasants were beaten savagely with *lathis*. Eighty demonstrators were killed, at least 300 injured and several thousands were arrested.

It was a desperate situation for the people. Looting of grain shops started in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. To quote Frankel, 'During much of the later 1960s and into the 1970s, there were chronic food shortages, sharp inflationary price spirals, low availability of domestic raw materials, shortfalls in industrial output, under utilised capacity in consumer goods industries, stagnant or declining rates of public investment, and diversion of scarce foreign exchange for imports of food grains and raw materials.'¹⁶ The condition of the people went on deteriorating.

'The index of per capita national income [in 1970]', wrote Thomas Balogh, 'was still some 4 per cent below 1964-5.'¹⁷ And he also observed that the per capita availability of food grain estimated in 1970 was over 6 per cent below

1965¹⁵ – a year when famine conditions had made their appearance. The country was reduced to economic bankruptcy. Out of the total Third Plan (1961–2 to 1965–6) outlay of Rs 7,500 crore, 'foreign assistance' (which meant much greater drain of wealth from the country in the long run), estimated to finance the plan was Rs 2,200 crore.¹⁶ And the deficit financing of Rs 550 crore and the additional taxation of Rs 1,700 crore were deemed necessary to implement the plan. This would add to the burden mostly of the impoverished people. Charles Bettelheim wrote: '...the Indian tax system [which has now become still worse], far from contributing to a reduction of unequal income distribution, aggravates it even more. From this point of view, the most characteristic fact is the important and rapid growth of indirect taxation on articles for mass consumption. Equally significant are the various measures seeking to 'encourage' the capitalists to invest.'¹⁷

The crisis was so acute that there was a plan holiday for three years – 1966–7 to 1968–9.

The acute economic crisis was giving rise to a political crisis. To quote Pran Chopra, 'The Defence of India Rules, a set of sweeping regulations, have remained in use long after the emergency needs for which they were evoked had passed, and that they have been used, even to the extent of suppressing Fundamental Rights, not only for the needs of defence but for the day to day business of the Government.' 'As the Government's dependence upon unrealistic regulation mounts', wrote Chopra, 'so does use of force, which in the past few years appears to have become the *normal instrument of all kinds of policy*: ...everything ends up as a law and order problem.'¹⁸

Resentment against the ruling classes among the people all over India found violent expression. 'In this atmosphere of pervasive violence', to quote Chopra again, 'even people and professions [including doctors, nurses and engineers], better known for more orderly relations broke out into unpredictable behaviour.'¹⁹ Among the numerous instances he has cited are: '...more than 130,000 teachers employed by the Kerala government struck work and all schools aided by the government had to shut down; all engineers of the Punjab State Electricity Board decided to quit their jobs.... The administration of the whole of UP was brought to a halt for 62 days because several thousand junior grade employees put their quills down; 150,000 Maharashtra government employees and 200,000 in West Bengal took mass casual leave to protest.... Disorder reached a quite unexpected height when the police force in Delhi struck work, some detachments refused to surrender arms and some others surrounded the house of the Union Minister of Home Affairs.'²⁰

A revolutionary situation was developing in the country. The people were

in a rebellious mood. Workers and students were in the forefront of struggles. Pran Chopra wrote: 'Labour unrest was acute throughout this period: it continues to be, and in fact, becomes worse as production indices decline, leading to retrenchment and lay-off, and the cost of living continues to soar.'²⁴ Everywhere, there were strikes, protest demonstrations, clashes with and firings by the police and many deaths.

Driven to the wall, workers devised a new form of struggle in West Bengal, namely *gherao*. When they were victimised in a factory or office, they would keep their bosses confined until their demands were met or the police came and dispersed them.

Fascist forces represented by the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra Party (party formed by former princes and a section of the big bourgeoisie) were also gathering strength. They too were exploiting the mass unrest. Pran Chopra observed that India then 'stood uncertainly between two massive but opposing possibilities'. The possibilities were democratic revolution and fascist counter-revolution. As we shall see, all the so-called Left parties contributed to the strengthening of the fascist forces.

Because of the government's failure to procure food from the substantial landowners, rationing in cities like Calcutta – even modified rationing in places – faced a breakdown. In West Bengal, people in several districts rose to oppose the exploitation and oppression to which they were subjected. The people's resistance started in the North 24 Parganas district. In February 1966, a student, Nurul Islam, was killed in police firing for joining a demonstration for kerosene oil, which was scarce. All over the district, people started attacking police stations, block development offices, etc. In Nadia district, another student was killed in police firing, setting the whole district aflame. For one week, the entire administration was wiped out from the district. The protesters set fire to railway stations and coaches, banks, administrative buildings, a minister's house, etc. They cut off telegraph and telephone wires, erected barricades and battled with the police. Two policemen were killed. In other districts, too, people were engaged in militant struggles against their corrupt rulers. The people were fearless in smashing the existing system. A Bangla 'Bandh' (stoppage of all work) was observed throughout the state. On March 10, 1966, Calcutta witnessed a two-mile long procession of protesters. For three days, administration collapsed in Calcutta as also in many other areas. The whole situation seemed insurrectionary. Additional police contingents were rushed in from other states and the army was called in to restore law and order.

The revolutionary struggles in various other countries were also having their impact on the situation in India. Two struggles in particular had a profound influence on the Indian people. One, with deathless bravery the Vietnamese

people were dealing shattering blows at the French imperialists and then at the US invaders who were equipped with incomparably more powerful weapons of death and destruction. The struggle was an epic one. Two, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China brought the promise of the complete remoulding of man and liquidation of the foundations of the old society that thrived on the exploitation of man by man.

No doubt the situation in India in the late sixties was pregnant with revolutionary possibilities. What are the symptoms of a revolutionary situation? Lenin said: 'We shall certainly not be mistaken if we indicate the following three major symptoms: (1) when it is impossible for the ruling classes to maintain their rule without any change; when there is a crisis, in one form or another, among the "upper classes", a crisis in the policy of the ruling class, leading to a fissure through which the discontent and indignation of the oppressed classes burst forth. For a revolution to take place, it is usually insufficient for "the lower classes not to want" to live in the old way; it is also necessary that the "upper classes should be unable" to live in the old way; (2) when the suffering and want of the oppressed classes have grown more acute than usual; (3) when, as a consequence of the above causes, there is a considerable increase in the activity of the masses, who uncomplainingly allow themselves to be robbed in "peace time", but in turbulent times are drawn both by all the circumstances of the crisis and by the "upper classes" themselves into independent historical action.'

Lenin added:

'...it is not every revolutionary situation that gives rise to a revolution; revolution arises only out of a situation in which the above-mentioned objective changes are accompanied by a subjective change, namely, the ability of the revolutionary class to take revolutionary mass action strong enough to break (or dislocate) the old government, which never, not even in a period of crisis, falls, if it is not toppled over.'²⁵

No doubt, the lower classes did not want to live in the old way. Nor could the ruling classes rule in the old way. The Congress party, the main party of the ruling classes, was undergoing splits in different states. In the 1967 general elections, the Congress suffered defeat in eight major states. In this 'crisis of stability', the ruling classes gathered together all the parties claiming to represent diverse and seemingly opposed policies and ideologies to form coalition ministries in the states so as to maintain stability of their rule. But these coalitions were very unstable and the 'crisis of stability' could hardly be overcome.

The question is, was the subjective factor fully conscious of its historic role and able to organise and lead the revolutionary classes and oppressed people to fight and overthrow the ruling classes and the existing exploitative system?

It is a truism that there can be no revolution without a revolutionary party to awaken, organise, unite and lead the masses of the exploited and oppressed

people. What was the role of the CPI or the CPI(M) in the situation that had developed – the parties which claim to be the vanguard of the toiling people?

The government released those communists whom they had arrested towards the end of 1964 or early in 1965. In West Bengal the leaders – whose imprisonment had added lustre to their popular image – asked for time to prepare a programme for struggle. After some time, they gave a call for a general strike for two days. During those two days, no policeman was observed in the streets nor did the state intervene to break the strike. It passed off peacefully. One does not know if there was a prior understanding between the leaders and the government. They accomplished what the government had failed to do – restoration of order. The people were waiting for a lead from the leaders. After some time, the leaders asked the people to prepare for the coming election in early 1967 and oust the Congress ministry. They started negotiations with other political parties to form an alliance against the Congress. All class struggles – the struggle for food and dehoarding of illegal food stocks, the struggle of the peasants for land, especially the land under the illegal occupation of big landowners, the struggle of the workers against retrenchment, lay-off, wage-cuts, etc. – were stopped. Only the struggle for votes which, if successful, could change ministries but not the existing system – the root of all evil – was the form of struggle that the people were strongly enjoined to adopt. The fact is, as we shall see, these parties, like the other parties, wanted not the overthrow of the system but its stability – the heart's desire of the ruling classes.

It was only natural that the ruling classes were quite interested in the stability of their regime of oppression and exploitation. The two communist parties were no less interested in it. During an interview with a *Washington Post* correspondent, Namboodiripad, chief minister of Kerala and member of the CPI(M) Polit bureau, said: 'I may now claim that one of the biggest achievements of our pre-election alliance and the post-election Government is that we have shown that it is possible for the various non-Congress parties to come together and establish a relatively *stable* alliance on which a stable coalition Government can be built.'²⁶

The 'united front' of all non-Congress reactionaries and revisionists for fighting election battles and replace the Congress to preserve the same old system was the answer of the ruling classes to the challenge of the oppressed and rebellious people. That would be a means of defusing the revolutionary situation, diverting them from the revolutionary path and presenting before them an alternative path – replacements of Congress ministries through the ballot-box.

Building alliances to defeat the Congress at the polls became the programme

of the two communist parties. In West Bengal, the CPI and the CPI(M) organised two fronts – 'People's United Left Front' and 'United Left Front', respectively. When they found, after the elections, that they could not separately form a majority of the elected members, the two fronts combined and, along with a few more, set up a 14-party United Front to form a ministry replacing the Congress. In Kerala they – the CPI and the CPI(M) – together set up an united front of seven parties which it won a majority of seats in the Kerala Assembly. In the matter of forming alliances they were not at all squeamish. Not only did the 'revolutionary Marxists' and revisionists unite but they formed alliance also with the break-away Congress parties (which pursued the same politics as the Congress), Muslim League, Jana Sangh (whose present-day incarnation is the Bharatiya Janata Party), the Swatantra Party, etc. In West Bengal, Ajay Mukherjee, who had been president of the West Bengal Congress till 1966 and a Congress minister for several years, left the Congress for factional reasons and formed a party named Bangla Congress. Bangla Congress became a constituent of the United Front. In Kerala, the Muslim League was part of the CPI(M)-led United Front. In Tamil Nadu, the CPI(M) joined the Swatantra Party and the Muslim League. Similar alliances were formed in several other states. This led Frank Moraes to ask: 'With the Swatantraites, the Jana Sangh, the DMK, the SSP (Samjukta Socialist Party) and the PSP (Praja-Socialist Party) as political bedfellows, where does the Left begin and the Right end?'²⁷ The distinction between the left and the right was a matter of rhetoric. What mattered was the stability to the regime of oppression and exploitation. To ensure stability, the 'left' and the right could not but combine within united fronts in different states.

As noted before, the Congress was defeated in the 1967 election in eight states. The CPI(M) had a major role to play in the UF ministries formed in Kerala and West Bengal. In Tamil Nadu, the DMK party played a main role. In some other states – Bihar, Orissa, UP, Rajasthan and Punjab – the Swatantra Party and Jana Sangh had major roles to play. In Kerala, the CPI(M) leader Namboodiripad became the chief minister; in West Bengal, Ajay Mukherjee of the Bangla Congress became the chief minister and the CPI(M) leader Jyoti Basu deputy chief minister.

The Birlas' *Eastern Economist* hailed the results. It wrote: 'There can be no doubt at all that the wind of change now blowing through our political landscape will, on balance, be for the good of the country [i.e., for the good of the ruling classes – the Birlas and their likes] and, let us add, for the good of the Congress also.... By proving that office can be made to change hands with the help of the ballot box, the verdict of the fourth general election should have a soothing, sobering and steady effect on our politics.'

The weekly added:

'Quite clearly a variety of considerations has weighed with the electorate, for the circumstances in which the country went to the polls were certainly not in favour of the ruling party. Chronic inflation, continually rising prices, recurring shortages of essential commodities, famine conditions in many parts of the country, a hold-up in industrial activity and an uneasy outlook for the future, all these have bred resentment and hostility among the various sections of the community as different from one another as Central Government employees in Delhi, industrial workers in Bombay, lower-middle class families in Madras and Kerala, starving peasant families in Bihar and the common people anywhere and everywhere.... We thus enter a new phase in our political affairs without abruptly cutting ourselves off from the past.'²⁸

In the *Economic and Political Weekly*, Ashok V Desai commented:

*'Things have changed much less than we think, and they will continue to be the same much more than we think.'*²⁹

In a political report – very long-winded, as usual – on the new situation and the Party's tasks, adopted in April 1967, the CC of the CPI(M) claimed that the election results marked a significant victory for the people and for the democratic forces, that a new chapter had opened. It said that the Party's fate would depend on the performance of the two ministries in Kerala and West Bengal. It should be the task of the *entire* party to carefully observe the way they functioned and to propagate their achievements all over India. It was the task of the state units of the *entire* party to mobilise the people in support of the programmes of these ministries.³⁰ It was an excellent strategy; this would divert the people from the path of class struggle – all over India. The aim would be not to change the economic-political system – the cause of all exploitation and oppression – but to give stability to ministries, formed in alliance with heterogeneous parties and individuals, even sworn enemies of the people. Interestingly, the CC saw bright possibilities of forming an alternative People's Democratic Government at the Centre,³¹ though the Congress party was in absolute majority and the combined strength of all the 'democratic' parties including the Swatantra Party, the Jana Sangh, the DMK, the Muslim League, and so on, fell short of the required number of MPs. Yet, undaunted, the CC proposed to open talks among the non-Congress 'democratic' parties and groups.

In April, the West Bengal State Committee of the CPI(M) declared in a statement that the ministry, a coalition of 14 parties having different policies and ideologies, 'has to function on the basis of a *non-class* outlook'.³² This talk of a 'non-class outlook' was deceptive. As Marxism teaches us, no individual, group or party is above classes. No party or coalition of parties can be guided by a 'non-class outlook'; it must have the outlook of an exploiting class or the

outlook of the exploited class and must serve the interests of the former or of the latter. There is no third choice. The CPI(M)'s West Bengal State Committee openly declared that in the interests of the coalition ministry, they would be guided *not* by the class outlook of the exploited. In fact, the CPI and, later, the CPI(M) had never such an outlook except for brief spells in the late twenties and in 1933-35, and their politics of class collaboration, which amounted to capitulationism, served the interests of the exploiters, whether foreign or domestic. It was because of their politics of betrayal that India's freedom struggle in 1945-7 ended in a counter-revolution. Now, when there was a revolutionary situation, when the ruling classes were faced with a 'crisis of instability' and the ruled refused to live in the old way, the CPI(M) was assuring the ruling classes and its coalition partners that their politics would be no different from that of the past. It was at a critical moment of the history of our country, as in 1945-7, the 'communist' leaders of both factions sought to stem the rising tide of class struggles which threatened to assume its highest form - revolution.

When the CPI(M) adopted its party programme in 1964, as has been mentioned earlier, the leadership did not allow free discussion and debates. Deliberately they stifled all voices of dissent. Several groups of members like the 'Committee For Inner-Party Struggle Against Revisionism', 'Chinta', 'Surya Sen Group', tried to propagate their views by circulating documents among the party members. In one of the documents, 'Present Situation and our Tasks', the Committee for Inner-Party Struggle'; which had Sushital Roy Chaudhuri, Asit Sen and Parimal Das Gupta among its members, stated:

'The mass struggles of the recent times clearly show that our country has entered into a phase that marks the beginning of a high tide of revolutionary struggle. The mood of the people of our country is day by day becoming revolutionary. As a result of huge social upheavals occurring frequently, the atmosphere of our country is growing tense.... They are nothing but the rumble of the approaching revolutionary tide.'

Some features of these mass struggles were:

1. Even the movements for partial demands or for certain rights have to face the hard, unyielding attitude of the ruling classes. To fulfil even ordinary demands, people have to wage stubborn struggles.
2. The consciousness that it is necessary to fight the entire system is fast growing. A feeling for change, if not class-consciousness, is developing even among backward sections of the people, whose participation determines the sweep and intensity of any movement.
3. The traditional weapon of the working class - the general strike - as a means of fighting for demands, as a means of rousing the consciousness

of the people, uniting them and drawing them into the struggle - is growing popular.

4. At the time when people wage united struggles - at the time when democratic mass movements spread, especially during general strikes and *hartals* - hundreds of hitherto unknown agitators emerge; the agitators, in reality, turn out to be very influential because they have the closest ties with the vast masses.
5. ...A very significant feature noticeable during these struggles or clashes [with the police] is that the masses show a firm determination to carry forward the movements in the teeth of fierce police onslaught. People do not surrender easily. During these confrontations with the police, the people display ingenuity in devising various methods to weaken the enemy by returning every blow they receive.

The bulletin went on to state:

'Their second important characteristic is that in many cases they bear unmistakable signs of a civil war. This is specially observed in West Bengal where the ruling class, in order to suppress the democratic movements, depend mainly on the police force on the one hand, and on the other, try to unite all the reactionary forces of their own class for violent attacks on the people.

'The fundamental question in the context of the above situation is whether the tremendous social upheaval taking place now throughout the country will develop into an increasingly powerful tidal wave. The only way to have a definite answer to this question is to study carefully the social contradictions behind the present situation and to understand correctly the principal aspects of the contradictions. It is as a result of the sharpening of these contradictions that objective conditions are created for this social upheaval to grow into a tidal wave....'

The document refers to the contradictions between the national liberation movement and imperialist powers, between imperialism and Indian big capital on the one hand and the Indian people on the other, between the feudal system and the masses of the people and between the Indian ruling classes and the various nationalities whose right of self-determination is denied. India's backward economy has come under great strain and the contradictions have entered a new phase of intensification since the India-China war in 1962. The misery of the toiling people was more intense than ever before.

The document also states:

'At the present stage this [the Indian] revolution is directed towards overthrowing imperialism, big and monopoly native capital and feudalism and towards establishing a People's Democratic State.... The main basis on which the People's Democratic State is to be built is the

firm alliance of the working class and the peasantry. So it is necessary for us to orientate and organise all our activities accordingly. To realise this objective, our immediate aim should be to win over the people as rapidly as possible both in the rural and in the urban areas to the side of revolution through systematic revolutionary activities; but the key to the victory of the revolution is the leadership of the proletariat. For this it is necessary to establish the base of the party in all principal industrial areas as well as in the workers' organisations of Transport, Post and Telegraph, etc., and to make the Party genuinely proletarian both in its appearance and in its roots, by bringing in truly militant and tested working class cadres. Along with this, powerful working class movements and organisations will have to be built up.

But at the same time the basic orientation of the movement has to be kept in sight. It must not be forgotten that the *main condition for helping the struggle in the urban areas and for hastening the nation-wide revolutionary flood-tide is to develop the struggle for land, which is the basic struggle of the peasantry in the rural areas.* ...But this does not mean giving up the struggles in the urban areas or minimising their importance. Again, to neglect, in any way, the task of developing basic struggles and building up militant bases in the rural areas, will be a fatal mistake. ...Hence, the necessity for building up powerful broad-based peasant organisations, especially the mass organisation of agricultural labourers, share-croppers and poor peasants, which will create objective conditions for establishing militant bases. It is our conviction that with the resources which our party has at present, and *provided a genuine class consciousness is there*, it should not be difficult for the Party to tackle the problem of these two types of organisational activities. But that requires a conscious effort, a revolutionary initiative and efficient leadership.

...serious attention must be given at the same time to the *new* - which, from time to time, appears like a flash of lightning and electrifies the whole atmosphere during its brief spell of existence. ... In fact, this 'new' urges us to free our thoughts and outlook from the stereotyped grooves of activities. We are speaking of those clashes which are taking place between the people and the organised forces of the ruling class in times of mass struggle - and in some cases features of a civil war are witnessed, even if in flashes. A politically conscious revolutionary must recognise the essence of the aspirations of the people, which find expression during such clashes, of the preparations for resistance, which in many cases they organise spontaneously. There can be no doubt that these are, though in an embryonic form, the highest form of struggle which revolutionaries look forward to. In the past also a good many struggles

were fought, but, in the recent years, their frequent occurrences and the activities of the people during these occurrences *clearly make them qualitatively different from those of the past. These are plainly an embryonic form of what are required to bring about revolutionary changes in the society.* So, the bounden duty of this moment is to give all attention to ensure proper maturing of this embryo, so that it can grow and develop as a well-nourished entity within the womb of mass struggles to its full maturity. This will pave the way for the victory of the People's Democratic Revolution. ... Failure to do this will mean reducing the struggles to reformist movements totally devoid of revolutionary content... On the whole, what we need is a new outlook, a new strategy and new tactics in regard to struggles and organisations and a truly revolutionary way of functioning.'

In its concluding part the document stated:

'The truth is, our leaders have gone bankrupt, they are unable, or deliberately refuse, to discover the new content which has recently been growing in the democratic movements; as a result, their outlook has become one of electioneering and their political tactics have been reduced to electoral tactics. Yet what else could be the main task before us, if not to enrich the new forms of the mass movements and to undertake political and organisational measures to this end? *Elections must be subordinated and made complementary to this task.*'³³

I have quoted long extracts from the above document, for it points out the features of the revolutionary situation at the time and defines the main tasks of Indian revolutionaries. It was not, and has never been – before and after – the purpose of the CPI and the CPI(M) to make revolution but to prevent it. It may be noted that in original Bengali, the language quivers in response to the thoughts and feelings of the writer.

It is this India which formed the background of the Naxalbari uprising, the organisational preparations for which started in March 1967, soon after the United Front ministry assumed office in West Bengal. It is an India which had

rich revolutionary potentialities objectively but where the subjective factor, a strong organised revolutionary party which would be the leading force, was yet to appear.

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Part II: Naxalbari and After

5

Naxalbari Showed the Way

In a remote cluster of villages at the foot of the Himalayas in Darjeeling district, an event of great significance occurred in 1967. It was a historic event, marking a turning point in India's political history. This was the peasant uprising in Naxalbari. The decision to start an armed struggle and reject parliamentary cretinism was a decision of great revolutionary significance. The Naxalbari peasant struggle resolved the key-question – whether to seize power by armed force or to pursue the path of class collaboration and class capitulation.

At the Extraordinary Congress of the CPI held in Amritsar in April 1958, the main resolution adopted at the Congress said *under a significant sub-title 'Kerala Shows the Way': 'The most outstanding event in recent years...has been the formation of a Communist-led Government in Kerala.'* A coalition ministry led by the CPI and headed by EMS Namboodiripad was formed in Kerala in 1957 after victory in the Assembly election (and dismissed in July 1959 by the Nehru Government at the Centre). The formation of the Namboodiripad Government was hailed by the CPI as 'a spring-board for further conquests'. 'Ever since then, the CPI (and later, the CPI-M, too) have been following the way showed by Kerala – the peaceful, parliamentary path as opposed to the non-peaceful revolutionary path – to People's Democracy and Socialism. The Kerala way actually led to class collaboration and class capitulationism. Whether the workers, the peasantry and other toiling people would seize power by armed struggle or through the ballot box was the fundamental difference between Marxism-Leninism and right opportunism. The experience in India as well as of other countries eloquently points out that by following the Kerala way, ministries can be changed but not the existing economic and political system which is at the root of all injustice, exploitation and oppression. Marxist-

Leninists hold the view that it is only by violent revolution that the existing ruling classes and their state based on violence can be overthrown and a new economic and political system can emerge. Marx's oft-quoted words may be repeated here: 'Force is the midwife of the old society pregnant with a new one.'

For the first time in the long history of India's communist movement – except for Telangana under regional leadership, which did not break with the left-adventurist central leadership and claimed that the struggle was not directed against the Indian Government – Naxalbari showed the Marxist-Leninist path – the only way which leads to People's Democracy and Socialism. It boldly proclaimed that the existing economic and political system could be overthrown by the oppressed classes only through the use of revolutionary violence and that then only a regenerated India could arise. Naxalbari exposed the revisionist leadership of the two Communist Parties, which were enamoured of the parliamentary path – a snare, a deception. This path takes people away from the path of the highest form of class struggle – revolution. Instead of ending the system of exploitation and oppression, the Kerala way perpetuates it. The revolutionary path is not a smooth, straight road but a long, tortuous path full of twists and turns. It is the road of an arduous, protracted struggle, paved with occasional defeats, and demands great sacrifice in the present so that generations afterwards can live a materially and culturally rich life, free from exploitation and oppression. It was Naxalbari that broke the long spell of opportunism which had dominated and emasculated the communist movement of India.

When both the factions, known as the CPI and the CPI(M), abandoned Marxism-Leninism and were guided by the revisionist orientation, 'the new orientation', the 'new concepts' preached by Khrushchev and his successors, Naxalbari made it loud and clear that it stood by Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung thought. It loudly proclaimed its adherence to the revolutionary path to People's Democracy and then to Socialism, as opposed to the parliamentary path.

In 1915 Lenin said, 'The building of a revolutionary organisation must be begun – that is demanded by the new historical situation, by the epoch of proletarian revolutionary action – but it can be begun only *over the heads of the old leaders, the stranglers of revolutionary energy, over the heads of the old party, through its destruction.*'²

In the new historical situation in India, it became the task of the communist revolutionaries to unmask the real face of the erstwhile leaders, 'the stranglers of revolutionary energy'. Naxalbari aimed at doing so: Telangana, though by far a greater revolutionary struggle, made no such attempt. Its leaders who had, for the first time in India, upheld Mao Tsetung's thesis on New Democracy,

did not dissociate themselves from the all-India leaders, 'the stranglers of revolutionary energy', and had to surrender to the latter. Some of them, like Rajeswara Rao, themselves later on became 'stranglers of revolutionary energy'.

Besides, after the march of the Indian Government's troops into Hyderabad, many leaders and cadres of the party wanted the struggle to cease and did not like it to be waged against the Indian Government. They preached - as the leadership of the CPI, including Sundarayya did - that the struggle was not a revolt against the existing political-economic system represented by the Nehru Government.

Like many others in the CPI(M), Charu Majumdar rebelled against the revisionism of the established communist parties, upheld Mao Tsetung's teaching, 'Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun' and brought to the forefront the role of the peasant in the People's Democratic Revolution. Guided by Mao Tsetung thought, Charu Majumdar made his theoretical contribution to what brought about the Naxalbari struggle. He wrote what are known as 'eight documents' between January 1965 and April 1967. He was interrupted in September 1965 for a spell of prison life. In these writings, he declared war against modern revisionism and swore by Mao Tsetung thought - which represented a development of Marxism-Leninism - and dubbed the revisionist Soviet Union an ally of imperialism and reiterated that the only way of overthrowing the existing system of exploitation and oppression was by revolutionary violence, by armed struggle of the oppressed. The party, he said, must be rebuilt as a revolutionary party to fulfil its historic task. He pointed out the necessity of mass organisations like the Kisan Sabha and the trade union but he held that economism should be combated while working in them and conducting them. He said that no basic demand of the peasantry could be realised by following the peaceful path. He stressed the importance of the leadership of the poor and landless peasants in the agrarian revolution and the necessity of building a united front of the revolutionary classes under the leadership of the working class, on the basis of the worker-peasant alliance. He asked the students and other youth of petty bourgeois origin to integrate with the poor and landless peasants. He upheld the right of different nationalities of India to self-determination, including the right to secede. (It may be noted that though his writings marked a historic advance, they were not free from several erroneous ideas.)

The positive thoughts were mostly shared by many communist revolutionaries at the time. But without remaining content with making theoretical contribution, Majumdar gave a bold call for armed struggle in rural areas. This call was truly a historic leap. The call for rebuilding the communist party, to restore the soul of communism to the Indian communist movement,

to begin a people's war to seize land and power was something new. Charu Majumdar's historic contribution will be forever remembered despite his many limitations, to which we shall refer as we proceed.

Communist revolutionaries and peasants and workers of the Terai region responded to his call.

On March 18, 1967, the Siliguri sub-divisional peasant convention was held. From this convention, as Kanu Sanyal, the leading organiser of the peasant uprising, wrote, the call went out to the peasants:

1. Establish the authority of the peasant committees in all matters of the village
2. Get organised and be armed in order to crush the resistance of jotedars* and rural reactionaries
3. Smash the jotedars' monopoly of ownership of the land and redistribute the land anew through the peasant committees

The convention warned the peasants that the anti-feudal struggle would have to confront the repressive measures of the central as well as of the state government, which had to be resisted by force of arms. The struggle, it said, would necessarily be a protracted one.³

The call created a stir among the peasantry of the three police station areas - Naxalbari, Kharibari and Phansidewa - as well as in some parts of the Siliguri police station area. Naxalbari, the name of a village, has come to stand for this entire area. (Besides, this term has acquired a symbolic meaning—an armed agrarian struggle, the road to Indian revolution. This area is part of the Terai region in the Darjeeling district at the foot of the Himalayas where tea-plantations abound).

Darjeeling, an important centre of tea-production, was a non-regulated area, being outside the jurisdiction of the Bengal Government during colonial rule. Workers employed in tea-plantations, then owned mainly by British companies, were recruited from distant areas like present-day Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh. Innocent tribal men and women were duped by the planters' recruiting agents with false hopes. Santals, Oraons and other tribal people, who worked in the tea-gardens, were treated virtually as slaves and subjected to brutal treatment by the planters. It was a story of deceit and most cruel oppression.

After the end of direct colonial rule, tea plantations were not affected by land ceiling acts enacted by Congress governments. Besides the land planted

* Landowners who gave their land on oral lease to peasants to cultivate on a crop-sharing basis. Besides their share of the produce, mostly half of it, rural jotedars extorted various illegal exactions from share-croppers as well as exorbitant interest on the loan they had extended.

with tea, the owners had under their possession lands which plantation workers or other agriculturists cultivated to grow other crops on a crop-sharing basis. Furthermore, as noted in the second chapter, big landowners evaded the Land Ceiling Act by dividing their property and recording the ownership of excess lands under fictitious names. Even the lands in excess of the ceiling that were vested in the government continued to remain under their possession and were used by them for their own benefit. The large majority of peasants in the Terai area were poor share-croppers and agricultural labourers. Land inequalities were great. Some of the tea-garden workers were also peasants. Workers and peasants were close allies. The peasants, too, were almost all of tribal origins.

Naxalbari peasants and workers had a tradition of fighting, at least from the early fifties. A few communists went to Naxalbari from the outside, lived among peasants and workers and integrated themselves with them. Among them were Kanu Sanyal and Khokan Majumdar. Together with local comrades like Jangal Santal and Kadam Mullick, they organised peasants and workers – in Kisan Sabhas (peasant unions affiliated to the West Bengal Krishak Sabha) and tea-garden workers' unions. Charu Majumdar, who suffered from several serious ailments, was their mentor. He had left his studies before sitting for the Intermediate examination and became a full-time communist worker, first organising peasants and then workers in Jalpaiguri district. He took part in the Tebhaga movement of the share-croppers, which roused the peasantry in several districts of undivided Bengal, especially in north Bengal. He was a leader of that movement in the Jalpaiguri district. He was one of the Indians who came to have faith as early as 1948 in the ideological and political leadership of Mao Tsetung, who was then creating history by leading the Chinese people to victory in the New Democratic Revolution. Majumdar became an important leader of the Jalpaiguri District Committee of the CPI. In the meantime he had his taste of prison life. The left-adventurist line of BT Ranadive, who was general secretary of the CPI from 1948 to the first half of 1950, seemed to attract him. In 1952, after his marriage, he transferred his party membership from Jalpaiguri to Siliguri, where his parental home was. He tried to organise peasants and workers in the Terai region of the Darjeeling district. The Terai Tea Garden Workers' Union was formed in the 1950s with Majumdar as its president. It was under the control of the CPI. He was elected a delegate to the Madurai Congress of the CPI in 1953. Again, in 1961, he was elected a delegate to the West Bengal State Conference in Burdwan and to the Vijayawada Congress of the party. But he did not attend them. He was disgusted with the opportunism of the Party leadership.

Towards the end of 1962, when the India-China war occurred,⁴ Charu Majumdar went against the tide of national chauvinism. He issued an open

statement, accusing India as the aggressor. The cadres and quite a number of peasants of the Terai region shared his view and, like him, courted prison life.

Majumdar rebelled against revisionism, which encouraged the sickening opportunism of the CPI leaders, some of whom – as noted before, broke away in 1964 to form a new party which called itself CPI but had to add the term 'Marxist' within brackets after the name at the behest of the Election Commission somewhat later.

Naxalbari, as we have said, had a tradition of fighting. We shall depend mainly on Kanu Sanyal to tell the story. The glorious class struggle in Naxalbari began in 1946 but was interrupted during the arch-adventurist Ranadive period –1948 to 1950. It started again in 1951, continued without interruption and culminated in the historic struggle of 1967. Though the struggles before 1967 were mainly struggles to realise economic demands, they had a distinct character of their own. As peasants and workers of tea plantations were close neighbours, there existed close alliance between them. And, while waging partial struggles, both workers and peasants did not refrain from taking up their customary weapons – bows and arrows when occasions demanded. As Kanu Sanyal writes, on one occasion, during the struggle for bonus of the tea-workers in 1955, about ten thousand armed workers and peasants disarmed the police force.⁵ In 1958-9, not content with the call of the West Bengal Krishak Sabha for seizing the 'benami' lands under the possession of the jotedars, a conference of the Siliguri Sub-Divisional Krishak Samiti asked the peasants to reap the harvest and store it in their own granaries, to tell the jotedars to furnish proof of the ownership of the lands they claimed and then to receive their share of the produce. They were advised to arm themselves to protect the crop from the jotedars and the police. The struggle assumed a very militant character and there were several clashes with the jotedars' gangs and the police as well as snatching of arms. About two thousand peasants courted arrest and many were persecuted in other ways. The struggle was withdrawn only at the instruction of the West Bengal Provincial Krishak Sabha.

The Naxalbari peasants and workers were also opposed to national chauvinism which the Indian Government fostered during the India-China war of 1962. They and the cadres working among them regarded the Indian government as the aggressor. They did not allow national chauvinists to hold any meeting in the area. More than a hundred peasants and workers, besides cadres, were arrested. The cadres, workers and peasants of Naxalbari carried on the struggle against the revisionism of the Dangeites, who led the CPI. Later, after 1964, their anti-revisionist struggle was directed against the CPI(M) leadership.

On release from prison in June 1966, the cadres of Naxalbari came to know the contents of Charu Majumdar's 'documents'. During discussions

with him, they agreed with him on major issues, mainly on questions of strategy, but had differences on some issues concerning tactics. He wanted the formation of 'combat units' with Party activists, whose tasks would be to propagate revolutionary politics and to strike at reactionaries in order to annihilate them. He wanted these units to annihilate policemen, military officers, hated bureaucrats and class enemies and to snatch arms and weapons from the class enemies. He said that this kind of attack could be launched both in the urban and in the rural areas, but greater attention should be paid to rural areas. He wanted partisan struggle to be built up within six months (when no revolutionary party existed). Charu Majumdar held that peasant militants should be taught how to set fire to the houses of class enemies in the night. According to him, a liberated area was one which was freed of class enemies. The most urgent task of the revolutionaries was to build liberated areas by annihilating some class enemies and making others flee from the village. Arms should also be obtained from the armed forces of the enemy's state by sudden attacks. According to him, the area where we were able to organise the snatching of fire-arms would quickly turn into a liberated area. Charu Majumdar's call for revolutionary struggle was historic. But as regards the tactics he proposed before the Naxalbari uprising and sometime afterwards, they were products of his feverish imagination. It was not realistic to suppose that an area, even a village, becomes liberated if some class enemies have been annihilated and others have fled away. In that event, the state's armed forces rush into the area to suppress the revolutionary peasants. It is only by inflicting decisive defeats on the armed forces of the enemy's state that an area can be liberated. A liberated base is neither so cheap nor so easy to build up as Charu Majumdar had imagined.

It is not true, as Kanu Sanyal wrote in *'More About Naxalbari'* in 1973, that Charu Majumdar wanted 'combat units' at that stage to perform 'action' only – secret assassinations of class enemies in the villages and of other reactionaries – and did not put stress on political work. Nor is it true that Majumdar at that stage ignored the necessity of mass organisations and mass struggles. Actually, in some essays written in 1965 and 1966–67, he did recognise their necessity. But he appears to have placed greater emphasis on 'combat units' and their tasks than on mass struggles.

As noted by both Sanyal and Khokan Majumdar, it was decided after discussions with Charu Majumdar that the old cadres would work in the Naxalbari area, practise what they agreed to, and that new cadres like Dipak Biswas (whom Majumdar had sent to the villages with his eight 'documents') would work in the Chater Hat-Islampur area, adjacent to Naxalbari.

The Naxalbari uprising was a mass struggle. 'Combat units' of the kind Charu Majumdar prescribed were not formed. Secret assassinations of

individuals or setting fire to jotedars' houses did not form any part of the struggle. In Chater Hat-Islampur area, Dipak Biswas and his associates tried to carry out Charu Majumdar's instruction. The peasants did not respond. The jotedars themselves were on the offensive: they killed a peasant. Dipak and his associates had to flee to Naxalbari.

The West Bengal Legislative Assembly elections were held in February 1967. Jangal Santal was nominated by the CPI(M) as its candidate from the Phansidewa constituency. In one of his articles before the elections, Charu Majumdar wrote that the communist revolutionaries of the area should take advantage of the election. They should not seek votes for their candidate but utilise it to widely propagate their revolutionary politics, the politics of armed agrarian revolution. Jangal Santal was defeated: he won more than ten thousand votes without seeking them against a little over 16,000 votes obtained by the candidate who won. This revolutionary way of utilising the parliamentary election was quite helpful; it raised the political consciousness of the peasants and workers instead of blunting it.

As Kanu Sanyal wrote, the call of the Siliguri Sub-Divisional peasant convention, held on March 18, 1967, roused the peasantry. After the convention peasants joined the Krishak Samiti in thousands as never before and many of them became wholetime workers of the Samiti. The masses were on the march. As Khokan Majumdar writes, every day there were processions of one thousand armed peasants (armed with bows and arrows) or more. It was decided that the police would not be allowed to enter villages. When they were seen to enter, thousands of armed peasants rushed there and they were joined by hundreds of workers from the tea-plantations, similarly armed. On many occasions, the police were forced to retreat. Women also played a glorious role in the revolt.

In hundreds or more, the peasants raided the houses of several landlords, seized all their possessions and snatched their guns. They held open trials of some landlords and punished a few of them. It was only in a case like that of Nagen Roychoudhuri, a notorious landlord who fired on the peasants injuring some of them, that death sentence was awarded at an open trial and was carried out. The line adopted in Naxalbari was not to annihilate landlords physically but to wage a struggle to abolish the feudal order.

The peasants formed small groups of armed units and peasant committees which also functioned as armed defence groups. Between the end of March and the end of April almost all the villages were organised.⁶

An important role was played by the sub-divisional joint conference of the peasants and workers held on May 7. It was a 'historic conference', to quote Sanyal⁷ – an inspiring event.

During April and the following months, according to Kanu Sanyal, the peasants performed ten great tasks.⁸ The major ones among them were:

'They declared that all land which was not owned and tilled by the peasants was to be [taken possession of and] re-distributed by the peasant committees. By carrying this out in practice, they struck a blow at the main political and economic basis of the jotedars. The old feudal structure that had existed for centuries was thus smashed through this action of the peasants.'

And 'In every area they created regional and central revolutionary committees and established the peasants' political power.' To quote Sanyal again,

'The peasants of Terai... swept into the dust the political, economic and social authority, dignity and prestige built up in the villages by the landlords and jotedars, who represent feudalism, and established the rule of the peasant committees in the villages through their armed revolt.'

It appears that Kanu Sanyal, while writing his Report, took as his model Mao Tsetung's Hunan Report and followed it too closely. He realised towards the end what was wrong and contradicted himself. Before concluding his Report, Sanyal wrote:

'Our failure in establishing the revolutionary political power and in carrying out revolutionary land reforms blunted the edge of the class struggle both during and after the struggle.' The rich peasants and the upper stratum of the middle peasants played a role which proved an obstacle in the matter of confiscating and distributing the land. The fact is, there was no agrarian programme and this gave the rich peasants and the upper stratum of the middle peasants the opportunity to play that role.

And it was too early to say that, with the formation of revolutionary committees, radical agrarian reforms could be carried out. They could be carried out only after resisting and decisively defeating the armed forces of the enemy's state.

On May 16, Harekrishna Konar, Land and Land Revenue Minister of the West Bengal United Front Government, member of the CPI(M) CC and general secretary of the West Bengal Krishak Sabha, visited Siliguri and met with Kanu Sanyal at the Sukhna Forest Guest House. It appears to have been an important meeting. Strangely, Kanu Sanyal has not referred to this meeting either in his Terai Report or in *'More About Naxalbari'*. We shall return to it later.

On May 24 a large police party tried to enter a village. They met with resistance from the peasants. A police officer, Sonam Wangdi, was hit by arrows, to which he succumbed in a hospital. The other policemen went back to their camp in a tea-garden. The next day, armed policemen came and fired

on a gathering of women in a village, when the menfolk were away. They killed eleven persons, including eight women and two children.

An urgent meeting of the state secretariat of the CPI(M) held the police responsible for the killing of women and children. They accused the Chief Minister Ajoy Mukherjee of putting 'one-sided stress on law and order'. The landlords, who had formed the rural base of the Congress, shifted their allegiance to the Bangla Congress and the SSP with the advent of the UF Ministry and clamoured for official repressive measures against the peasantry. But the fact is, the CPI(M) members of the ministry were no less responsible than Ajoy Mukherjee for the repression unleashed on the peasants. The revisionists played a double-faced game in the face of public criticism for the killing of women and children. One face was turned towards the people whom they must deceive, the other face towards the class they served in collusion with other reactionary parties.

The activities of the peasants continued unabated. A team of six ministers including Harekrishna Konar and Biswanath Mukherjee (a CPI minister and president of the West Bengal Krishak Sabha), visited Siliguri on June 12. They asked the peasants through a leaflet to abandon the path of violence and depend on the state machinery for the settlement of land disputes. They advised the peasants to submit petitions to the Junior Land Reforms Officer (JLRO) and the like, conveying their grievances, for mediation between them and the landlords. They warned that if the peasants did not stop their violent activities by June 22, the administration and the police would start taking repressive measures.

It may be worth referring to Harekrishna Konar's report as general secretary of the West Bengal State Krishak Sabha to its conference held on October 14-16, 1966 (less than one year before the advice and the warning to the militant peasants of Naxalbari) at Memari, Burdwan. In that report, Konar was emphatic that no fundamental land reform could be carried out by amending the existing laws or by relying on the bureaucracy. To fulfil this objective, it was necessary to create a situation in which the legal deeds and documents of the landlords and usurers would be of no worth, when the toiling peasants would themselves sit and decide who were landlords and usurers and how much land they possessed and in which places. 'It would be the toiling peasants who would take possession of the lands of the landlords and usurers and distribute them... *It can be achieved by passing through the fire of bitter class struggle.* It can be clearly realised that this kind of fundamental land reforms cannot be carried out within the existing state, social and economic structure. Without doubt this is an inseparable part of the struggle of the entire people against imperialism and feudalism. The peasants can carry this struggle to victory by strengthening their alliance with the working class and other democratic sections of the people.'⁹

Again, in an article in their Bengali weekly organ *Deshhitaishree*, (autumn festival number, 1371 BS), which appeared on the eve of the general election in 1967, Konar wrote in the same vein. He said that 'Land reforms in the interest of the peasantry cannot be carried out through amendments to the laws by the existing ruling classes or by relying on bureaucratic deeds and documents... Compared to ten years ago, the numbers of landless agricultural labourers and share-croppers have increased significantly. The problem is so complex that *there can be no basic remedy by amending the laws and with the help of the bureaucratic machinery which is intimately connected with the landlords and jotedars*. The crisis has reached a stage when no partial reforms can prevent it from worsening. A radical surgical operation is necessary today. The legal deeds and documents of the landlords and jotedars have to be cancelled; no quarters should be given to them. It is for the toiling peasants in a village to meet and decide who are landlords, jotedars and usurers and to distribute the lands wherever and in whatever way they are under their possession.'¹⁰

The Naxalbari peasants were striving to implement basic agrarian reforms in the way of which Konar had been an eloquent advocate only a few months before. But within a short while, the mask fell off. After becoming a minister, Konar was decrying what he had been recommending, and threatened the peasants with punitive measures. He discovered that the existing land reform legislations were almost flawless and that much could be achieved within their framework. It was for the officers and the government department to trace the *benami* land. He advised the peasants, their mass organisations and the associations of landless peasants where they existed *to cooperate in a constructive way with the police and the bureaucracy*, which he had held only a few months before to be closely linked with the landlords, jotedars and usurers. They now became the chief instrument for implementing the desired land reforms – with the police and peasants to help. Konar's verbal demagoguery regarding the necessity of bitter class struggles yielded to his sermons about bureaucrat-police-peasant unity to carry out agrarian reforms – and to threats to peasants of dire consequences if they went their way.

Biswanath Mukherjee, president of the West Bengal Provincial Krishak Sabha, sang the same tune. Revisionists – of the CPI and the CPI(M) – were birds of the same feather. Whatever the demagoguery as president and as secretary of the Provincial peasant association, they indulged in class collaboration; class capitulation was the essence of their politics. All else was deception.

The jotedars in Naxalbari raised an uproar that the peasants were oppressing small landowners by seeking to throw them out from their lands. For some years the plots of land which were in excess of the land ceilings and had been vested in the government (for which the landlords had been

compensated) were being tilled by peasants. The jotedars were trying to suppress the peasants by force as well as by other means. They 'sold' to persons of small means those plots of 'vested' land (to which they had no right) either at nominal prices or for free. Conflicts arose between the new buyers and the tillers of these plots.

The ministerial team, including Konar and Mukherjee of the CPI(M) and the CPI, respectively, overlooked the wrongs perpetrated by the jotedars and took their side in the class struggle. In a leaflet issued, they held out the threat to the peasants that if any incident occurred after June 22, the police would be let loose: they would be empowered to kill and maim peasants.

The severe repression, code-named 'Operation Crossbow', as threatened by the 'communist' leaders and their allies, started on July 5. The Central Government had already banned the entry of spears and bows and arrows into the Naxalbari area. The entire area that was the focus of the struggle was encircled by armed police and thousands of para-military forces. Police camps were set up in the villages, while searches of peasant homes and arrests and other atrocities continued. The roads to Bihar, East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and Nepal were sealed. Constant patrolling of the area by armed men was carried out. The order to shoot Kanu Sanyal at sight was issued. Seventeen persons, including women and children, were killed. More than a thousand warrants of arrest were issued and hundreds of peasants were arrested. Plantation workers went on strike and the workers and employees of the State Electricity Board came out in a large procession in Siliguri in protest against the murder of women and children. There were other organised protests by different sections of the people against the repression.

Thousands of CRP men, units like the Gujarat Fourth Battalion and Malabar Special Reserve police were posted at Kadamtala in the Naxalbari area as late as 1969 as part of their massive repression.

The then Superintendent of Police of Darjeeling wrote that units of the army had been sent and 'a powerful Army detachment was standing by on the fringe of the disturbed area'.^{10a} He also wrote: 'We were indeed faced with a situation which called for massing of adequate force and it had to be an assorted conglomeration, drawn from different sources like the Eastern Frontier Rifles, the Border Security Force, the State Armed Police in addition to our own District Police; moreover, we had to draw officers from the other districts of North Bengal.'^{10b}

The CPI(M) tried to keep its mask on. Its state secretariat blamed the top police officials and the Chief Minister (who was also Home Minister) 'for the atrocious excesses'. But the Chief Minister openly stated that the CPI(M) ministers were a party to the cabinet decision to launch repressive measures.

One does not know whether in the period from late March to June, when thousands of peasants and workers were active and fifteen thousands enrolled, according to Kanu Sanyal, as whole-time workers of the Krishak Sabha¹¹, it was possible or not to build a rudimentary kind of a People's Army. It appears that no attempt was made to acquire knowledge of the military art and no military training was imparted to the armed units that had been set up. One also does not know if attempts were made to spread the struggle to newer areas beyond Naxalbari.

What was very remarkable was the strong worker-peasant unity. Peasants stood firm by the workers who went on strike in 1955-6 for nine days on the issue of bonus. In late 1966, resolutions in favour of agrarian revolution were adopted by branch conferences of the plantation workers' union.¹² One may remember the joint conference of workers and peasants on May 7, 1967, which gave an impetus to the peasant struggle. Hundreds of tea plantation workers rushed with their bows and arrows to help the peasants when the police entered a village. There were many occasions when they together forced the police to beat a retreat. It is also worth noting that the workers, themselves victims of the oppression and exploitation by the planters, went on strike three times, in support of the peasants' struggle.¹³

The Naxalbari struggle owed its inspiration to Charu Majumdar's 'Eight Documents', despite, several wrong or careless formulations in them. It was this revolutionary orientation which made the uprising of 1967 basically different from all militant struggles of the Naxalbari peasantry which preceded it. It is true that Naxalbari followed the mass line. But it is not true, as Kanu Sanyal wrote, that Charu Majumdar ignored the necessity of the trade unions (or other mass organisations like the Krishak Sabha)¹⁴. He spoke of their necessity in some of the 'Eight Documents' written in 1965 and later. It is true that his emphasis at this stage, as in the stage after 1969, was on 'combat groups' (or 'guerrilla groups') and their actions. But to assert that 'Practically Naxalbari uprising is a living protest to the "Eight Documents"¹⁵ betrays one's political weakness. For, without the revolutionary orientation in them, there would have been no Naxalbari. It is this revolutionary orientation, which was in such dramatic contrast to the opportunist verbiage of Joshi, Ranadive, Ajoy Ghosh, Dange et al, that far outweighed the few wrong or incorrect formulations in the 'Eight Documents'.

Kanu Sanyal is of the view that it was 'possible to preserve' the Naxalbari peasant uprising if Charu agreed to the proposal of the 'Naxalbari cadres' to have 'a dialogue with the United Front Government'¹⁶, obviously some time in May 1967. He has accused Charu Majumdar of lacking flexibility in tactics (while remaining rigid in principles) and, thus, wasting the possibility of preserving the uprising.

To quote Sumanta Banerjee, 'According to Konar, it was agreed [by some leaders whom Konar met on May 16 or 17] that "all unlawful activities" would be suspended, the peasants would submit petitions for the land vested with the Government [but much vaster land was in the possession of the landlords in their own names and under fictitious names], and land would be redistributed through official agencies in consultation with the local peasants' organisations. It was also agreed that all the persons wanted by the police, including Kanu Sanyal and Jangal Santal, would surrender. The dissidents of North Bengal however denied that there was any such agreement.'¹⁷

In his thesis which earned him a PhD, Amiya Samanta (a police officer who became Deputy Commissioner of the Special Branch of the Calcutta police and much later, a sectional director-general of the West Bengal police) wrote that failing to meet Charu Majumdar, who refused to see him, Hare Krishna Konar met Kanu Sanyal on May 17, 1967. According to Samanta, after 'a prolonged discussion of about two hours, Konar told the district administration that Sanyal had agreed that the peasants should not take out armed processions or organise meetings which had terrifying effects on the landowners and others. He had also agreed that they should not take the law into their own hands and should refer the land disputes to the Block Development Officer or the Sub-Divisional Officer who should expeditiously deal with such cases. There would be no resistance to arrest of persons who participated in various cases of lawlessness and the peasants would be asked to obey the prohibitory orders promulgated by the administration to maintain law and order. Soon after his meeting with Konar, Sanyal met Charu Majumdar and he was again swayed by Majumdar's line of thinking.'¹⁸

Samanta's book contains many errors of which some are ridiculous. But Sanyal's statement about the proposal of Naxalbari 'cadres to preserve the uprising' by having a 'dialogue with the United Front Government' fills one with the misgiving that reports on the dialogue between Sanyal and Konar may be true.

There is corroboration in a book titled *Maoist 'Spring Thunder': The Naxalite Movement (1967-1972)* by Arun Prosad Mukherjee, then Superintendent of Police, Darjeeling District. According to Mukherjee, Konar had 'arranged a meeting with Shri Kanu Sanyal,...in course of which he will seek to impress upon them the undesirability of such activities...' Konar asked the SP to see him at the Sukhna Forest Bungalow next morning (May 18, 1967). When the SP saw Konar as directed, Konar informed him that he had discussions with Sanyal on the previous night 'in course of which he explained our viewpoints to Kanu Sanyal as also his feelings about the undesirability of such activities which will benefit none.' He asked Sanyal to meet the SP for a discussion at the bungalow.

On the morning of May 18, Sanyal came accompanied by Souren Bose and met the SP. The latter suggested their immediate acceptance of the following three courses of action for solving the present tangle:

- (i) *Demonstrations or any other concerted group action by the CPI(M) workers must not be held with bows, arrows and similar other weapons. If they have any complaint regarding any land, the same should be brought to the immediate notice of the BDO or the SDO.*
- (ii) *We will have to arrest all persons whose complicity has transpired in connection with various cases of lawlessness in Siliguri Sub-Division. Since we do not want any clash in the process of effecting the arrests, it will be desirable if Kanu Sanyal ensures that there is no resistance from his party workers at the time of such arrests*
- (iii) *In their proposed attempt at forcible dehoarding of food-grains in the near future, they should not take law into their own hands and do anything which may amount to looting of food-grains...*

'Fortunately', wrote the SP, 'all the above suggestions were accepted by Kanu Sanyal...'

But the SP received no communication from Sanyal afterwards. The SP went down to Siliguri on May 20, and contacted Souren Bose, who told him that he had received no intimation. Bose came to see the SP on May 21, when the latter was meeting some of his superiors and the SDO. Bose 'pleaded his helplessness in the matter and felt that he had nothing more to say as to what course of action the police should take under the circumstances.'

The SP wrote: 'It was learnt later that though Kanu Sanyal and a few other leading members of the group wanted to try out our suggestions, [the 'suggestions' amounted to withdrawal of the struggle and helping the police to arrest all those who had taken active part in it; see Mukherjee, pp. 46-7 and 90-1] for some time, Charu Majumdar reportedly took them to task for entertaining such revisionist ideas at the very crucial stage of the struggle and strongly advised further escalation of their militant activities.'¹⁹

It is very curious that Sanyal has not mentioned his meetings with Konar and the SP (His meeting with Konar was an undoubted fact) in his Terai Report or in 'More about Naxalbari'

What would 'a dialogue with the United Front Government' at that stage, as keenly desired by Sanyal in the name of 'flexibility in policy', really amount to? At that stage the revolutionaries of Naxalbari had two alternatives before them to choose from (there was no third alternative) - either to continue with the uprising till the end, or to withdraw it. Withdrawal would have meant total surrender to the United Front Government, which wanted the revolutionaries to divert the revolutionary agrarian struggle into a reformist

economist movement within the boundaries of the bourgeois law. The Naxalbari uprising would then be killed; it would not be preserved. It appears that it is Charu Majumdar's intervention that saved the revolutionary character of the struggle which, though crushed within a short time, raised waves of struggle both in the ideological and in the practical field throughout India. Naxalbari as it happened, despite defeat, was many times more effective in carrying forward the ideological struggle within the CPI(M) camp and outside. It also spawned many struggles elsewhere.

Naxalbari – Premature or Timely?

Was the Naxalbari uprising, which was suppressed within a few months, premature? Was this challenge to an incomparably more powerful enemy a rash decision, a fatal mistake? Would it have been prudent to rouse and organize millions of people and then challenge the enemy as it should be ordinarily done?

No doubt, Naxalbari met with defeat quickly. But it was not premature. Considering the situation at the time, it may be asserted that it was very timely. Naxalbari acted as a path-breaker. Theoretical discussions had been going on for a long time but they were not enough to break the long spell of opportunism. Practice wedded with theoretical discussions, could and did break the spell, however, small might be the area of struggle. While unmasking the existing communist parties, that remote small cluster of hamlets at the foot of the Himalayas dared to send a clarion call to the revolutionaries all over India to wake up, and they responded. It was a call to shun the parliamentary path and follow the revolutionary road of armed struggle in order to accomplish the long-awaited democratic and national revolutions which would be carried out over the heads of 'the stranglers of revolutionary energy'.

It was a revolutionary situation when the peasant uprising in Naxalbari took place and became a significant part of history. To allow revolutionaries a long time to arouse and mobilise tens of millions in a large area to join in the struggle would have dissipated the revolutionary situation prevailing at the time. Naxalbari itself caused an awakening and played the role of an organiser in many parts of the country. It roused the consciousness among peasants and others that, under the present system, the radical distribution of land from above by any political party, though pledged to do so, was a vain illusion; it would have to be seized and distributed by the peasants themselves by force, breaking all laws of the existing state and defying all authorities. Naxalbari restored to the communist movement in India its soul. It marked the beginning of democratic revolution in India that would bring about fundamental changes in India's agrarian system and, in the process, complete the national revolution wiping out all traces of imperialist domination.

There lies Naxalbari's abiding interest. The revolutionary mass peasant struggle, which enjoyed the support of the neighbouring workers, was far more important than a hundred programmes. Naxalbari marked a bold departure from the sickening politics of Joshi, Ranadive, Ajoy Ghosh, Dange, Namboordi-pad *et al* – and a historic advance.

Indeed, Naxalbari promised a new dawn – the dawn of a new era when India has abolished feudalism and eliminated all traces of imperialist domination, an India which has completed the democratic revolution and, along with it, the national revolution. But the first streaks of light were blotted out by the darkness of reaction and the promise has remained unfulfilled. Instead of light, darkness rules India. Feudal or semi-feudal relations still prevail in the countryside and indirect imperialist domination is yet to be liquidated.

What prevented the fulfilment of the promise? Usually, it is the party line and party policies that are responsible for the success or failure of a revolution. The Communist revolutionaries followed a line which was basically correct but many of their policies, as we shall see, were wrong and led to defeat. Mao Tse Tung said: 'New things always have to experience difficulties and set-backs as they grow. It is sheer fantasy to imagine that the cause of socialism is all plain sailing and easy success, without difficulties and set-backs or exertion of tremendous efforts.'

References

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2. Lenin, 'The Collapse of the Second International', CW, 21, pp.252-3 –emphasis added by Lenin.
3. Kanu Sanyal, 'Report on the Peasant Movement in the Terai Region,' *Liberation*, II, No. 1 (November 1968), pp.31-3.
4. See Suniti Kumar Ghosh, *The Himalayan Adventure*.
5. See Kanu Sanyal, 'More about Naxalbari', in Samar Sen *et al* (Eds), *Naxalbari and After: A Frontier Anthology*, II, p.331. The article has levelled many unfounded charges against Majumdar.
6. See Kanu Sanyal, 'Report of the Peasant Movement on the Terai Region', *op cit*.
7. Sanyal, 'More about Naxalbari', *op cit*, II, pp.340-1.

8. Sanyal, 'Report.....', *op cit*.
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10. Our translation.
- 10a. A.P. Mukherjee, *Maoist 'Spring Thunder': The Naxalite Movement (1967–1972)*, p. 109.
- 10b. *Ibid*, p. 120.
11. See Kanu Sanyal, 'The Terai Report', *op cit*.
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14. *Ibid*, p.339.
15. *Ibid*, p.341.
16. *Ibid*.
17. Banerjee, *In the Wake of Naxalbari*, p.112.
18. Samanta, *Left Extremist Movement in West Bengal*, p.79.
19. AP Mukherjee, *Maoist 'Spring Thunder': The Naxalite Movement (1967–1972)*, p.97 'n' 2.

6

In the Wake of Naxalbari

Many Communist revolutionaries outside the Darjeeling district, including myself, immediately responded to the call of Naxalbari, the call of the politics of struggle against reaction and revisionism, the politics of armed agrarian revolution. Sushital Roychoudhuri, a member of the West Bengal State Committee of the CPI(M), went to Siliguri during the Naxalbari uprising and had discussions with Charu Majumdar. On June 14, 1967 the Naxalbari O Krishak Samgram Sahayak Committee (Committee in aid of Naxalbari and Peasant Struggles) was formed at a Convention held in the Rammohun Library Hall in north Calcutta.

Promode Sengupta was elected President of the Naxalbari O Krishak Samgram Sahayak Committee; Sushital Roychoudhuri and Satyananda Bhattacharyya as Vice-Presidents; and Parimal Dasgupta as the Secretary. The Committee tried to mobilise support for Naxalbari and to propagate the politics of an armed agrarian revolution. It held numerous meetings, rallies and processions for this purpose in different parts of Calcutta and other districts. It also sought to initiate mass struggles and held a workers' convention and a food convention, for the problem of food at the time was most acute. Many trade unions were represented at the workers' convention. The food convention adopted a programme for initiating mass struggles on the burning issue of food.

The Committee carried on wide propaganda against the policies of the United Front Government and the repression let loose by it in Naxalbari. In August, three more vice-presidents and three assistant secretaries were elected and it was decided to include representatives from the various districts.

In different countries of the world students – fresh, young and full of fervour – have played glorious roles in their countries' revolutionary struggles and

have been in the forefront at the initial stages. In China, the May 4 movement of 1919 launched by students was a turning point in her history. As Mao Tse Tung said, 'Around the time of the May 4 Movement, hundreds of thousands of students courageously took their place in the van.' Though the most important, it was not a solitary instance.²

In West Bengal, radical students carried on ideological-political struggle among fellow students - against the revisionism of the CPI and the CPI(M). They brought out a magazine *Chatra Fauz* as their mouthpiece from about the end of 1966. Students played an important role in the food movement in West Bengal in 1966 (to which we have referred in Part One).

An All Bengal Students Committee for Struggle was formed. When the Naxalbari uprising broke out, they hailed it. Some students of the North Bengal University were strong supporters of Naxalbari; they stood by the peasants and co-operated with them in bringing out hoards of rice and paddy from the jotedars' houses.

In Calcutta another group of students known as the 'Presidency Consolidation', violently reacting against some acts of the Presidency College authorities, emerged. Some students of other Calcutta Colleges stood by them. Owing allegiance to the CPI(M), this group reacted unfavourably when, towards the end of 1966, it was asked by the CPI(M) leadership to withdraw their movement. This group was known for some of its anarchic activities.

Another operation, started by the CPI(M), ran parallel to the 'Operation Crossbow'. This operation was launched against revolutionary comrades within the CPI(M). In early June 1967, the CPI(M) leadership dissolved the elected Darjeeling District Committee and the elected Siliguri Sub-divisional Committee, dispensing with the formality of any discussion with the members of the committees or issuing charge-sheets against them. They trampled underfoot the party constitution then as also afterwards. They replaced the dissolved committees with ad hoc committees with men of their choice.

In the Darjeeling district, most of the members before dissolution of the committee had been tea-garden workers and peasants. Of the 25 members of the Darjeeling District Committee, 16 members were either teagarden workers or peasants; and of the 21 members of the Siliguri Committee, 12 were either workers or peasants.³ In Calcutta or other districts of West Bengal, a party committee hardly consisted of so many proletarian and semi-proletarian elements.

By the end of June, many comrades were expelled from the CPI(M) in a similarly high-handed manner - sometimes with formal charge-sheets, full of flimsy charges, issued to them and sometimes not. Thus it was that Sushital Roychoudhari, Saroj Datta, Parimal Dasgupta, Promode Sengupta, etc., were

expelled for their support of the Naxalbari struggle. Almost all members of the Editorial Board of *Deshhitaishree*, the weekly Bengali organ of the party – Sushital Roychoudhuri, Saroj Datta, etc. (except its loyal editor), and comrades responsible for its organisational work were unceremoniously expelled. It is they, besides Mohit Moitra, former editor, then deceased, who had brought it out and built it up. On June 28, before the expulsion of the comrades, the party leadership sent hoodlums twice – once at about 2 PM and again at about 9 PM – to 'capture' the office of the weekly. But the operation at about 2 PM failed at the intervention of local people. The operation in the night was successful: the *Deshhitaishree* comrades had left, the hoodlums broke the locks and 'captured' the office. It was a magnificent victory for the leadership of the CPI(M).

Among the purged members were also Charu Majumdar, Kanu Sanyal and Jangal Santal. This was only the beginning of the Operation Expulsion. More as we proceed.

As a comrade, I escaped the purge, for I had left the CPI(M) in 1966. Earlier, in 1956, after the 20th Congress of the CPSU and the Palghat Congress of the CPI, I had left the party. The Palghat Congress declared the CPSU's 20th Congress as 'an event of the greatest importance'⁴ and gave full-throated support to the revisionist theses of the Soviet party. At the Palghat Congress, the CPI was anxious to build 'a national united movement of all forces, parties and organizations, including the Congress' – a national democratic front which would include not only the Socialist Party and the Praja Socialist Party but also 'the democratic elements inside the Congress'.⁵ It hailed the 'emergence of India as a world power.'⁶ It offered the 'most energetic and unstinted support' to the Congress Government for every 'step taken by the government for strengthening national freedom and national economy'.⁷ The Palghat Congress stated that the Party would strive to achieve a People's Democracy but peacefully – without tears.

We formed a group almost immediately after India's war with China. Abdul Latif was a prominent member of our group. Early in 1964, Promode Dasgupta and Samar Mukherjee met our group to know if members of our group would join the proposed party – the future CPI(M). Dasgupta and Mukherjee came separately and met us on three occasions. While many other members expressed their willingness to join the proposed party, I refused in answer to their queries on each occasion. But, later, when preparations were being made to bring out *People's Democracy* from Calcutta, Dasgupta made a personal appeal to me to join the CPI(M). I reluctantly agreed and started writing unsigned articles (at that time almost all writings, except those by the leaders published in *People's Democracy*, were unsigned) on national liberation struggles in different countries. But, in 1965, Sundarayya's article, 'Sundarayya Answers Nanda',

appeared in *People's Democracy*. Almost immediately after the Party Congress was over, in December 1964, the Party General Secretary, P Sundarayya, saw India's Home Minister G Nanda and gave him a sort of undertaking that his party would function legally and peacefully and had no intention of preparing to make revolution. So he appealed to the Home Minister not to use repressive measures against his party. And EMS Namboodiripad's chauvinistic appeal to Indians to donate blood for the Indian soldiers engaged in a war with Pakistan in 1965 was published in *People's Democracy*. I felt all this was too much for me. I sought clarification from Dasgupta, secretary of the West Bengal State Committee, in a long letter to which I received no reply. I sent a reminder to which also there was no reply. I left the CPI(M).

A feature of the purge was that the names of the members expelled were published in the press for the benefit of all, including the police. As regards the police, the leadership could pass them on secretly but they preferred open channels.

The operation was accompanied by a scurrilous campaign against the Communist revolutionaries. They were abused as CIA agents, 'agent-provocateurs', etc. Promode Dasgupta wrote that 'in all countries reactionary forces employ agent-provocateurs and the US global espionage service is now extremely active in this sphere.'⁸ Promode Dasgupta had his own experience. Perhaps it is not widely known that after 1941, during the World War II, Promode Dasgupta assumed charge of espionage activities in Bengal and north-east India in close association with British and US intelligence services. His activities were directed against patriots, followers of Subhas Bose and others, who were waging anti-imperialist struggles. He was quite active in recruiting spies and in training them for such activities that could help the British and US imperialists.⁹

As part of their campaign against communist revolutionaries, the CPI(M) leadership forced on *Deshhitaishree* a long essay on the struggle against revisionism and the sectarian tendency written by Ashok Mukherjee (to which we have already referred) before the period of the purge. It appeared in several instalments in the weekly and was published as a book with a preface by Promode Dasgupta in July 1967. Several comrades, including Asit Sen and Sushital Roychoudhuri (who was then a member of the editorial board of the weekly), wrote to the leaders to stop publication of it or to grant permission to refute it. But nothing of the sort was done. The object was to wage struggle not so much against revisionism as against the revolutionary line, which was dubbed a sectarian tendency.

West Bengal State Coordination Committee

A West Bengal State Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries was set up perhaps by the end of June with Sushital Roychoudhuri as the Convener. It had as members Saroj Datta, Parimal Dasgupta, two student leaders and several others, including myself. At different stages Promode Sengupta, Asit Sen, Shyamal Nandi, Dilip Pyne (a student leader) and organisers from Howrah, Hughli and 24 Parganas districts became members of the Committee. There were district units; Shyamal Nandi was the secretary of the Calcutta District Committee. The tasks of the Coordination Committee and the Naxalbari O Krishak Samgram Sahayak Committee were mostly overlapping.

Deshabrati

An event of major importance of this period between Naxalbari and the formation of the CPI(M-L) was the publication of the Bengali weekly *Deshabrati*, the first issue of which came out on July 6. Sushital Roychoudhuri was chairman of the Board of Editors and Saroj Datta its editor. Some people wrongly attribute its editorship to Gopal Majumdar. It is true that the press line in *Deshabrati* stated that Gopal Majumdar was editor, printer and publisher of *Deshabrati* just as the press lines in *Liberation* and *Ghatana Prabaha* (our Bengali magazine) said that Nimai Ghosh and Santosh Basu were editors, printers and publishers of the two journals respectively. The press lines, which appeared until the police raid on 'Deshabrati Prakashani,' our publishing concern, were meant to satisfy the press laws, while serving organisational needs, but the actual facts were different. These comrades worked in 'Deshabrati Prakashani' of which Comrade Niranjan Basu was manager. 'Deshabrati Prakashani', was raided by the police not on May 24, 1970, as a book says. The raid took place on April 27, 1970. The last legal issue of *Deshabrati* came out on April 23, 1970 as that of *Liberation* in early April. Their legal publications stopped after those dates.

Deshabrati, at least so long as it was legally published, rendered invaluable service to our cause. It held high the banner of Naxalbari politics. Besides reports of the Naxalbari struggles, it published reports of other struggles – of workers, peasants, students, other youth, office employees, etc. It gave prominence to the struggles of workers against lay-offs, lock-outs, retrenchments and closures and police repression on them. A large number of student unions of colleges were coming out in support of Naxalbari politics. There were police atrocities on students in different places but they were particularly grim in the two universities of Calcutta and Jadavpur. But even these were surpassed in the Uttarpara Peary Mohan College where even teachers were not spared police attacks. The entire emphasis in *Deshabrati* was put on mass organisations and mass movements while combating economism. The unmasking of the real

character of the CPI(M) leadership was going on side by side. *Deshabrati* carried in its every issue, especially for some months in the beginning, politically educative articles, especially by SR (Sushital Roychoudhuri).

Besides editing *Deshabrati*, Saroj Datta started a column named 'In the World of Journals,' ('Patrikar Duniyay'), using the pen-name Shashanka. It was an attractive column, which exposed many dark deeds of reactionaries. In the initial stage, I was attached to *Deshabrati*. For some time till I started editing *Liberation*, I contributed to *Deshabrati* under the penname 'Amit Deb'. My column was 'Bahir Jagat' ('The Outer World') and my notes were mainly on national liberation struggles in different countries. After me, Promode Sengupta took charge of 'The Outer World' and wrote under the pseudonym 'Kalapahar'.

Deshabrati became immediately popular. For the first issue the print order as far as I remember was for 7,500 copies. It was soon sold out and had to be reprinted. The circulation increased fast. It leapt up perhaps to 40,000 when the last legal issue was published.

Deshabrati served another very useful purpose. Comrades from outside contacted *Deshabrati* and this helped in the consolidation of Communist revolutionaries.

Liberation

Immediately after the Naxalbari uprising, comrades from different parts of India, from neighbouring Bihar to Tamil Nadu and Kerala, began to contact Charu Majumdar at Siliguri, Sushital Roychoudhuri and other comrades in Calcutta and *Deshabrati*. The news of the Naxalbari uprising was broadcast by the Peking Radio and hailed by it and by the Chinese press; this added keenness to their desire to know about it. The need was felt for an all-India journal which would propagate the ideology and politics of Naxalbari and pave the way to the unity of revolutionary comrades of the whole of India. At a meeting of the West Bengal State Coordination Committee (or of the editorial board of *Deshabrati*), it was decided to bring out a monthly organ in English. The name '*Liberation*' was suggested by Saroj Datta. He also proposed my name as editor of the new journal. I did not feel quite confident about the task and said that I would require their help and guidance in editing *Liberation*. But neither Sushital Roychoudhuri, who became editor-in-chief, nor other comrades shared my burden at all. Subhas Ghosh, known to Saroj Datta and introduced by him to me, assisted me with his painstaking and dedicated work so long as the journal was published legally. Afterwards, from about the end of 1970, Bhabani Roychoudhuri helped me.

The first issue of *Liberation*, which came out on November 11, 1967, said:

'*Liberation* appears at a time when India is in the throes of an acute economic and political crisis, when the class struggle within our country and

outside grows sharper and sharper, when the imperialists and their stooges, aided by the Soviet revisionists, are waging a brutal, fascist war in three continents. In India, the big bourgeoisie, big landlords and their masters, the US and British imperialists, are bleeding the people white, ...But the forces of liberation are marching from victory to victory all the world over. Here, in India, an unpre-cedented revolutionary situation is fast developing. The brave peasants of Naxalbari, armed with Mao Tsetung's thought, have raised the banner of revolt against feudal oppression, against the rule of the reactionary classes...The perfidy of these neo-revisionist¹⁰ leaders, like that of the Dangeites, knows no limit. When the long-delayed social revolution is breaking out, they are acting as the last reserve of the reactionary ruling classes, which are now caught in the meshes of a deepening economic and political crisis.'

Liberation gave a pledge to the people:

'Liberation dedicates itself to the cause of the Indian Revolution and takes the pledge to wage an uncompromising fight against the imperialists and native reactionaries including the revisionists and neo-revisionists.'

So far as its capacity allowed, *Liberation* tried to remain true to its pledge until at least April 1972 when I left it.

Messages greeting *Liberation* came from Marxist-Leninist parties of Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Britain and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). The Communist Party of China gave it a generous welcome as was evident from the Peking Radio's frequent quotations from it and reprint of articles from it or extracts from them, especially Charu Majumdar's articles, in *Peking Review*.

Deshabrati Prakashani

As noted before, our publishing concern was Deshabrati Prakashani. It not only published *Deshabrati*, *Liberation* and a Hindi weekly *Lok Yuiddh* but many booklets for the education of workers, peasants and youths in thousands of copies and it also served as their sales outlet. Original writings like those of Charu Majumdar, Sushital Roychoudhuri, Asit Sen and so on as well as translations of the writings of Mao Tse Tung, Lin Piao (*Long Live the Victory of People's War*), Jen Pi-shih (on Agrarian reforms in China,) etc., came out in several impressions and many thousands of copies of most of them were circulated. Asit Sen wrote many booklets like 'Revolutionary Situation: Has it Matured?' and 'The Real Face of Parliamentary Democracy in India'. Saroj Datta translated 'I will unmask Myself - Ranadive' (containing revealing extracts from BT Ranadive's long self-critical reports of May 1950 with comments) and Deshabrati Prakashani published it to expose the real face of CPI(M) leaders like their foremost theoretician BT Ranadive. It was a many sided campaign launched by Deshabrati Prakashani to awaken and educate people on various ideological and political issues.

Revolt in Uttar Pradesh

The call of Naxalbari reached various states and there were revolts against the CPI(M) leadership. Shiv Kumar Misra, secretary of the Uttar Pradesh State Committee and member of the CC of the CPI(M), sent a circular to all Party members in Uttar Pradesh on September 7, 1967, urging them to mobilise 'the revolutionary people of the UP in support of the Krishak Vidroh (peasant revolt) in Naxalbari'. Another circular, dated September 27, sent out by him said:

'The Krishak Vidroh in Naxalbari has today become the demarcating line between the revisionists on the one hand and Marxist-Leninists on the other. The revisionist leading clique of the CC is, on the one hand, busy in lending its helping hand to the ruling classes by its capitulationist and class-collaborationist line, and on the other hand, is adopting organisational methods against the Marxist-Leninist cadre of the Party, who are supporting the Krishak Vidroh whole-heartedly... P Sundarayya and Harkishan Singh Surjeet, the two chieftains of this revisionist leading clique, recently held a so-called PC meeting convened by a handful of their stooges [attended by nine out of 27 members] without any consultation with the Secretariat of the State Committee. At this meeting, which was wholly irregular and unconstitutional, they arbitrarily removed the Secretary of the State Committee from his office, disbanded the Secretariat, set up a new puppet secretariat, dissolved all the Regional Committees [duly elected like the State Committee at Party conferences] and expelled the aged veteran Marxist-Leninist leader, Com. Shri Narain Tewari from Party membership. Marxist-Leninists enjoy a clear majority in the State Committee of the Party and the number of the supporters of the revisionist leadership of the CC is quite insignificant. The big majority within the UP State Committee has spurned the anti-Marxist-Leninist counter-revolutionary politics and tactical line adopted by the revisionist CC. People's Democracy can be established only through a successful peasant revolution under the leadership of the working class.'¹¹

(Shiv Kumar Misra began his political life as a national revolutionary, a member of the Kakori organisation of national revolutionaries. Afterwards, he joined the CPI and then the CPI(M). After the Naxalbari peasant uprising, he almost immediately dissociated himself, along with a large majority of UP comrades, from the CPI(M) leadership. With a heart full of unquenchable revolutionary spirit, this young man of more than ninety years of age went from Kanpur to Mumbai to take part in the 'Mumbai Resistance' in 2004. His death took place in December, 2007.)

Punjab

Revolutionary comrades were on the march in different states. In Punjab, revolutionary comrades of the different districts met and formed the Punjab

State Coordination Committee. The Committee issued a statement in which it hailed the Naxalbari Kisan Revolt and condemned 'the treacherous leaders of the CPI(M)'. The statement said, 'Supporting wholeheartedly the declaration of the All India Co-ordination Committee of the Revolutionaries of the Indian Communist Party (Marxist) [to the formation of which and the declaration which it issued we shall soon refer] the meeting called upon the revolutionaries of Punjab to carry forward the peasant struggles on the line of Naxalbari by openly revolting against the traitor clique of Loyalpuri and Surjeet and to organize a genuine Communist Party on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and Mao's Thought.'¹²

Bihar

The revolutionary comrades of Bihar met on December 9 and 10, 1967 and formed the Bihar State Coordination Committee. The Committee issued an appeal in which it stated: 'The split [with the CPI] was artificially engineered [by the CPI(M) leaders] mainly on the issue of the Dange letters and the party was formed without the full maturing of the ideological polarisation in the party, which is necessary for the formation of a revolutionary organisation. There is absolutely no doubt that the leadership has taken advantage of the deep anger in the party ranks against the Dange clique and utilised it to further their own factional interests in the name of struggle against revisionism. The Naxalbari struggle proved in practice that the situation in India is ripe for unleashing revolutionary political struggles and developing rural bases. It proved that the time has come when revolutionaries in the CPI (M) should unite and coordinate their efforts for rebuilding the Communist Party so as to give proper leadership to these struggles....It is therefore a matter of great jubilation for the Marxist-Leninists that revolutionary representatives of this party met at Calcutta and decided to unite and co-ordinate their activities. We warmly support the declaration issued by the Central Coordination Committee and call upon all the revolutionary comrades of Bihar and the CPI(M)...to unite and implement the tasks set by the Central Coordination Committee.'¹³

Delhi

In Delhi, a general body meeting of the Delhi State Communist Party (Marxwadi) on January 14, 1968, convened at the initiative of leading comrades and attended by about 90 per cent of the membership, repudiated the top leadership of the CPI(M), disowned an ad hoc committee imposed by it as a substitute for the State Committee and endorsed the call of the revolutionaries to form a genuine communist party. In one of the resolutions, the meeting declared that the CPI(M) leadership was hardly a shade different from the Dangeites. In another resolution, it 'fully endorses and wholeheartedly supports the call of the

Revolutionaries of the Party as released through the pages of *Liberation* No. 2 to form a genuine Communist Party of Marxism-Leninism, which has culminated today in the thought of Mao Tsetung. The meeting hereby assures the All-India Coordination Committee of every effort and co-operation for the cause upheld by them.¹⁴

Orissa

The comrades of Orissa reported that the Madurai ideological drafts of the CPI(M) had been thrown out in several districts of Orissa – Cuttack, Baleswar, Koraput, Sundargarh, etc. The state plenum convened by the neo-revisionist state committee and attended by 11 persons ended in a fiasco. The report said, 'The revolutionary comrades in Orissa are firmly upholding the banner of Mao Tsetung's thought and are determined to stick to the policy of developing agrarian revolution and building up a genuine revolutionary Party.'¹⁵

Tamil Nadu

Naxalbari roused the interest of the comrades and workers of Coimbatore, the industrial district of Tamil Nadu and of other districts. The CPI(M) district committee of Coimbatore revolted against the Party leadership. L Appu, a member of the State Committee and an important trade union leader, was expelled from the CPI(M). Also expelled were 14 out of 21 members of the Coimbatore district committee. Many Party units were dissolved.

Revolutionary comrades in Tamil Nadu started bringing out a weekly in Tamil – *Puratchikanal* (*The Revolutionary Flame*) – from the beginning of 1968. A total of 16 comrades from nine (out of fourteen) districts of Tamil Nadu met in March and set up the Tamil Nadu State Coordination Committee. After exposing the real face of the neo-revisionists (the leaders of the CPI(M)), the Committee declared: 'Nothing can be more illusory than to think of capturing state power from the bourgeois rulers without smashing their state machine with which they suppress the toiling masses. There is no shortcut to smash the instrument of class rule. The general line of Indian Revolution is that of Naxalbari, which is guided by the thought of Mao Tsetung. It is the one and only line for the successful completion of Indian revolution.' It further stated: 'At this historic moment, the revolutionaries of the Marxist Party from different parts of India met at Calcutta and formed a coordination committee. They have called on us by their historic declaration to come forward to build up a Revolutionary Party. They have laid down the general line of action. We, the revolutionaries of Tamil Nadu, greet and welcome this historic declaration. We call upon the revolutionaries both inside and outside the Marxist Party to carry forward the torch of Naxalbari movement into the nooks and corners of Tamil Nadu, at the same time exposing the machinations of the traitors who lead the Marxist Party. We call upon the revolutionaries inside all working class movements to organise a Revolutionary Party to carry out our historic duty.'¹⁷

Karnataka

Revolutionary comrades of the different districts of Karnataka met on April 14, 1968 at Mangalore and set up the Karnataka State Coordination Committee. It issued a statement in which it declared its resolve 'to carry on revolutionary work in accordance with the declaration of the All India Committee'. It also 'called upon all the revolutionary comrades still within the CPI(M), Karnataka State, to repudiate openly the neo-revisionist leading clique at all levels and their politics, and openly to join hands with us who are striving to build a genuine Communist Party.'¹⁸

Jammu and Kashmir

The State Committee of the Democratic Conference of Jammu and Kashmir functioned as the state unit of the CPI(M). It unanimously decided to sever all its relations with that party. In a lengthy statement it issued, it said, '...it firmly believes that the CPI(M) leadership has adopted the path of revisionism in ideology, politics, organisation and practice...They have renounced class struggle and taken the path of class collaboration and parliamentarism. In brief, their path now is the path of service to American imperialism, Soviet revisionism and Indian reaction.' The statement made a brilliant analysis of the communist movement in India. About the CPI(M) leadership, it said: 'By presenting an erroneous class analysis of our society, by describing the bourgeois class as independent, by shielding its character of servility to US imperialism, by creating illusions among the people about bourgeois parliamentarism and by running away from sharpening mass struggles, these revisionist leaders are openly serving the ruling classes and betraying the working people.' It further stated: 'When in West Bengal, during their tenure of government, the peasants of Naxalbari rose to assert their rights they were subjected to extreme terror by the police and army under orders from the UF Government of which CPI(M) was the major partner...No one whose practice is contrary to Marxism-Leninism can claim to be a communist.' The statement went on to say: 'Had the communist leadership taken a correct class line, the leaders of bourgeois-landlord classes - Gandhi, Nehru, Patel and Jinnah - would never have succeeded in misleading the people. India would have remained an undivided country and the democratic revolution under the leadership of the working class would have been carried out.' The Committee undertook to carry out tasks similar to those which the All India Coordination Committee had set in its first declaration. Before the statement concluded, it said: 'The State Committee takes the solemn pledge that shoulder to shoulder with other communists in the country it will contribute its share in fulfilling those tasks and exert all its energies for this end.'¹⁹

Kerala

In Kerala, communist revolutionaries from different districts met at Ernakulam and set up the Kerala State Coordination Committee. It decided to continue publication of Mao Tse Tung's writings from different centres in Kerala and to bring out a monthly journal in Malayalam. In the declaration it said: 'The ruling non-Congress Government of Kerala headed by the "Marxist" leadership have opened the floodgates to the penetration of imperialist, especially US imperialist, and Soviet modern revisionist ideologies, to an alarming degree... The revisionist leadership broke up [in 1964] into two factions but both pursued the same parliamentary path... Like the rays of the morning sun, the message of Naxalbari has warmed up the hearts of our peasants, workers and the [other] toiling people and has brought new hopes to them... In spite of these dirty tricks by the revisionist leadership, it must be stated that the situation is excellent, very excellent, here in Kerala. Ever wider sections of our people are responding to the thought of Mao Tse Tung and yearning for its practical implementation as in Naxalbari. The spell of revisionism is fast losing its grip on our peasants and our working class. The students - the precursors of all revolutions in modern history, have already entered the fray with a thud that has its reverberations even across the borders of our state.'²⁰

Andhra

In Andhra Pradesh, a State Party plenum was held in the second week of January 1968 to discuss the CPI(M)'s Madurai drafts on ideological issues. Three members of the provincial secretariat placed two documents in resolution form exposing the revisionist character of the Madurai drafts. Among other things, the documents pointed out how the central leadership was trying to establish contacts with the revisionist East European Communist Parties and how cunningly this leadership avoided clarification of the principal contradiction in the present-day world and inveigled the Khrushchevite concept of peaceful transition, etc. Two Polit Bureau members, including P Sundarayya, the General Secretary argued in the plenum for almost half the time of the plenum's deliberations in order to get the revisionist line accepted but in vain. By an overwhelming majority, the Madurai drafts were rejected. The plenum passed a resolution throwing out the revisionist drafts and requesting the CC to prepare a new draft in the light of the two critiques submitted by the three Andhra Party secretariat members. While 158 members rejected the Madurai drafts, only 52 members supported them and eight members remained neutral.²¹

Formation of the AICCCR

In the meantime the All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries in the CPI(M), to which many references have been made in

the preceding pages, was formed in November 1967. On November 11, 1967, there was quite a large gathering on the Shahid Minar Maidan, Kolkata, at the call of the Naxalbari O Krishak Samgram Sahayak Committee to celebrate the anniversary of the Russian revolution of 1917. I was sitting on the maidan among the people assembled there, when a comrade from the Deshabrati Prakashani came and handed to me a copy of the first issue of *Liberation*, fresh from the binders.

There were many speakers, some from other states like L Appu, Shiv Kumar Misra and Satyanarain Singh.

The last speaker was Charu Majumdar who had then not fully recovered from his illness and had arrived that very evening. With his frail body supported by Saroj Datta, he made the briefest possible speech. Greeting the audience who cheered him, he said :

'You think that I am the leader of the Naxalbari struggle. I know that you want to know something about that struggle from me. But I regret my inability to make a speech. It is not I but Comrade Kanu Sanyal, Comrade Jangal Santal, Comrade Khokan Majumdar, Comrade Kadam Mullick and many other peasant leaders who are its true leaders.'²²

On the next two days, i.e., November 12 and 13, comrades from seven states - Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal - met at Sushital Roychoudhuri's place - where Charu Majumdar was residing - at Ultadanga, Calcutta, to discuss the question of formation of an all India organization of Communist Revolutionaries and its aims and objects. It was convened by Sushital Roychoudhuri in consultation with others, especially Charu Majumdar.

Tamil Nadu was represented by L Appu, the expelled member of the Tamil Nadu state committee of the CPI(M) and a leading trade union organiser. Shiv Kumar Misra and Narain Tewari, an old comrade, represented Uttar Pradesh. From Kerala came Kunnikal Narayan and a student leader, Philip M Prasad. Bihar was represented by Satyanarain Singh, a trade union leader of Bihar, and an Adivasi comrade. Anil Datta and two other comrades came from Karnataka. The representative from Orissa was Rabi Das. Among those from West Bengal, besides Charu Majumdar and Sushital Roychoudhuri, were Saroj Datta, Parimal Dasgupta and myself. I do not remember who else from West Bengal attended. No comrade from North Bengal, other than Charu Majumdar, could attend; Kanu Sanyal and Khokan Majumdar were in China then and Jangal Santal and most other peasant leaders were under arrest.

The meeting discussed for two days the national and international situation and the urgent tasks of the revolutionary comrades in India. According to its assessment, a revolutionary situation was developing in the

country. This meeting issued a declaration which said that Naxalbari had come as a turning point in the history of our Party and country. It had torn off the masks of the CPI and the CPI(M) and exposed their true character. Those revisionist renegades had chosen the path of parliamentarism and class collaboration. In order to develop and lead the revolutionary struggles, the need for building a revolutionary centre was urgent. All revolutionaries now working in isolation in different parts of the country and on different fronts of mass struggle believed that they should coordinate their activities and unite their forces. So the like-minded comrades of different states decided to form an All-India Co-ordination Committee of the Revolutionaries in the CPI(M). They undertook the following as their main tasks:

(1) To develop and coordinate militant and revolutionary struggles at all levels, specially peasant struggles of the Naxalbari type under the leadership of the working class

(2) To develop militant revolutionary struggles of the working class and other toiling people, to combat economism and to orient these struggles towards agrarian revolution

(3) To wage an uncompromising ideological struggle against revisionism and neo-revisionism and to popularise the Thought of Comrade Mao Tse Tung, which is Marxism-Leninism of the present era and to unite on this basis all revolutionary elements, within and outside the Party [the CPI(M)]

(4) To undertake preparations of a revolutionary programme and tactical line based on concrete analysis of the Indian situation in the light of Comrade Mao Tse Tung's Thought.

The declaration concluded with the appeal:

'We call upon the revolutionary comrades still within the Communist Party of India (Marxist) to repudiate *openly* the neo-revisionist leading clique and its politics and *openly* to join hands with us who are striving to build a genuine Communist Party in our country.²³

From West Bengal, Saroj Datta and Parimal Dasgupta were elected members of the AICCCR, besides Charu Majumdar and Sushital Roychoudhuri. Roychoudhuri, convener of the West Bengal State Coordination Committee, was elected convener of the AICCCR as well.

As regards the formation of the 'All India Coordination Committee', Kanu Sanyal has made some wild accusations. In 'More about Naxalbari' (April 1973), Sanyal has written: 'The All India Coordination Committee failed to realise the mischief of this political careerist group [clique of political careerists who were trying to establish their leadership] even after the publication of the article 'Spring Thunder Breaks over India'. The net result of this was that this clique of political careerists utilised the glorious role of Naxalbari uprising to project single individual as the creator of Naxalbari within the Coordination

Committee. [The AICCCR never did assume that a single individual was the 'creator of Naxalbari' but implicitly recognised the political leadership of Charu Majumdar in the uprising as Kanu Sanyal himself did in his "Report on the Peasant Movement in the Terai Region". In it he called Charu Majumdar "our respected leader" more than once.] Taking the opportunity of "our respected leader" more than once.] Taking the opportunity of confinement in jails, their living underground and the exclusion from the Coordination Committee, for unknown reasons, of the Naxalbari communist Revolutionaries, *this clique of political careerists* established Charu Majumdar as the leader-creator of Naxalbari with the plea of "Lessons of Naxalbari" and "Evaluation of Naxalbari". The subjective outlook of the AICCCR towards the Naxalbari peasant uprising and its lack of political vigilance led to the split in the unity of the Communist Revolutionaries.²⁵

Kanu Sanyal, Khokan Majumdar and two others were in China when the inaugural meeting of the AICCCR was held.²⁶ Jangal Santal and most other peasant leaders were then in prison. Their exclusion from the first meeting of the AICCCR was not 'for unknown reasons' – at least not unknown to Kanu Sanyal. Perhaps, by the 'clique of political careerists', he meant Dipak Biswas and his associates who wrote the booklet 'Lessons of Naxalbari'. I came across this booklet much later. It claimed to be the work of the North Bengal-Bihar Border Regional Committee. I have never come across 'Evaluation of Naxalbari'. The fact is, Dipak and company had absolutely no role in the formation of the AICCCR. He was then hardly known outside Siliguri. Charu Majumdar never pushed him to the front as he did Souren Bose. He was not even elected a member of the West Bengal State Committee at the State Conference before the Party Congress in 1970. It was in late 1971 – after the death of Sushital Roychoudhuri, arrest of Souren Bose and martyrdom of Saroj Datta that we coopted him to the State Committee, perhaps in September, 1971.

As noted before, it was Sushital Roychoudhuri and his associates, in consultation with Charu Majumdar, that took the initiative in convening the meeting at which the AICCCR was formed. If 'the clique of political careerists' refers to them, it is a baseless slander.

Nobody belittled the role of Kanu Sanyal in the Naxalbari uprising. One may remember that Charu Majumdar himself categorically said that not he but Kanu Sanyal and some others were the actual leaders of the Naxalbari uprising. Quite rightly, he did not mention Dipak and company there.

A merger of the CPI(M-L) (PW) and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) took place a few years ago. Earlier, in some of their writings, the MCC claimed that their members had joined the AICCCR. According to them, they left the AICCCR when it decided to form the party without first weeding out opportunists. This claim is not based on facts.

During the existence of the AICCCR, this group was known as the *Dakshin Desh* group, named after the organ they published – *Dakshin Desh*. Actually this group maintained its separate existence – separate from the AICCCR and published its own organ. None from this group attended the inaugural meeting of the AICCCR on November 12 and 13, 1967. Second, none from the group was a member of the AICCCR at any stage. Third, they asserted that they left the AICCCR when this committee decided to form a party. The decision was taken at the February 1969 meeting of the AICCCR and the resolution 'It is Time to Form the Party' was adopted *unanimously*.²⁷ If anybody of the *Dakshin Desh* group dissented, who was he? When did the group leave the AICCCR – at the time the resolution was adopted or afterwards? One may note that polemics were going on between this group and the AICCCR even in 1968. In an article 'Intensify the Struggle against Economism' (our translation of the title in Bengali), the group confused the struggle by workers for economic demands with economism and held that it was not the task of the communists to lead such struggles and that it would be their basic task to make theoretical, political and organizational preparations for establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat. Asit Sen's article 'A Dangerous Line' was published in *Deshabrati* of June 13, 1968, refuting their erroneous ideas.

The formation of the AICCCR at that stage was a correct step. In 1915, Lenin said, 'The building of a revolutionary organisation must be begun – that is demanded by the new historical situation, by the epoch of proletarian revolutionary action – but it can be begun only *over the heads* of the old leaders, *the stranglers of revolutionary energy, over the heads* of the old party, through its destruction.'²⁸

The Burdwan Plenum of the CPI(M)

In April 1968, the CPI(M) held an all-India plenum at Burdwan to adopt the Madurai draft prepared by their CC on ideological issues. Formally, they shelved discussion of ideological questions from 1964 to 1967 (until their conference at Madurai) and pretended to *sham* neutrality between Marxism-Leninism and modern revisionism. But in their Programme of 1964, they introduced the revisionist formulations like peaceful transition to Socialism. 'In words', as we wrote in an editorial article in *Liberation*, 'they were neutral – between the Marxist – Leninist camp headed by the great Communist Party of China and the treacherous revisionist camp led by Khrushchev and his men'. But *in deeds*, they were a part of the revisionist camp, attacking the CPC on the issue of the Sino-Indian border, Kashmir, etc. And among other things, they peddled all the time the revisionist filth that Soviet neo-colonial aid to the Indian reactionaries was socialist aid that strengthened India's national independence and they declared time and again that they fully supported the India

Government in its efforts to strengthen the defence of the country (efforts which actually amounted to robbing the toiling people in order to pay the imperialist monopolies, the comprador big bourgeoisie and the big landlords), fully supported the Soviet - US plan for the Tashkent conference, refused to recognise the right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people (and of other nationalities like the Nagas and the Mizos), were quite enamoured of the Congress variety of parliamentary democracy and of the Indian Constitution²⁹, and advocated, like the Dangeites, the peaceful path to People's Democracy and Socialism....³⁰

'An analysis of the Central Committee's Draft for the Ideological Discussion,' said the editorial article in *Liberation*, 'will reveal its hypocritical, deceitful character. While pretending to accept Lenin's teachings in the abstract, it repudiates them in the concrete. The sting of the "Draft" is actually in its tail. While pretending to rebuke the Soviet Party for its "deviations" from Marxism-Leninism, it concentrates all its fire against the Chinese Party for refusing to respond to the slogan of "Unity in Action" [the Soviet rulers' deceitful slogan of "Unity in action" between China and the Soviet Union (which had become tacitly an ally of US imperialism) in helping Vietnam fight US aggression].... The long series of articles in defence of the "Draft", published recently in *People's Democracy*, are even more venomous attacks against the Chinese Party (though the CPC is hardly mentioned in these articles) and all other Marxist-Leninist Parties and Groups.'³¹

Hundreds of Party committees, including the Andhra and Assam State Plenums, besides a very large number of comrades of different states, rejected the official draft. But the Party press reported only the names of committees which supported it but not those who had rejected it. Without publishing the Andhra alternative drafts, Sundarayya threatened Andhra comrades with disciplinary action at a press conference in Calcutta.³²

Comrades from Andhra placed an alternative draft on ideological issues at the Burdwan Plenum. Quite expectedly, it was rejected by the rigged body.

Meeting of the AICCCR

Meeting in May 1968 and reviewing the developments since its meeting in November 1967, the central Coordination Committee issued a fresh declaration. It pointed out that India was 'a neo-colony of several imperialist powers, chief among which are the USA and the Soviet Union. The US imperialists, the most aggressive enemies of all mankind, are also the worst enemies of the Indian people.' It said that the main enemies of the Indian people were US imperialism, Soviet revisionism, the big Indian landlords and the comprador bourgeoisie.

It was stated that the main force of the Indian people's democratic revolution, which would overthrow the direct and indirect rule of their enemies, would be the peasantry. Under the leadership of the working class, the peasantry would wage an armed struggle for agrarian revolution, set up revolutionary base areas in the countryside, carry on a *protracted* armed struggle, encircle the cities from the countryside, seize them and win nationwide victory. The firm alliance between the working class and the peasantry would form the basis of a united front of the working class, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie. Mao Tse Tung's Thought would be the guide and the wide propagation of it should be the foremost task of the Communist revolutionaries. The declaration warned: *'Not conspiratorial methods but the mass line alone must be pursued if the enemies of the Indian people are to be overthrown.'*

It stated that after the CPI(M) plenum on ideological issues at Burdwan, there was no further scope for revolutionaries to carry on an inner-party struggle within the CPI(M). It said that it would be sowing illusions among the people and preventing them from consolidating themselves if revolutionaries still remained within the CPI(M).

The declaration appealed to all those who had faith in Mao Tse Tung's Thought to disband separate groups and consolidate themselves within the All India Coordination Committee and build a true Communist Party of India.³³

The meeting unanimously adopted a resolution on the *parliamentary path as opposed to the revolutionary path*, the path of armed struggle for seizure of power. It said: 'Since the victory of the Chinese Revolution and the swift advance of the national liberation movements unleashed by it and the emergence of Chairman Mao Tse Tung's Thought as the Marxism-Leninism of the present era of rapid collapse of imperialism and swift spread of socialism, bourgeois parliamentary institutions, already historically obsolete, have become a positive impediment to the advance of revolutions in general and to revolutions in semi-feudal, semi-colonial countries like India, in particular, which is feudal, and not bourgeois.' The resolution added: 'Naxalbari has proved to be the burial ground of parliamentarism in India.'³⁴ So the slogan that it raised 'Down with Elections' became a strategic slogan, not a tactical one.

A few weeks before the AICCCR meeting, when Charu Majumdar was at Siliguri, the members of the State Coordination Committee met twice, each time at least for four hours to discuss this question. Only Sushital Roychoudhuri, Promode Sengupta and one or two other comrades— one from Howrah — were in favour of participation in elections; all others, including myself, were advocates of boycott of elections. At the AICCCR meeting,

Sushital Roychoudhari changed his opinion and supported boycott and the resolution was passed unanimously within a short time – without much discussion.

Today, the resolution appears to me to be a revolutionary comrade's reaction, marked by resentment – to the reformist manner in which parliamentary elections were being manipulated by the CPI and the CPI(M). If participation in parliamentary elections is counterposed to class struggle, to the revolutionary path, it becomes a trap, a snare and diverts the people from the path of class struggle, from revolutionary struggle, as the CPI and the CPI(M) were doing and have been doing, as all ruling class parties do. Lenin exposed the evils of parliamentarism. He said: *'To decide every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament – this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism not only in parliamentary constitutional monarchies, but also in the most democratic republics. Take any parliamentary country from America to Switzerland, from France to Britain, Norway and so forth – in these countries the real business of "State" is performed behind the scenes and is carried on by the departments, chancelleries and General Staffs. Parliament is given up to talk for the special purpose of fooling the "common people."*'³⁵ In *'Greetings to Italian, French and German Communists'*, Lenin said: *'Only scoundrels or simpletons can think that the proletariat must first win a majority in elections carried out under the yoke of the bourgeoisie, under the yoke of wage-slavery, and must then win power. This is the height of stupidity or hypocrisy: it is substituting elections under the old system and with the old power, for class struggle and revolution.'*³⁶ To quote Lenin again, *'Parliamentarism does not eliminate, but lays bare the innate character even of the most democratic bourgeois republics as organs of class oppression.'*³⁷

As regards formation of ministries in coalition with reformists and others under the existing system, Lenin said: *'The experience of alliances, agreements and blocs with the social-reform liberals in the West and with the liberal reformists (cadets) in the Russian revolution, has convincingly shown that these agreements only blunt the consciousness of the masses, that they do not enhance but weaken the actual significance of their struggle, by linking fighters with elements who are least capable of fighting and most vacillating and treacherous.'*³⁸

But Lenin also taught that participation in parliamentary elections, like a Communist party's work in the trade union – even in a reactionary one – could be utilised to help class struggle, to serve the cause of revolution. A genuine Communist party could use elections not to seek votes or win seats but to propagate revolutionary politics when people are more keen to learn about political issues, more receptive to such dissemination of ideas, than in ordinary everyday life. One should distinguish between the parliamentary

path (which diverts the people from the revolutionary path) and participation in parliamentary elections to propagate revolutionary politics and advance people along the revolutionary path. Lenin was in favour of using even the worst parliamentary institution not as an alternative to class struggle and revolution but as an *aid* to them. He said: '...the number of parliamentary seats is of no importance to us; we are not out for seats.'³⁹ '...they (Communists)', wrote Lenin, 'should not at all strive to "get seats" in parliament, but should everywhere try to get people to think, and draw the masses into the struggle... they should try to explain to the people what Bolshevism is, in a way that was never possible (under bourgeois rule) outside of election times (exclusive, of course, of times of big strikes...)'.⁴⁰ To quote him, '... We must not regard what is obsolete to us as something obsolete to a class, to the masses.'⁴¹ 'To attempt to "circumvent" this difficulty by "skipping" the arduous job of utilising reactionary parliaments for revolutionary purposes is absolutely childish.'⁴² To quote him again, 'we are obliged to carry on a struggle within parliament for the destruction of parliament.'⁴³

About Communists forming coalition governments so long as the capitalist system exists, Lenin said: '...it always happens, under all sorts of "coalition" cabinets that include "socialists," that these socialists, even when individuals among them are perfectly honest, in reality turn out to be either a useless ornament or a screen for the bourgeois government, a sort of lightning conductor to divert the people's indignation from the government, a tool for the government to deceive the people.... So it has been and so it will be as long as the bourgeois system exists and as long as the old bourgeois, bureaucratic state apparatus remains intact.'⁴⁴ Referring to the rhetoric of the 'parliamentary "lapdogs" of Social Democracy', he said: 'Revolutionary-Democratic phrases to gull the rural Simple Simons, and bureaucracy and red tape to 'gladden the hearts' of the capitalists - that is the *essence* of the "honest" coalition.'⁴⁵ 'The parliamentary representatives of this party [the Bolshevik Party]', to quote Lenin again, 'preferred exile in Siberia to taking a road leading to ministerial portfolios in a bourgeois government.'⁴⁶

One more passage from Lenin: 'Realising that the government's position was hopeless, they [the capitalists] resorted to a method which for many decades, ever since 1848, has been practised by the capitalists of other countries in order to fool, divide and weaken the workers. The method is known as a "coalition" government, i.e., a joint cabinet formed of members of the bourgeoisie and turncoats from Socialism.... When the "socialist" leaders entered a bourgeois cabinet, they invariably proved to be figureheads, puppets, screens for the capitalists, instruments for deceiving the workers.'⁴⁷

The Central Committee of the CPC had written to the CC of the Soviet Party a few years before we adopted the resolution on elections: 'In order to lead the proletariat and working people in revolution, Marxist-Leninist Parties

must master all forms of struggle and be able to substitute one form for another quickly as the conditions of struggle change. The vanguard of the proletariat will remain unconquerable in all circumstances only if it masters all forms of struggle – peaceful and armed, open and secret, legal and illegal, parliamentary struggle and mass struggle, etc. It is wrong to refuse to use parliamentary and other legal forms of struggle when they can and should be used. However, if a Marxist-Leninist Party falls into legalism or parliamentary cretinism, confining the struggle within the limits permitted by the bourgeoisie, this will inevitably lead to renouncing the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat.⁴⁸

What was the Naxalbari experience? In 'Build up Armed Partisan Struggle by Fighting Revisionism' (the seventh of his Eight Documents), Charu Majumdar had written about one year before the resolution on elections was adopted: 'General Elections are coming. During elections discontented people want to know political views and will know them.... Taking advantage of the coming elections, we have to propagate our politics. We have to take boldly to the masses our politics of the People's Democratic Revolution, that is, alliance between workers and peasants under the leadership of the working class, armed struggle and the politics of establishing the leadership of the party. We have to take full advantage of this opportunity.' The revolutionary comrades of the Naxalbari area who had decided to take to the path of armed agrarian revolution utilised the Assembly elections in early 1967 to propagate their politics among the people. As noted before, Jangal Santal, President of the Siliguri Sub-divisional Krishak Samiti and a leading communist revolutionary, was nominated by the CPI(M) as its candidate from the Phansidewa Assembly Constituency.

The communist revolutionaries of the Naxalbari area used the election campaign not to win votes but to propagate the politics of armed agrarian revolution and to prepare the people for the coming revolutionary struggle. Far from harming, the wide campaign actually helped the Naxalbari peasant uprising.⁴⁹

It was unfortunate that the teachings of Lenin and the CPC as well as Naxalbari's own experience were ignored and we failed to make a distinction between the parliamentary path as opposed to class struggle and revolution on the one hand and participation in elections as a means of helping the cause of revolution on the other.

It was at this meeting that the AICCCR adopted a lengthy resolution on our trade union work. It urged the necessity of developing trade union work and of fighting economism on the working class front. As had been the case at its first meeting, so it was now that importance was correctly placed on building working class struggles through their trade unions.

The wide dissemination of Mao Tse Tung Thought, the need for building a revolutionary party, integration of the youth and students of the petty bourgeois origin with poor and landless peasants, intensification of class struggle in rural areas and organising working class struggles were stressed.

When discussions at the meeting were over, Charu Majumdar said that he wanted to add a few words. With his usual enthusiasm, he said that a great drama full of brilliance and splendour was going to be played in Naxalbari: the stage was ready. It would create new history. I had no knowledge of what this drama was till I read Khokan Majumdar's book recently. Kanu Sanyal, Khokan Majumdar and about one hundred militant peasant comrades went up the hills and selected a place near a tea-garden. They wanted to arrange guerrilla training there and to attack police camps on the hills and in the Terai region. They were carrying out investigations about some camps. But what oppressed them was hunger. For two or three days workers of a tea-garden provided food to them. They lived mostly on wild things. After 24 days Kanu Sanyal, accompanied by a few peasants, left for Naxalbari to bring food. But they did not return even in four days. So the other comrades climbed down the hills and the drama ended.⁵⁰

Mao Tse Tung said: 'We should keep our heads cool and our heads hot, which are also two opposites of a single entity. Soaring enthusiasm means hot-headedness and scientific analysis cool-headedness.' There was no dearth of hot-headedness in Charu Majumdar as also in us – perhaps more than what Mao Tse Tung had bargained for – but there was lack in him and in us of cool-headedness. Charu Majumdar seldom made a scientific analysis of the concrete conditions. We shared this characteristic with him to a greater or lesser extent.

It was at this meeting that the name of the Coordination Committee was changed from All India Coordination Committee of the Revolutionaries in the CPI(M) to All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries.

So far as I remember, a comrade delegate from Punjab attended this meeting; and Orissa was not represented. I was coopted a member of the AICCCR at this meeting.

Difference and Disunity

Promode Sengupta came to the place of the meeting in the evening when it was over. Charu Majumdar told him in a persuasive manner that the AICCCR had adopted the resolution on boycott of elections, but that if it proved wrong, it would be changed. Sengupta spoke not a word but dissociated himself from the organisation. He continued to write for three more months his 'A New Assessment of the History of the CPI' (under the pen-name Bande Ali Khan), which was appearing serially in *Liberation*, and then he ceased writing for *Liberation*. Unfortunately, his book was not finished. The loss hurt the

organisation. As noted before, Sengupta had been the President of the Naxalbari O Krishak Samgram Sahayak Committee from its inception and had addressed many public meetings to propagate the politics of agrarian revolution.

It was possible to work together. At one of the sessions of the Communist international, communist delegates from some countries of Western Europe wanted to leave the International because they wanted to boycott parliamentary elections while Lenin wanted that the elections should be made use of for revolutionary purposes. Lenin said that with all their differences on this issue they could work together within the Communist International. There was no need to break away on this issue. Such flexibility in tactics on non-antagonistic issues was very rare among the Communist revolutionaries and this cost the organisation much.

Regrettably, later in a book *Naxalbari and Indian Revolution* (English translation by Dr Tanika Sarkar from the original in Bengali entitled *Biplab Kon Pathe*, which first appeared in 1970), Sengupta made many accusations against the AICCCR which have no basis on facts. We are citing a few instances. Sengupta wrote:

'But Charu Babu as well as other leaders in the Coordination Committee decided that Party could spontaneously be formed through a mass movement. Ideological struggle was not even considered. At first they had said that the Party would be formed through mass movement.'⁵¹

Again, 'The second declaration [of the AICCCR] proclaimed the leaders' demands for monopoly rights in revolution, revealing the heights of an arrogance appropriate to petit bourgeois revolutionaries of narrow mentality.'⁵²

In another instance Sengupta said: 'It is clear from Comrade Jangal Santal's statement [*Kalpurush* No.4, 1967] that the Naxalbari movement began as a spontaneous economic movement.'⁵³ I think any comment here will be superfluous.

A Trip to Other States

Letters were coming from communists in different places seeking to know about Naxalbari. In August 1968, Sushital Roychoudhuri decided to send Saroj Datta and Asit Sen to meet like-minded persons in other states. They both wanted me to accompany them. I was only too glad to do so. Earlier, Sushital Roychoudhuri had himself undertaken a trip to other states for the same purpose.

We first went to Bhopal. The CPI(M) state secretary of Madhya Pradesh was our host. We had discussions with him and stayed there for two or three days. We then went to Bombay (now Mumbai). On the way we saw Ajanta. In Mumbai, Sundari Navalkar was our hostess. She was an advocate and trade union leader. We also met several young persons and had discussions

with them. Leaving Mumbai after some days we proposed to go to Bangalore via Mysore. At about three in the night after we had left Bombay by train, Anil Datta and some other comrades were shouting our names when our train stopped at a station. They entered our compartment and asked us to get down. They took us to Mangalore on the Arabian Sea. We stayed there with a comrade very close to the beach. During our stay there we paid a visit to Udupi, a little over thirty miles from Mangalore.

On our way to Mysore by bus we had to cross the Western Ghats. It was a marvellous scenery. On our left there were steep slopes; on our right, the hill went down into a narrow gorge along which flowed a stream. Many waterfalls with their snow-white, sparkling water crossed our path and gushed down into the stream. There were occasional plantations - bright-green on the hill-sides.

After a stay of some days at Mysore we went to Bangalore. Anil Datta's ancestral home was in Bangalore. It was not a busy city then as it is now. We met and had discussions with many comrades including S Guna. Guna was contributing an article 'Is India Independent?' It was coming out in *Liberation* serially. The relations between Guna and the group that Anil led were not pleasant. I have forgotten why Guna stopped contributing to *Liberation* after our visit and his series remained incomplete.

After about a week in Bangalore we went to Guntur via Vijayawada. Our search for the house, the address of which had been given in the letter sent to us, ended in a hostel where some medical students stayed. Asit Sen took a lecture session with them. They treated us to a good lunch. Before we left, I gave the student who seemed to be the leader of the group my address in Calcutta where they could contact us.

Contact with Srikakulam

One morning in late October, Panchadi Krishnamurthy and Tejeswar Rao came to my place with the student leader of Guntur. Tejeswar Rao was the secretary of the Srikakulam District Committee and Krishnamurthy a member of the Committee. A struggle of the Girijans (men of the hills, tribal people) that had been going on was facing severe state repression besides attacks by landlords.⁵⁴ The visitors were not satisfied with the advice of the Andhra leaders about how to conduct the struggle and wanted to see Charu Majumdar.

Charu Majumdar had just come from Siliguri to attend a meeting of the AICCCR. Nagi Reddy, DV Rao, Kola Venkaiah and another comrade representing the Andhra Committee had reached Calcutta on the same day to convey to him their decision to join the AICCCR. When they met him, they said they had only one reservation. They did not fully agree to the AICCCR's resolution on elections. But they would abide by it and Nagi Reddy would

resign from the Andhra Assembly. They wanted to have the right to raise the point later.

I arranged a meeting between Charu Majumdar and Tejeswar Rao and Panchadi Krishnamurthy that same afternoon. At the meeting, Majumdar listened attentively to their report on the Girijan struggle for about two hours. Then he told them briefly to wage 'guerrilla struggle' against the class enemies and the police who would come to protect them and their interests.⁵⁵ By guerrilla struggle, Charu Majumdar meant annihilation of landlords by small, secret groups formed for the purpose.

Charu Majumdar suggested that they might attend the AICCCR meeting which would begin the next day. They said that as the Andhra State Committee had decided to join the AICCCR, they would not attend the meeting, for the Srikakulam Committee was a unit of the Andhra State Committee.

I came out with Panchadi and Tejeswar and asked them about their reactions to what Charu Majumdar had told them. One of them said: 'If it is so easy we can start it tomorrow.' They left for Srikakulam the same night.

AICCCR Meets

Before the meeting of the AICCCR in October 1968, the Andhra Committee joined the AICCCR and was represented at this meeting by DV Rao and another important comrade. Kerala and Karnataka were not represented nor did any comrade from Punjab attend it.

A member asked Charu Majumdar about Kanu Sanyal's report on the Naxalbari struggle. The reply was that he had brought it from Siliguri and given it to Deshabrati Prakashani for publication. Unfortunately, the report of the struggle – the struggle which led to the formation of the AICCCR and various State Coordination Committees; which inspired and was still inspiring Communist revolutionaries to lead peasant revolts in many places – could not be discussed by the AICCCR. The experience of the Naxalbari struggle could not be summed up and appropriate lessons could not be drawn for the guidance of comrades.

The meeting adopted resolutions 'On the Indian Situation and Our Immediate Task', 'On China's Proletarian Cultural Revolution', 'On Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia', and 'On the Solidarity with the Albanian People' and a resolution paying homage to 'Comrade Babulal Biswakarmakar.'⁵⁶

In the resolution 'On the Indian Situation and Our Immediate Task', the AICCCR stated that India's reactionary ruling classes and the revisionists, obedient to the dictates of the US and Soviet masters, had intensified their offensive against the people. On the other hand, the flames of armed struggle had spread to Bihar, UP, etc. It called upon the revolutionary Communists to go more resolutely and deeply among the peasant masses and to build up

revolutionary bases in the countryside. This was the major task; other tasks, developing class struggles of other sections of the people, undoubtedly important, were 'contributory and subordinate to this basic task'.

In a resolution the AICCCR hailed the victory of China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, which had been initiated and led by Mao Tse Tung to overthrow the capitalist-roaders in China and to consolidate Socialism. The formation of Revolutionary Committees all over China, except the Taiwan province, marked the triumph of the Cultural Revolution.

In another resolution, the AICCCR condemned the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet revisionist renegades and their four Warsaw Pact partners.

The AICCCR greeted the people of Albania led by the Party of Labour and Comrade Enver Hoxha 'on their withdrawing from the Warsaw Pact, which, led by the Soviet revisionist renegade clique, has degenerated into an imperialist war-pact like the Nato'.

Homage was paid in another resolution to Comrade Babulal Biswakarmakar, 'who gave his life to raise the great Naxalbari peasant struggle to a higher phase, the phase of guerrilla war'.

Babulal Biswakarmakar was a valiant, young peasant comrade, one of the leaders of the Naxalbari uprising. A poor peasant, he started taking part in class struggles of the peasants when he was only 15. He participated in every struggle in the Naxalbari area and was jailed many times. He became assistant secretary of the sub-divisional Kisan Samiti. He was also a trade union organiser and was elected assistant secretary and member of the working committee of the Terai Tea Garden Workers' Union. Later, he was expelled from the CPI(M) as he was a leader of the Naxalbari struggle and also belonged to the Terai Tea Garden Workers' Union.

The brave, indefatigable comrade was killed at midnight on September 7, 1968 near the Birsingh Jote village in the Naxalbari area after a four-hour-gunbattle with a large party of armed policemen. He helped his comrades to move away to safety by skilfully using his gun from various positions. It was only when Comrade Babulal came out of his hiding place and was trying to move away to a safe place that the enemy spotted him in the clear moonlight and riddled him with bullets. This class-conscious brave comrade died when he was hardly thirty. He left behind him an example to be emulated.

The resolution, adopted at the convention of Naxalbari cadres in September 1968 paying homage to Babulal, stated that his heroic fight had raised the Naxalbari struggle to a higher stage - the stage of guerrilla warfare. To call the armed fight of a heroic comrade with the armed police a guerrilla war was hardly proper. The resolution said: 'In order to carry the struggle forward we must form units, elect one leader for each of the units and specify a definite

area for each of them to work in. The tasks of these units will be to spread and propagate the thought of Chairman Mao, to intensify class struggles and to carry out surprise attacks on the enemy as guerrilla units. Blows must be dealt at opportune moments against the hated class enemies, against police agents and against the reactionary armed forces.¹⁷ At that time, the revolutionary tide was at a low ebb and the revolutionary organisation and struggle in the Naxalbari area were disrupted and suppressed by the reactionary government. Then it was the time to rebuild and strengthen the revolutionary organisation, to re-establish the political base among the people and extend it to wider areas by carrying on agitation and propaganda among the people, organising them and initiating class struggles – economic and political, for fulfilling daily needs and demands, with a view to preparing for guerrilla war when the time for it would mature.

Difference and Disunity

We shall dwell briefly on the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union and four other states of Eastern Europe. It created a rift within our own organisation; it was also the occasion for Charu Majumdar's making a serious formulation of an anti-Marxist character.

On the night of August 20–21, 1968, the rulers of the erstwhile Soviet Union and their lackeys – the rulers of East Germany, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria – made a surprise attack on Czechoslovakia with the intention to occupy it. The Soviet revisionists regarded the countries of Eastern Europe (except Albania, which was an uncompromising fighter against modern revisionism, and erstwhile Yugoslavia, which moved close to the USA) as within their sphere of influence. The Soviet Union had set up the Comecon (the Council of Mutual Economic Aid) as the instrument of their neo-colonial plunder of several countries of eastern Europe, and the Warsaw pact as a means of perpetuating their military domination over them. Throughout eastern Europe (except Albania), the contradiction between the Soviet Union and the new bourgeoisie of the different countries was growing sharper every day. In 1968, the pro-Soviet Novotny clique in Czechoslovakia was unceremoniously ousted from power by the pro-US Dubcek clique. The Dubcek clique openly challenged the Soviet hegemony – the Warsaw Pact and the Comecon: it sought to move into the orbit of US imperialism and to receive US aid (i.e. loans). There were both contradiction as well as collusion between the Soviet revisionists and the US imperialists. There was collusion between them to 'contain' Socialist China and to defeat national liberation struggles. But they had contradictions over their respective spheres of influence.

The Soviet revisionists, who had degenerated into social-imperialists (socialists in words, imperialists in deeds), would not allow Czechoslovakia

to escape from their sphere of influence. That is why they resorted to a shameless invasion which the Dubcek clique did not resist though the working people and students of Czechoslovakia offered whatever resistance they could.

Deshabhati and *Liberation* rightly condemned the invasion but Parimal Dasgupta strongly criticised the *Deshabhati* editorial. He held that the Soviet revisionists had invaded Czechoslovakia not to serve imperialist ends but to save socialist gains. Dasgupta refused to criticise or condemn the Soviet invasion. To him, it was the inevitable result of the contradiction within the revisionist camp. Strangely enough, he said that both the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia were socialist states which functioned on revisionist lines.⁵⁸

Dasgupta also criticised the AICCCR for neglecting trade union work – a left trend which had developed from 1969.

Earlier, the declaration that the May 1968 meeting of the AICCCR issued, stated unequivocally that the Soviet revisionists, like the US imperialists, were among the four enemies of the Indian people. It said: 'India, which was a colony of Britain a little over twenty years back, has become a neo-colony of several imperialist powers, chief among which are the USA and the Soviet Union. The Soviet renegade ruling clique... has set up again a bourgeois dictatorship in the first socialist state of the world.'⁵⁹ Parimal Dasgupta, a member of the AICCCR, expressed no disagreement with this declaration, which was adopted unanimously. How could a bourgeois state save socialism in another country by rushing troops into it?

When Dasgupta's view was rejected, he left the AICCCR and formed a separate coordination committee, which came to nothing. The charge about neglecting trade union work led Charu Majumdar to make a formulation which was a deviation from Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung thought. He wrote: '...if one admits that there prevails a revolutionary situation in India, then it must be admitted that the task today in India is to build up the Party, not a mass organisation.' He argued that 'open mass organisation of the peasants will strengthen the tendency towards open movement and, as a result, we shall become leaders of another revisionist mass organisation. The leadership of the poor and landless peasants can be established in the peasant movement *only* by building secret Party organisations among the peasants. The peasant struggle can be initiated *only* by disseminating widely among peasants the politics of seizure of political power and that this task can be performed by the Party unit of poor and landless peasants among the peasantry. This Party unit can fulfil this responsibility *only* by waging guerrilla war with the help of poor and landless peasants. We should remember that the poor and the landless peasants can establish their leadership over the entire peasantry *only* by conducting guerrilla war. It is guerrilla war which is the *only* tactic for

waging the peasants' revolutionary war. No mass organisation can accomplish this task through open work.⁶⁰

About six months later he wrote:

The revolutionary peasants have demonstrated through their struggle that neither mass movement nor mass organisation is indispensable for waging guerrilla warfare... Mass organization and mass movement increase the tendency towards open and economic movement and expose the revolutionary workers before the enemy, which makes it easier for the enemy to launch attacks. Therefore, open mass movement and mass organisation are obstacles in the way of the development and expansion of guerrilla warfare.⁶¹

Besides negating the role of mass organisations and mass movements in rousing and mobilising millions of people in revolutionary struggles, Charu Majumdar made some formulations about 'guerrilla war' and its being 'the only tactic for waging the peasants' revolutionary war'. Later, he elaborated his ideas about guerrilla war.⁶² These formulations will be discussed later. Here however, are his formulation about mass organisations and mass movements.

Charu Majumdar ignored the fact that it was at the call of the Siliguri Sub-divisional Krishak Samiti, a mass organisation of the peasants (which had roused and mobilised them) that the Naxalbari peasant uprising took place. So, as we shall see later, did the Girijan Sangham and Mahila Sangam rouse and organise the peasants in Srikakulam. In other areas of struggle also, mass organisations and mass movements played their important roles until they were banned by Charu Majumdar. At first all these struggles had a mass character.

Delivering the 'Political Report of the Central Committee of the RCP (B)' on March 27, 1922, more than four years after the people of Russia led by the RCP (B) accomplished the October Revolution, Lenin said: 'The idea of building communist society (as well as making revolution) exclusively with the hands of the communists is childish, absolutely childish. We are but a drop in the ocean, a drop in the ocean of the people.'

In his report, Lenin repeated the same idea: 'In the sea of people we are after all but a drop in the ocean....'⁶³

Mao Tse Tung also said: 'Our comrades must realize the truth that Communist Party members are at all times a minority as compared with non-Party people—much less than one percent of the people.'⁶⁴

It is wrong to pose party building as opposed to the building of mass organisations and mass movements. Far from being opposed to each other, they are actually complementary. Party building is not a one-stage affair. It is a continuous process. The Party links itself with the masses through their

various organisations - trade unions, Kisan Samitis, youth associations etc., and grows strong by recruiting the most active, the most class-conscious elements in the mass organisations, who have proved themselves through their activities in mass movements for economic and political demands. It is by continually absorbing the most advanced elements of the working class and other revolutionary classes, thrown up by and tested and tempered in class struggles, that the Party can be strengthened. Neither the Marxist-Leninist Party worth the name nor the party's mass base nor the PLA can be built merely by propagating the politics of seizure of power or by secretly assassinating some class enemies and policemen. Secret assassinations of class enemies by secret units gladden the hearts of many peasants but these fail to mobilise them as active fighters.

Mass organisations are indispensable links between the party and the people. Lenin called the trade unions 'the transmission belts from the Communist Party to the masses.' The Party *alone* can hardly reach tens of millions of people, let alone rousing and mobilising them, without which the revolution cannot achieve victory. If the Party dispenses with mass organisations and mass movements of the various classes of the exploited people, it will be isolated from the masses and can neither grow nor become effective. That is why the building of the party and the building of mass organisations and mass movements must go hand in hand - one strengthening the other. If the revolutionary classes themselves - large majorities of their members - are not involved, there can be no revolution. The efforts of the vanguard alone - the few advanced elements - will be fruitless if they are not actively supported by the *organised* millions.

Mao Tse Tung said: '...the regions where China's Red Political Power first emerged and is able to last for a long time have not been those unaffected by the democratic revolution, such as Szechuan, Kweichow, Yunnan and the northern provinces, but regions such as the provinces of Hunan, Kwangtung, Hupeh and Kiangsi, where the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers rose in great numbers in the course of the bourgeois - democratic revolution of 1926 and 1927. In many parts of these province trade unions and peasant associations were formed on a wide scale, and many economic and political struggles were waged by the working class and the peasantry against the landlord class and the bourgeoisie.'⁶⁵

'In China', said Mao Tse Tung, 'war is the main form of struggle and the army is the main form of organisation. Other forms such as mass organisation and mass struggle are *extremely important* and indeed *indispensable* and in no circumstances to be overlooked, but their purpose is to serve the war. Before the outbreak of a war all organisation and struggle are in preparation

for the war, as in the period from the May 4 Movement of 1919 to the May 30 Movement of 1925. After war breaks out, all organisations and struggles are coordinated with the war either directly or indirectly, as, for instance, in the period of the Northern Expedition when all organisations and struggles in the rear areas of the revolutionary army were coordinated with the war directly, and those in the Northern warlord areas were coordinated with the war indirectly.⁶⁶

To quote Mao Tse Tung again, 'Communists must never separate themselves from the majority of the people or neglect them by leading only a few progressive contingents in an isolated and rash advance, but must forge close links between the progressive elements and the broad masses.' And these links are mass organisations.

I would like to quote here a few lines from the Theses on the Communist International and the Red International of Labour Unions adopted on July 12, 1921 by the third Comintern Congress (which was attended and addressed by Lenin):

'Communists must explain to the proletarians that salvation is to be found not in leaving the old trade unions and remaining unorganised, but in revolutionising the trade unions, ridding them of the spirit of reformism and of the treacherous reformist leaders, and so transforming the unions into real mainstays of the revolutionary proletariat.

*'The party must learn to exercise decisive influence in the unions without subjecting them to petty control. It is the union cell, not the union as such, which is under the authority of the party. It is only by patient, devoted, and intelligent work by the cells in the unions that the party will be able to bring about a state of affairs in which the unions as a whole will readily and joyfully follow party advice...'*⁶⁸

The same holds good about the organisations of peasants, students, youths, women, etc.

Again, in the Theses on tactics adopted at its third Congress (on July 12, 1921), the Communist International stated:

'Communist parties can develop only in struggle....They must form the spearhead of all proletarian mass organisations, showing the backward vacillating masses, by putting forward practical proposals for struggle, by urging on the struggle for all the daily needs of the proletariat, how the struggle should be waged, and thus exposing to the masses the treacherous character of all non-communist parties.'

And 'The task of the communist parties is to extend, to deepen, and to unify this struggle for concrete demands....These partial demands, anchored in the needs of the broadest masses, must be put forward by the communist

parties in a way which not only leads the masses to struggle, but by its very nature also organizes them.'

And 'Every objection to the putting forward of such partial demands, every charge of reformism on this account, is an emanation of the same inability to grasp the essential conditions of revolutionary action as was expressed in the hostility of some communist groups to participation in the trade unions, or to making use of parliament. It is not a question of proclaiming the final goal to the proletariat, but of intensifying the practical struggle which is the only way of leading the proletariat to the struggle for the final goal.'⁶⁹

Mass organisations and mass movements are not invariably revisionist. Their character depends on who leads them – revisionists or revolutionaries.

As the leadership of the Communist Party in this country was captured for long years by right opportunists and revisionists, the Party remained for most of the time a *wholly* open organisation and the aim of the mass organisations and mass movements led by the Party was to secure some concessions without linking those movements with the final goal of overthrowing the existing system. To utilise mass organisations and mass movements led by a *wholly* open party like the CPI and the CPI(M) for the purpose of class collaboration and for diverting the people from the path of revolution means right opportunism; on the other hand, to deny the role of mass organizations and mass movements as indispensable tools for building the Party and for arousing and mobilizing millions of people to make revolution is 'left' opportunism.

Earlier, before 1969, Charu Majumdar had himself stressed the importance of mass organisations and mass movements to the cause of revolutionary struggle.

In 'Carry Forward the Peasant Struggle by Combating revisionism' (his eighth 'document' written in April, 1967) Majumdar said: 'Naturally, the question arises whether in that case there is no need in this period for waging mass movements of the peasants on the issue of partial demands. There is certainly the need now and it will remain in the future, too.... The opportunity of conducting the peasants' mass movement for partial demands shall always be there and the Communists must fully utilise them...The movement for partial demands will make the class struggle acute and develop political consciousness among the broad masses. The broad peasant masses will be inspired to make sacrifices and the struggle will spread to newer and newer areas.' One may also see his other articles 'To my Comrades', and 'Develop Peasants' Class Struggle through Class Analysis, Investigation and Study' (both written in 1968).⁷⁰

But there was an abrupt, complete change from 1969. Not only on this issue but on other issues, too (to which we shall refer later), there was complete change of the Party line from what it was before 1969. But no explanation

was offered for the abrupt change. When the leadership was confronted with questions and criticisms, Souren Bose, Charu Majumdar's loyal devotee until his arrest in March 1971, and on whom the latter showered many benefits political and material, came out with the thesis of 'Revolutionary Authority'. Writing as 'Observer', Souren Bose claimed that Charu Majumdar was an infallible leader – the 'revolutionary authority',⁷¹ who must be unquestioningly followed; all doubts, questions and criticisms were sought to be stifled. This concept of 'revolutionary authority' will be discussed later.

An article in *Peking Review*, No. 5, 1969, which was also broadcast by Peking Radio, entitled 'Confession in an Impasse: A comment on Nixon's "Inaugural Address" and the Contemptible Applause by the Soviet Revisionist Renegade Clique' – the English version of the original Chinese article by 'Commentator' of *Renmin Ribao* and *Hongqi* – marked a turning point in the brief history of our Party. Before concluding, the article said: 'As to "the beginning of the third millenium", that is, the year 2001, it will be the brilliant festival of the world-wide victory of the proletarian revolution, the brilliant festival of the world-wide victory of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tse Tung's Thought.' This absurd prediction was entirely contrary to the trend of world history and to the teachings of all great Marxist-Leninists, including Mao Tse Tung, but it was taken seriously by our Party leadership. Taken uncritically, it strengthened the existing weak 'left' tendencies and gave rise to new ones. Later, we shall refer to the profound changes it brought about in our Party's policies, which broke our Party.

Here we shall refer briefly to Souren Bose's thesis on the 'revolutionary authority' of Charu Majumdar.

The 'Revolutionary Authority'

The abrupt changes in the party line under the influence of the Chinese article, for instance, secret annihilation of class enemies by secret groups, the rejection of mass organisations and mass movements, did not fail to attract the notice of many comrades. The Party leaders had not offered any explanation for the changes. A leaflet circulated by comrades from the northern suburbs of Calcutta reached our hands towards the end of 1969. It accused the Party leadership of changing the Party line abruptly without offering any explanation. Souren Bose referred to a pocket-size pamphlet which claimed to be the publication of some Calcutta unit of the Party, and which challenged the new Party line. Charu Majumdar, Saroj Datta and Souren Bose had discussions among themselves about such literature. They could hardly reply to the charges. But a reply had to be given to suppress further criticism.

So, Souren Bose came forward to write a thesis on the 'revolutionary authority' of Charu Majumdar. The article, originally written in Bengali and published in *Deshabrati*, was translated into English and published in

Liberation under the title 'To win Victory in the Revolution We must Establish the Revolutionary Authority'. This is a wholly anti-Marxist-Leninist, anti-Mao Tse Tung thought. Charu Majumdar was projected as a revolutionary authority, an infallible person, whose instructions had to be obeyed unquestioningly to achieve victory in the revolution. Those who questioned their correctness were enemies of the Party and the people.

Any claim to the infallibility of a person, of an omniscient *guru*, is a spurious claim. Lenin said that there is no such person on earth, nor can there be any, who has not made any mistakes. On November, 1877, Marx wrote to W. Blos: 'Neither of us [i.e., Marx and Engels] cares a straw for popularity. A proof of this is, for example, that, because of aversion to any personality cult, I have never permitted the numerous expressions of appreciation from various countries, with which I was pestered during the existence of the International, to reach the realm of publicity, and have never answered them, except occasionally by a rebuke. When Engels and I first joined the secret Communist Society we made it a condition that everything leading to encourage superstitious belief in authority was to be removed from the statutes.'⁷³

This theory about the revolutionary authority of an individual is a poisonous weed. Only a person ignorant of the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung thought could dabble in such theorisation. It is destructive of the Party's organisation, for it dispenses with the basic principle of the Party organisation – democratic centralism. There can be no centralism without democracy. A Party cannot grow healthy and strong without recognising that there *shall* be differences and contradictions within. It can grow only by ceaselessly trying to resolve contradiction between leaders and leaders, between the leaders and the led and between the Party and the people. As Mao Tse Tung said, the Party's life ends if there is no contradiction within it. Non-antagonistic contradictions within the Party need to be solved through debates and discussions. Mao said: 'Truth develops through debate between different views.'⁷⁴ Lenin said that within the party, there should be freedom to discuss and criticise and unity of action. Every member should have the right to discuss an issue and criticise others' views, but when a decision based on the majority opinion is adopted, all members should be united to implement it. Mao added that truths are sometimes with the minority – like Copernicus, Darwin, Marx, Engels and so on – and new truths take time to be appreciated by the majority. So the question of centralism versus democracy should be solved in such a way that the Party's course of action is guided by the majority opinion while the minority is free to retain its views. The majority must be broad-minded enough to respect this right of the minority and test the correctness of its line on the touchstone of practice and should not hesitate to change it if it proves

wrong. To quote Mao Tse Tung, 'The only way to settle questions of an ideological nature or controversial issues among the people is by the democratic method, the method of discussion, criticism, persuasion and education, and not by the method of coercion or repression.'⁷⁵

Mao Tse Tung upheld the Party committee system which would ensure collective functioning and prevent 'any individual from monopolizing the conduct of affairs'⁷⁶

Blissfully ignorant, Souren Bose wrote: 'The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution has...radically changed all the old concepts about the revolutionary party and world revolution which were current before the Cultural Revolution and established new Marxist-Leninist concepts which are the contributions of Mao Tsetung Thought.' Souren did not know that China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution did not seek to and did not change any old concept about the revolutionary party and the world revolution but to consolidate Socialism in China and to overthrow capitalist-roads in power at different levels. Though Socialism had been achieved in the ownership of the means of production, it was necessary to carry on an uninterrupted revolution in the relations between men in the course of production and in the ideological sphere. In brief, I would like to quote Mao Tse Tung:

'At present, our objective is to struggle against and crush those persons in authority who are taking the capitalist road, to criticise and repudiate the reactionary bourgeois academic "authorities" and the ideology of the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes and to transform education, literature and art and all other parts of the superstructure that do not correspond to the socialist economic base, so as to facilitate the consolidation and development of the socialist system.'⁷⁷

In his infinite wisdom Souren Bose wrote: 'There can be no revolution without a revolutionary authority.' He coined a ridiculous slogan. He said: 'Our slogan is: *Internationallly*, we must follow Chairman Mao, Vice-Chairman Lin Piao and the great, glorious and correct Communist Party of China as well as implement the world lessons of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution; nationally, we must be loyal to Chairman Mao, Vice-Chairman Lin Piao and the Communist Party of China and must fully accept the revolutionary authority of the leadership of Comrade Charu Majumdar.'⁷⁸ (True to his character, Souren did not know that Mao Tse Tung had rejected the Soviet revisionist idea of a patriarchal party, a leader party, and asserted that all Communist parties were equal.) The 'revolutionary authority' of Charu Majumdar was invented in order to stifle all criticism of his belief and policies.

Satyanarain Singh came in February 1970 to Calcutta to arrange Charu Majumdar's visit to Bihar to attend the state conference of the Party unit there.

On our way to his shelter I asked – as requested by Souren – Satyanarain's opinion about the latter's article. He answered that it was all right but there was one omission: Charu Majumdar's successor as 'revolutionary authority' was not mentioned in the article. It seemed to me Satyanarain regretted that Souren had made a mistake by not mentioning him as Charu Majumdar's successor as the 'revolutionary authority.' Later, we shall have occasions to return to this 'revolutionary authority'.

The Decisions of the February Meeting of the AICCCR

The AICCCR met on February 7–8, 1969. The Andhra Committee was represented by Kola Venkaiah; also present was the erstwhile secretary of the Madhya Pradesh State Committee of the CPI(M), who had been our host in Bhopal. This meeting adopted two resolutions – both quite important. One was on the Andhra Pradesh State Coordination Committee. The AICCCR bureaucratically and abruptly disaffiliated the Andhra State Coordination Committee. The resolution said that there were 'basic differences' with the APSCC and that 'AICCCR, therefore, decides to part with Andhra Coordination Committee and to treat them as friends and comrades outside AICCCR'. What were the 'basic differences'? First, according to the AICCCR resolution, the Andhra Committee was not loyal to the CPC. Nagi Reddy had issued a press statement on the Kerala (Pulpalli and Tellicherry) incidents, which was at variance with the pronouncements on it by Chinese comrades and did not retract it later. Second, the Andhra Committee gave a 'most lukewarm support', instead of warm support, to the Srikakulam struggle. Third and the last, the Andhra Committee still considered 'Boycott of Elections' as a matter of tactics and not as a matter of strategy. Nagi Reddy did not comply with the AICCCR's resolution and did not resign from the Andhra State Assembly within the specified time.⁷⁹

Kola Venkaiah assured the meeting that Nagi Reddy would soon submit his resignation. One comrade was quite rude and aggressive while most others were not vocal enough but supported the resolution and it was passed in spite of Kola Venkaiah's assurance.

Today it appears to me that we were guilty of closed-doorism, which cost us as well as the Andhra comrades much. Ideologically and politically, the Andhra comrades were very close to us: there was ideological and political agreement between us on fundamental issues. We shall dwell at length on this question, for ultimately it proved to be of great importance.

First, at the Andhra state plenum, held in January 1968, the Andhra comrades rejected by an overwhelming majority the ideological drafts of the CPI(M) central committee adopted at Madurai. Among other things, the two

documents placed by the provincial secretariat at the plenum pointed out how the central leadership of the CPI(M) was striving to establish contacts with the revisionist leaders of the East European countries and how cunningly the CPI(M) leadership avoided mentioning the principal contradiction in the present-day world and introduced in the Party programme the revisionist concept of peaceful transition. In its March 1968 issue, *Liberation* hailed the outcome of the Andhra State Plenum as a powerful blow at the CPI(M) leadership.

Second, at the all-India plenum held at Burdwan in April 1968 by the CPI(M) to discuss their ideological drafts, comrades from Andhra placed an alternative draft. One of the comrades declared: 'Our differences with the CC draft are fundamental, matters involving basic principles...' He condemned the CC draft for refusing 'to expose ruthlessly and mercilessly the revisionist theories and policies of the leadership of the CPSU and their pernicious effects' and for serving as 'an apologia for Soviet revisionism'; for refusing 'to locate the class roots of Soviet revisionism and to see the antagonistic class contradiction between Marxism-Leninism and modern revisionism'; for refusing to treat 'Soviet revisionism as the class enemy' and for 'advocating a policy of united front with Soviet revisionism'; for refusing to recognise 'the leading role of PRC and CPC in the fight against imperialism and Soviet revisionism'; for 'treating the CPC leadership as left sectarian and for adding its own contribution for the spread of anti-China propaganda in our country'; for refusing to see 'the decisive role of the National Liberation Movement in the final disintegration of imperialism' and to recognise 'People's war as the universal form of struggle applicable to all backward countries, including India, in their struggle against imperialism'; for refusing to take 'the criticism of the CPC of our policies and tactics of struggle in a comradely spirit and for advocating a reformist line instead of a revolutionary path of struggle'.

In its report on ideological discussions in the different states, the Polit Bureau bewailed: '...We want to draw the attention of the Plenum delegates to the fact that in spite of the Central Committee decision that the Party Programme and other Central Committee decisions like "New Situation and Our Tasks," etc., are not open for discussion, these comrades (who met at the Andhra State Plenum) challenged all these documents and a discussion was forced in Plenum. We, PB members present at the time, could not stop it when the overwhelming majority of the delegates who had assembled there were in no mood to accept the Party Programme which was based on a certain ideological ...basis and all other Central Committee decisions following the Party Programme were to be changed.'

Condemning the parliamentary path and the UF Governments, a comrade from Andhra said: 'The whole crux of the matter is that instead of basing agrarian revolution as the apex of our work, elections, mass agitation and

limited mass strike struggle, slipping from election to election has become the main apex of our entire party work...instead of using the non-Congress Governments as instruments of struggle, subordination of the mass struggles to the preservation of the UF Government has dominated the whole of our work....In spite of the establishment of non-Congress governments mass struggles have again begun to occur throughout India. Government has been threatening these movements with repression...it is in the context of these rising struggles *Naxalbari Peasant Struggle has acquired a symbolical importance for the path of the Indian revolution....* Our movement in Srikakulam, Nalgonda, Warangal, Khammam are being subjected to intensified repression from landlord-goonda-police combine.... The question of resistance to this repression, the forms of resistance have come to the forefront.'

In *Liberation*, we argued with the Andhra comrades in a comradely manner if it was permissible for the Marxist-Leninists to continue in the same party with those who had violated all principles of Marxism-Leninism and proved to be traitors to revolutionary struggle We suggested to them: '...an open repudiation of them [the CPI(M) revisionist leadership] *ideologically, politically and organisationally*, a decisive break with them, can release fresh revolutionary energy and enthusiasm among our people, sow confusion and despair among revisionists and neo-revisionists, and hasten their doom.'⁸⁰

Before the May 1968 meeting of the AICCCR, Charu Majumdar took me aside and said that Nagi Reddy and others were senior and experienced comrades and that we could not overlook their errors and we should not be soft in our attitude to their mistakes.

Sushital Roychoudhuri had gone to Burdwan to meet the leading comrades of Andhra. Kola Venkaiah gave him drafts of their two documents, marked one of them and said that we could publish one of them if we so desired. We announced in the May issue of *Liberation* that the special enlarged June 1968 issue of *Liberation* would carry 'Full Text of the Alternative Ideological Draft of the Andhra Comrades' [placed at the Burdwan plenum of the CPI(M).] Unfortunately, there were objections and the draft had to be published separately but not in *Liberation*, with a note by me written as a comrade, which concluded with the appeal contained in the second declaration of the AICCCR to all revolutionaries to unite. But Charu Majumdar implicitly criticised them in his article 'The Indian People's Democratic Revolution', the Bengali original of which was published in *Deshabrati* on May 16, 1968. He wrote: 'not a single person attending the Burdwan plenum broke away from revisionist traitors'.

In fact, the Andhra comrades wanted to unite with us. Kola Venkaiah came to Calcutta on their behalf in 1968. They wanted to thrash out certain differences before joining us. Once Asit Sen and I met Kola Venkaiah. He

raised certain points, two of which were: first, boycott of elections should be a tactical slogan and not a strategic slogan (today I think they were right); second, how could the Soviet Union be social-imperialist when finance capital had not emerged there?

According to Asit Sen, Panchadi Krishnamurthy came with a letter from Nagi Reddy to Sushital Roychoudhuri. Attached to that letter, there was a copy of a resolution adopted by the APSCC. It 'warmly hailed', to quote Asit Sen, 'the historic revolutionary role of Naxalbari and urged all the revolutionaries throughout the country to come into the organisational fold of AICCCR.'⁸¹ It was not wrong if the Andhra comrades took a little time to put their own house in order before uniting with us.

The AICCCR resolution, disaffiliating the Andhra State Coordination Committee, said: 'AICCCR should henceforth treat the Andhra Committee as friends and comrades outside the coordination and should try to maintain non-antagonistic relation with them.'⁸² But this promise was violated without any further delay. Charu Majumdar went to Andhra, met some comrades there and formed, by March 6, 1969, a new Andhra State Coordination Committee,⁸³ which would no doubt be a rival to the other Committee. And then criticism of Nagi Reddy and others appeared in our literature.

After the disaffiliation, Nagi Reddy and his associates renamed their Committee as Andhra Pradesh Revolutionary Communist Committee and adopted an 'Immediate Programme' at a convention held in April 1969.⁸⁴ If one goes through it, one will find that there was no *basic* ideological and political difference between them and us. The only difference is that in their immediate programme there was an attempt at a concrete analysis of the concrete conditions in the different regions of Andhra. On the other hand, our writings lacked concreteness and were subjective. Take, for instance, 'Srikakulam - Will it be the Yenan of India?' The objective conditions that could lead one to raise such a question and predict that Srikakulam was going to be the Yenan of India were hardly mentioned and analysed. And, as in Naxalbari, the Andhra comrades of the APRCC put emphasis on the mass line, on the importance of mass organisations and mass movements. They also pointed out the necessity of giving both political education and military training to activists. They raised the slogan 'Support the Srikakulam armed struggle' and said that they would learn from the Srikakulam experience and pass on their own experiences to the Srikakulam comrades.

It is my belief that the severance of relations with the Andhra comrades hurt us as well as them. The AICCCR and the Andhra Committee represented the two most important revolutionary forces in India at the time. Our unity would have added to the strength of the revolutionary forces, not only

organisationally but also politically. If we adopted what Mao Tse Tung advised communists to do -- the party committee system -- and had the mutual exchange of experiences and views, we might have got rid of many of the erroneous ideas which ultimately proved disastrous.

These comrades were more mature and more experienced than we were. (Some of them had the experience of the Telangana armed struggle.) Regarding our potential allies as adversaries meant tremendous losses for the revolutionary forces.

One may remember Nagi Reddy's theoretical work *India Mortgaged, A Marxist-Leninist Appraisal*. It was an attempt at a comprehensive study of the political economy of semi-colonial and semi-feudal India. Before Nagi Reddy, no attempt was made by communist revolutionaries to substantiate with facts and arguments our assertion that the Indian big bourgeoisie was comprador. With all its limitations, his book was a pioneering effort.

It is true that a few of our comrades had misgivings about some leaders of the Andhra group. *People's Democracy*, the organ of the CPI(M), published in its issue of March 17, 1968 the following lines alleged to be from Pulla Reddy's letter of August 8, 1967 to the CC of CPI(M):

'We must demarcate ourselves, and demarcate sharply from the Chinese Communist Party on this question -- especially on the character of the Government, estimation of the present situation, participation in the non-Congress Governments, their [the Chinese] tactless statements on Naxalbari peasant struggles, etc., and firmly stand on the position of the party programme.'

Srikakulam comrades also accused Pulla Reddy of having opposed China. According to them, DV Rao, who had been a member of the CC of the CPI(M), had supported the CPI(M)'s draft on ideological issues at the Madurai session of its CC.⁶⁵

But it appears that these Andhra leaders had completely changed their views by the time the Andhra plenum was held. They challenged the CPI(M) Programme itself and rejected the CC's ideological draft as a revisionist document. They unequivocally declared that their differences with the CPI(M) were basic, fundamental, that there was an antagonistic class contradiction between Marxism-Leninism and modern revisionism and that they upheld Naxalbari as showing the path of the Indian revolution. There might still exist differences between them and us on minor points. On their behalf two drafts, not one, were submitted at the Burdwan plenum. (Kola Venkaiah later said that the draft that we had published was not the one they had wanted us to publish. They had desired us to publish the other one). Yet the points of agreement that existed between the AICCCR and the Andhra comrades were enough to cement our unity; whatever differences there were

with some of them could be resolved through debates and discussions. If contradictions with some of them proved antagonistic, there might then be the parting of ways with them. The disaffiliation of the Andhra Committee, who represented the overwhelming majority of comrades of Andhra, was a blunder and the manner in which the possibility of maintaining friendly and comradely relations with them later was wasted was quite unfortunate.

Our task was to unite with all those with whom it was possible to unite and to mobilise all the forces that could be mobilised for the cause of revolution. We failed to fulfil our task.

The other resolution 'It is Time to Form the Party' was adopted unanimously. It noted that since the formation of the AICCCR, peasant struggles had broken out in Srikakulam, Mushahari and Lakhimpur Kheri; there was the revolt in Kerala; the *Adivasis* rose in revolt in Chotanagpur; and the national liberation struggles of the Nagas and the Mizos had made remarkable progress. The resolution stated that revolutionary committees from Assam to Maharashtra had united under the banner of the AICCCR and that this body had served as an indispensable link in the process of Party formation. It was time to form the Party, for without a revolutionary Party there could be no revolution. It was necessary to build an all-India Party, a centre recognised by all revolutionaries, in order to analyse and assess the experiences of the peasant struggles that were breaking out, to make generalisations and draw appropriate lessons in order to lead these struggles along the correct line. It was also necessary to impose revolutionary discipline to raise the struggles to a higher level. There would surely be contradictions within the Party; contradictions would always be there. It was by resolving contradictions and fighting alien trends that the Party would grow and develop. A revolutionary Party was the need of the hour: composed of revolutionary cadres, such a Party would lead the People's Democratic Revolution to victory, carry 'it forward to the completion of the Socialist Revolution' and help 'to bring about the total collapse of world imperialism and revisionism.'⁸⁶

It may be noted that, unfortunately, neither before nor after the formation of the Party, any of our struggles was analysed and assessed and appropriate lessons drawn for the guidance of comrades by the AICCCR or by the Party leadership.

At this time, Charu Majumdar also wrote an article entitled 'Why Must We Form the Party Now?' Besides other things, he said that in the absence of a Party, revolutionary authority could not grow and there could be no revolutionary discipline. He said that 'international leadership has been reminding us time and again of the importance of building up a Party'. We do not know the basis of this statement. We know that Mao Tse Tung held

that the communists of every country should decide its own line and policies independently. Majumdar said that the AICCCR had fulfilled its task but in this new era, it was imperative for the Indian revolutionaries to build the Party to shoulder new tasks. Majumdar said: 'The dream the two young men dreamed in 1848 will be fulfilled at the end of the twentieth century. For mankind this twentieth century will bring a new promise - the promise of communism.' It seems that he looked forward to the advent of communism by the end of the twentieth century as the Chinese article 'Confession in an Impasse' had predicted. He stated that there would be contradictions within the Party. It was by fighting against revisionism in the old and new forms and by resolving contradictions that the Party would grow stronger.⁸⁷

Charu Majumdar was entrusted with the responsibility of drafting the political resolution and Shiv Kumar Misra with that of drafting the organisational resolution. Both were to be placed at the next meeting of the AICCCR to be held from April 19-22, and were to be finalised after discussion at the meeting. They would form the basis on which the Party would be formed.

Some member suggested that Charu Majumdar should bring Kanu Sanyal to the next meeting, to which he replied that in that case he would have to bring Souren Bose also. This was agreed to. One does not know why Souren was preferred to a comrade like Jangal Santal. Souren did not take part in the Naxalbari struggle; he was in Siliguri then.

With the benefit of hindsight, today it appears to me that there could be a better method of forming the Party. What happened is that the AICCCR dissolved itself to become the Party. No doubt, with the formation of the Party a new wave of hope and enthusiasm spread. The decision to form the party was hailed by the CPC. Yet I think a great opportunity was lost. The AICCCR had been formed on the initiative of West Bengal comrades who invited comrades from other states who had come out with their support for the Naxalbari struggle. The most encouraging support, which the Peking Radio, gave was an important factor in uniting the comrades who organised the AICCCR. Yet there were other groups and committees with whom it was possible to unite if closed-doorism was rejected. As a step to building the Party, the proper course would have been if the February 1969 meeting of the AICCCR had decided to convene a Convention of the representatives of the committees and groups and individuals - all those with whom we had broad agreement on ideological and political issues and who had already started some work among the masses. All relevant political issues could be raised and thrashed out through intensive discussions and debates. Those who had common minimum agreement regarding the line and policies would form the party.

In February 1969, the AICCCR could have decided to bring out a forum for exchange of views and experiences and to which every interested person and group would be invited to contribute. The forum could have published the drafts of the Political and Organisational Resolutions prepared by the AICCCR comrades. In our country theoretical weakness, a very weak grasp of Marxism-Leninism, is a common malady. Besides, the grasp over the past history of our country and the present conditions of the different classes and their inter-relations is also weak. The forum could have encouraged the comrades to overcome these weaknesses. Organised discussions and debates through the forum and at the Convention would be very helpful.

A regular forum and a convention might have broadened the scope for unity among communist revolutionaries and equipped the new party to be able to fight better both right and 'left' opportunism.

My Visit to Siliguri and Naxalbari

At the February meeting of the AICCCR, I told Charu Majumdar that I wanted to go to Naxalbari. He said, 'Come to my place, I shall take you there.' I went to his house at Siliguri in early April. I stayed there for three days and two nights. On one of these days, Charu Majumdar read out to me the following words from Lin Piao's *Long Live the Victory of People's War*: 'Guerrilla warfare is the only way to mobilise and apply the whole strength of the people against the enemy'. These words were to be frequently quoted in party writings later. Those words are part of a sentence, not the whole sentence. Majumdar did not read the rest of the sentence. He did not say why he read out those words or anything about their significance. The entire sentence (and the context) would have proved his conception of guerrilla warfare to be incorrect. We shall return to this later.

On one of the evenings Majumdar took me in Dr KN Chatterjee's car to the Naxalbari area. The reputed physician of North Bengal and Charu Majumdar's close friend, took his seat beside the driver. When the car had reached the appointed place, quite far from the Siliguri town, Majumdar and I got down. The car went back with the doctor. By the roadside there was a hut. In the yard in front of it, a small number of people had gathered. When we went there we saw Kanu Sanyal (who had just been released from prison) and Souren Bose. The others were mostly peasants. It was a small meeting which Charu Majumdar proceeded to address. After his speech, Kanu Sanyal put some questions to which Charu Majumdar replied; nobody else spoke. Then the meeting was over. In the meantime, the car had returned without the doctor. We got into the car and returned to Siliguri.

My purpose was not served. I could not walk around the place; nor could I talk to the peasants in the villages. I saw Naxalbari not in daylight but in the darkness of the night.

The next afternoon when I was getting ready to leave for Calcutta, Kanu Sanyal and Souren Bose came to Charu Majumdar's place. I could hear him telling Kanu, 'You are indulging in revisionist practice'.

In the meantime, after the February meeting of the AICCCR, Charu Majumdar went to Andhra and set up a new Andhra State Coordination Committee with comrades loyal to the AICCCR. Returning from Andhra, he wrote the article 'Srikakulam - Will it be the Yenan of India?' He said: 'India's Yenan will be created here.'⁸⁸ It was a mere fantasy; no scientific analysis of concrete conditions helped him make such a prediction. He had not the patience to conduct a serious study and investigation and make a concrete analysis of conditions, which, according to Lenin, is 'the living soul of Marxism'. There could be no comparison between Yenan and Srikakulam. From 1937 to some time before the country-wide victory in 1949 of China's democratic revolution, Yenan was its headquarters. By 1937 the CPC, with its base in Shensi-Kansu-Ninghsia, three provinces in the north-west of China, had an army of 90,000 men and had humbled the pride of Chiang Kai-Shek and forced him to surrender to its demands for an end to civil war, joint resistance to Japan, etc.⁸⁹ When Charu Majumdar wrote the article, we had no Party, no army and no united front.

The last meeting of the AICCCR was on April 19-22, 1969, as scheduled. (Souren Bose with his characteristic irresponsibility has written that 'the date of the meeting of the Coordination Committee was April 25' and that 'it was decided to announce April 22, as the date on which the Party was formed as this day marked Lenin's birth-centenary though the Party was formed on 27 April'.)⁹⁰ His book, where this appears, contains many howlers. We shall cite here one specimen. Souren has written: '...during even the non-violent non-cooperation movement led by Gandhi, armed peasants seized power in *Chauri-Chaura* in Uttar Pradesh, then United Provinces.'⁹¹ This book is strewn with such pearls of wisdom.

The last AICCCR meeting was attended for the first time by RP Sharaf (from Jammu and Kashmir), Kanu Sanyal, Panchadi Krishnamurthy, Tejeswar Rao and Souren Bose. Charu Majumdar's draft political resolution was placed at the meeting. After some discussion a few members - SK Misra, RP Sharaf and Satyanarain Singh - wanted to place an alternative draft. It was taken up for discussion on the last day of the meeting. Though it was getting late, there was no agreement. I said that there was no conflict between the two drafts: that they were rather complementary and could be knitted together to form one resolution.

As many members were anxious to leave, they welcomed the proposal, though Charu Majumdar did not relish the idea and was sarcastic at my expense. I was entrusted with the task of carrying out the knitting business. It

was resolved that I would submit the new draft with necessary adjustments to Charu Majumdar for his approval and make changes according to his instructions and that the final draft, when approved by him, would be deemed as adopted by the AICCCR and published as its resolution. When I prepared the new draft based on the two earlier drafts and showed it to Charu Majumdar, he did not dislike it, suggested no changes, seemed quite satisfied with it and was no longer sarcastic. The first half of the resolution as published (sections 'Indian Society: Semi-colonial and Semi-feudal' and 'Excellent Revolutionary Situation') was the draft prepared by Shiv Kumar Misra, Satyanarain Singh and RP Sharaf with minor changes and the second half - rather, a little more than a half - (sections 'Struggle between the Two Lines in the Party' and 'Task before the Revolutionary Party') was the English version of Charu Majumdar's original draft in Bengali without any changes.⁹²

As noted before, Shiv Kumar Misra had been entrusted with the task of preparing the Organisational Resolution. It was placed at the meeting and adopted with few changes. Today it appears that the resolution belittles the importance of the class struggles of the workers and of other urban struggles like those of the youth and students, the great importance of which to agrarian revolution in India was ignored.⁹³

Charu Majumdar suggested 'Communist Party of India (Maoist)' as the name of the Party while most others wanted the name to be 'Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)', and this name was adopted. There was no voting on the issue.

A Central Organising Committee of the new Party was formed with Charu Majumdar as the general secretary. The other members were: (1) Sushital Roychoudhuri, (2) Shiv Kumar Misra, (3) Kanu Sanyal, (4) Saroj Datta, (5) Satyanarain Singh, (6) Panchadi Krishnamurthy, (7) RP Sharaf, (8) L Appu, (9) Souren Bose and (10) Tejeswar Rao.

It was decided to announce the formation of the party at the next May day rally on the Sahid Minar Maidan, Calcutta. It was also decided that Kanu Sanyal would make the announcement and that Asit Sen would be requested to preside at the rally. After these decisions were taken unanimously, the AICCCR dissolved itself.

Later, in April 1973, Kanu Sanyal wrote in 'More about Naxalbari': '...this careerist clique were successful in their conspiracy to make this split [in the ranks of Communist Revolutionaries] permanent by hurriedly forming the CPI(M-L), basing on the slogans: "guerrilla warfare is the only way" and "individual annihilation is the only strategy and tactic."⁹⁴ No such slogan as 'individual annihilation is the only strategy and tactic' was raised at this stage and does not find a place in either the political resolution or in the resolution

on organisation. Whom did Kanu Sanyal mean by the 'careerist clique'? Dipak Biswas and his friends, who wrote *Lessons of Naxalbari* ('Naxalbari Shiksha') had nothing to do with the formation of the Party or with the formation of the AICCCR earlier. The only person from the Siliguri subdivision who was associated with the decision to form the party at the AICCCR's meeting in February 1969 was Charu Majumdar. If by the 'clique' Sanyal meant Charu Majumdar, it was gross abuse. Charu Majumdar had his positive achievements: without him there would not have been any Naxalbari. No doubt, the policies that he formulated mainly from sometime in 1969 were erroneous. The question is: who was right? Charu Majumdar did not hesitate to impose on himself any strain for what he considered to be of benefit to the Party and to make the supreme sacrifice. Can he be labelled as a 'political careerist'? I believe Kanu Sanyal did not mean him: his accusation that 'the clique of political careerists' hastily formed the CPI(M-L) and split the ranks of communist revolutionaries is not based on facts. Kanu Sanyal himself and Souren Bose had something to do with the Party formation, for they took part in the last meeting of the AICCCR, which finalised the formation of the Party. Did Kanu Sanyal speak a word at the meeting about the incorrectness of the step that was being taken? And it was Kanu Sanyal who announced the formation of the Party at the May Day rally.

I was pleasantly surprised when on the evening of April 30, 1969, Kanu Sanyal, accompanied by Souren Bose, came to my place. Before, and while taking our meals together, I asked him and learnt from him about, besides other things, his visit to China. Mao Tsetung had seen him and his companions before they left China for India. He had asked them if Chinese comrades had taught them anything. Kanu Sanyal enthusiastically replied that they had learnt many things from Chinese comrades. Mao Tsetung advised them to forget all those things when they would cross the border. He asked them to study well the conditions in India and formulate the Party line independently.

Like other great Marxists, Mao Tsetung held that in this vast world every country had some features common to other countries as well as some specific features of its own. And it was for the Communist Party of every country to formulate its line independently and to integrate the truths of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete conditions of its country. During a talk with representatives of some Latin American Communist Parties on September 25, 1956, Mao said: 'The experience of the Chinese revolution, that is, building rural base areas, encircling the cities from the countryside and finally seizing the cities, may not be wholly applicable to many of your countries, though it can serve for your reference. I beg to advise you not to transplant Chinese experience mechanically. The experience of any foreign country can serve only for reference and must not be regarded as dogma. The universal truth of Marxism-Leninism and the concrete conditions of your own countries - the two must be integrated.'⁹⁵

The Calcutta District Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries announced that they would hold a rally on May Day at the Shahid Minar Maidan. It was later announced that the rally would be addressed by Kanu Sanyal. Another meeting on the Brigade Parade Ground was convened for the day by, among others, the CPI(M).

On May 1, at about 4.30 PM a long procession from south Calcutta was attacked by CPI(M) hoodlums on the Chowringhee Road near the venue of the rally. Then the hoodlums armed, with lathis, iron rods and bombs advanced towards the Sahid Minar Maidan to create terror and disrupt our rally. There was coordination between their plan and the United Front Government police under the Home Minister Jyoti Basu. The police fired numerous teargas shells, all aimed at our comrades who fought heroically to defend the rally. In its issue of May 3, *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (an important Calcutta daily, now extinct) reported: 'The Police also fired several rounds of tear gas shells, all directed towards the Naxalites.... Supporters of the Brigade Parade Ground rally were seen breaking the loudspeakers installed at the Naxalites' meeting ground at the foot of the Monument.' This fight between our young comrades and the CPI(M) hoodlums was ominous as it marked the beginning of a fight in Calcutta and the suburbs that continued for months.

The vast gathering was forced by the numerous teargas shells to move away for a short while: only comrades on the high rostrum continued to raise slogans. The people returned immediately when Kanu Sanyal came and stood on the rostrum. He received a tumultuous ovation. The meeting started in perfect calm with Asit Sen as president soon after 5.30 PM.

After the Party formation, State Organising Committees were set up in different states, Charu Majumdar went to Siliguri. It was decided that he would return to Calcutta in July (or August) and go underground. He came back by plane. The police threw a net around him, as we shall see later.

Visit to Albania

In the meantime, in February 1969, *Liberation* received a letter from *Zeri-i-Popullit*, the central organ of the Party of Labour of Albania, inviting two representatives of *Liberation* to visit that country. They offered to pay our travelling expenses. It was decided that Sushital Roychoudhuri and I would go to Albania but he refused. I decided to ask Anil Datta, who had attended the inaugural meeting of the AICCCR and contributed some articles to *Liberation* to accompany me. He was then staying in Berne, Switzerland. There was delay in obtaining my passport, for I did not apply for it through the regular channels. I did not want the police to know of my going to a

foreign country. So I wanted my application for a passport to be countersigned by a government officer of or above a particular rank. There was delay in obtaining this precious signature.

On completion of other formalities, I left for London on my way to Albania (via Rome) on September 25, 1969 with a letter of introduction from Sushital Roychoudhuri. On the way, I stopped at Zurich and went to Berne to meet Anil. He said that he would meet me in London in a few days. I was a guest in London of William and Ranjana Ash of the Communist Party of Britain. Ranjana was the daughter of Dr Nirmal Siddhanta, a former Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University. William Ash informed the Albanian authorities and arranged a date for our visit to that country.

During my first stay in London I met many Indian workers, mainly Punjabi. They took me to east London and Southall, where they had their homes. I found much enthusiasm among them: they had high hopes about the struggle going on in India. We also became guests of J Joshi, general secretary of the Indian Workers Association, in Birmingham. There was a small meeting at Joshi's place, where I spoke on the struggle in India. William and Ranjana Ash also attended the meeting. The Indian workers in London gave us presents as tokens of love for the revolutionaries in India.

While in London, we went to the Highgate village, where in the local cemetery, there is the grave of Karl Marx with his bust on it. On our way to Birmingham we visited Stratford-on-Avon where we saw Shakespeare's house and museum.

At the airport in Tirana, capital of Albania, we were welcomed by the editor of *Zeri-i-Popullit* and several representatives of the Party of Labour of Albania. They took us to a State Guest House where we were to stay. It was a two-storeyed building, the best of all the state guest houses.

Before lunch, we sat in the drawing room. The Albanians asked us what we would like to see. I mentioned factories, agricultural farms, educational institutions, including those for children, cultural institutions, etc., and whatever else they would like us to see. I told them that we would like to meet the comrades in the Chinese and South Vietnamese embassies and the Indonesian comrades who had been expelled from the Soviet Union some time after the coup staged by the CIA and the counter-revolutionary generals headed by Suharto and Nasution in Indonesia in 1965, the coup which led to the massacre of about one million communists and other progressives. Setting an example of 'unity in action' with the US imperialists, the revisionist Soviet Union helped the counter-revolutionary regime with military and economic aid. And Indonesian comrades who had been in the Soviet Union were driven out and they came to Albania.

Because of my inexperience in such matters, I did not mention the name of Enver Hoxa in particular, whom we would like to see.

An Albanian interpreter, a young man, stayed in the guest house. Usually a party functionary and the interpreter would travel with us to different parts of Albania. In Tirana we were taken to the office of the Party of Labour. Comrade Behar Stylla, a CC member who was in charge of maintaining relations with communist parties of other countries and, later Albanian ambassador to China, welcomed us. While wishing success to our struggle he wanted to know more about it. I made a report on our struggle. At the end he spoke briefly on their struggle against the fascists during the Second World War and the liberation of Albania in November 1944. I asked him about the possibility of attack on China jointly by the USA and the USSR or singly by either of them. He replied that China was so strong, so immensely strong, that they would not dare attack her. We were also invited by *Zeri-i-Popullit*. After formal greetings and my report, the old editor-in-chief of the journal spoke of urban guerrilla struggles during the occupation of Albania by the fascists. According to him, the Albanian guerrillas first launched their struggle in Tirana and then moved to rural areas.

Albania is dotted with hills; it is hills, hills everywhere. This hilly country on the Adriatic with Yugoslavia and Greece as the nearest neighbours was an agricultural country before the end of the Second World War. Albanians are a race of ancient people in the Balkans, older than the Slavs. For some centuries Albania was enslaved by Turkey. It became independent in the twentieth century but was invaded by Italy in 1939 and remained under the occupation, first of Italy and then of Nazi Germany almost till the end of 1944. With the liberation of the country it became a People's Democratic Republic. Stalin's influence was dominant on this country. When Khrushchev came to power, Albania opposed him and his revisionist theories. It remained outside the Soviet bloc and had close relations with the People's Republic of China. A significant minority of the Albanians lived in areas which became part of Yugoslavia. After the end of the world war, Yugoslavia sought to annex Albania.

It was with Soviet help that Albania set up a few industrial and other enterprises after becoming a People's Republic. (Previously it had hardly any factory or industry.) We visited one of them – the Stalin Textile Combine near Tirana. The manager here told us that the differences in pay between the managerial staff and the workers were being narrowed down. He took us around the factory. I noticed that the relations between the manager and the workers were unlike those between the boss and subordinates in a capitalist enterprise.

The development of industry really took place after 1960 with Chinese help. In a large factory, the Mao Tse Tung Textile Combine, which was a gift

of the Chinese, the director resembled a capitalist boss. After the formal greetings were over, he stepped out of his office and went ahead of us and the Party's district functionary. As he approached, workers sprang to attention. We heard that he was the general secretary of the Albanian Federation of Trade Unions and a friend of Enver Hoxa. In that factory we saw some Chinese instructors who seemed very modest and self-effacing.

Many industrial enterprises were being built with Chinese help. With China's support, a metallurgical factory and a complex of thirteen other industries were being established. We saw a fertilizer factory set up by the Chinese. We were told in Britain on our return that one could hardly find such modern and automatic fertilizer factories in Britain or in other countries of eastern Europe.

When we went to Albania, feverish construction was going on there. A vast Mao Tse Tung hydroelectric works was being built. The Albanian comrades told us that every region, every hamlet, every home would be lit up with electricity on its completion. Voluntary labour was being offered by the Albanian youth in building railways and roads on the hill sides, etc.

From Tirana we were taken to different parts of the country. First, we visited Skodra in the north. Beyond Skodra it was Yugoslavia – those areas where the Albanian minority lived. Our Albanian companions expressed great resentment towards Yugoslavia. We went to Elbasan in central Albania where we found teams of young men rendering voluntary labour to build their country. We were taken to Korcha in the south, a few miles from Greece, on the anniversary of the day the German hordes withdrew in October 1944 and the area was liberated. Our coats were pinned with badges of the two brigades of Albanian soldiers who liberated Korcha. Anil Dutt wanted Mao badges. The Party's district functionary, who was with us, tried to find them but could not. A few Chinese comrades who were also guests at the celebration ultimately offered two Mao badges. One of them is still with me as a memento. There was a small rostrum where we and the Chinese comrades stood. There was a march past by the two brigades. While we were returning after the ceremony was over, we saw sweeper women, quite handsome, pointing to us with Mao badges pinned to our coats along with the other badges, and saying rather loudly to one another with smiling faces – 'Kinnesé', 'Kinnesé'. They mistook us for Chinese: they had not seen Indians before. It seemed that their attitude towards China was one of love and respect.

We came back to Tirana. Then we were taken to Vlora, superbly beautiful. It is on the Adriatic coast. We stayed in a state guest house on the top of a hillock. A road climbed up to the house, along which a car could move. On both sides of the road there were young fruit trees with branches bent down under the burden of fruits. The house overlooked the Adriatic. On a moonlit night one could see an island of a rock somewhat distant from the coast. And

far beyond was invisible Italy. The water of the Adriatic here was slightly greenish and transparent. There were small rocks out in the sea but quite near the coast. If, sitting on a rock, one dropped a coin or something else into the water, one could see it on the sands below.

We went to a barber shop for a hair-cut. A young barber moved from one chair to another to have a good look at us. Without being asked, he offered us two small Mao badges.

From Vlora we returned to Tirana via Duress, a sea resort. Religion was banned in Albania. We were told that churches and mosques had been closed down because religious heads had been disloyal and treacherous to Albania and had acted as agents of hostile powers like Italy. On our way back we visited a museum where exhibits, proofs of the treachery and immorality of religious heads were displayed.

We saw factories, state farms, orchards, schools, kindergartens, youth labour camps, the Tirana University, etc. We went to the Chinese embassy in Tirana. In the absence of the Chinese ambassador, we met the Charge d'Affaires. He was warm and informal. He had taken part in China's war of liberation. We also went to the embassy of South Vietnam. As the ambassador was absent, it was the Charge d'Affaires again who received us. He was also very warm and informal. When we criticised the Soviet policy during our talks, the young interpreter immediately stopped and did not interpret our words. The Indonesian comrades who were staying in Albania – driven out of the Soviet Union – met us on two days at the guest house. We had long discussions with them. There was an air of sadness about them. They gave us an article in English for publication in *Liberation*. On my return this article entitled 'The Soviet Modern Revisionists are the sworn enemies of the Indonesian People' by Marzuki was published in *Liberation* (December 1969) and a translation of it in *Deshabrati*.

We stayed in Albania for three weeks. The people would be celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the liberation of Albania towards the end of November. They told us that comrades from other countries, including Latin American countries, would be coming to attend the celebrations. They urged us to prolong our stay till the end of November. The prior decision was that we would leave on November 5. They even offered to bear all expenses if we wanted to visit western Europe and return for the celebrations. But I felt homesick. I had been away from India for more than a month; I was anxious to know what was happening there. I politely refused to comply with their requests.

A few days before we left, we told the Albanians that we would like to meet Enver Hoxa. The next day, the Party functionary who accompanied us to most of the places we visited let us know that Hoxa was too busy to see us.

The day before we left Albania, Hysni Kapo, a member of the politbureau of the Albanian Party of Labour, who had recently returned from China, met us. He was accompanied by Behar Stylla. Hysni Kapo spoke of their experience during the anti-fascist struggle, on the importance of alliance with other groups, the importance of trade unions and urban struggles. Among other things, I asked him if there was any possibility of a war against China. He said that there was.

It appeared to me that the Albanian society was differentiated into an elite and the common people. The Albanian leadership did not believe that contradiction existed within the Party - between two lines and between the leadership and the led - nor that there was any contradiction between the Party and the people. They seemed to hold the view that if there was any contradiction, it should be stifled. It was for the Party ranks to submit to the elite leadership who would lead them from socialism to communism.

We were not taken to any Albanian home. While returning from a place, we expressed our desire to see the home of an Albanian and meet the family members. We were taken to a house where we met and had a talk with the head of the family in the sitting room. No other member came out, not even his wife. He told us about his children and their careers. During the previous regime, he had lived in poverty. But under the present regime his sons were well placed. He said nothing about his or their politics. It was a dull talk, after which we left. Our interpreter or the Party functionary who accompanied us during our visits to different places never talked about politics or showed the least interest in what was happening in India. They seemed completely apolitical. The functionary took upon himself the task of impressing upon us the material progress achieved by Albania. While travelling by car through valleys studded with low, distant, green hills, he would all the time reel out the names and numbers of trees of each kind planted by the government on every hill. He would not allow me a moment to look around and enjoy the lovely scenery. No educative talk of this sort was necessary to convince us that Albania had made good progress since her liberation, that abject poverty seemed to have disappeared, though the people might not ooze prosperity, which was not expected.

It seemed the Albanian elite had some reservations about Mao Tsetung as *the greatest* Marxist-Leninist of the time. But from the few glimpses that I had, I felt that there was abundant love and respect for China among the ordinary people.

As I stayed in Albania only for three weeks, I cannot be too sure about the correctness of my impressions.

Leaving Albania on November 5, Anil Datta and I had to go back to England for some unavoidable reasons. On our way to England from Rome, we stopped for one day at Florence and visited the two museums housing

wonderful exhibits of Renaissance painting and sculpture. In the evening we left for Milan. The next evening, we took the plane for England. On our way back home we stopped at Paris for about a day. Reaching Paris in the afternoon, we went across the Seine and booked a room in a cheap hotel. We hurried to meet Marxist-Leninist comrades known to Anil but could not find them, for their office was closed. It was already evening. We saw the Notre Dame Cathedral and, next day, the Eiffel Tower. We could not enter the Louvre which was closed; we walked in the gardens only and saw some pieces of sculpture. We had lunch at a French comrade's place. He was Anil's acquaintance. At the lunch his Lebanese wife and sister-in-law were present. We had long discussions on the political movements in France, especially about the groups of comrades inspired by the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China. Only the year before, the historic students' revolt in France had taken place and the workers had joined them despite the machinations of the revisionist Communist Party of France. Our host took us in his car to our hotel. On the way we saw the Sorbonne from the outside. I collected my things from the hotel and we left in his car for the airport. I left for home; Anil stayed. I reached home in about mid-November.

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2. See Ho Kan-chi, *A History of the Modern Chinese Revolution (1919-1956)*, pp. 144-45 and p.157, note 2.
3. Charu Majumdar and Souren Bose, Letter to Editor, *Deshabrati*, July 13, 1967.
4. M. Sen (Ed.), *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, VIII (1951-1956), p.495.
5. *Ibid*, pp.554, 556.
6. *Ibid*, p.551.
7. *Ibid*, p.546.
8. Promode Dasgupta, Preface to Ashok Mukherjee (pen-name of Samar Mukherjee), *Sangshodhanbader Biruddhe Samgram O Sankirnatabadi Jhonk* (in Bengali), p.6
9. Marcus Franda, *Radical Politics in West Bengal*, pp.65-66.
10. In our writings of those days, there is frequent use of the word 'neo-revisionist'. We characterised the CPI(M) leadership as 'neo-revisionist' and the CPI leadership as revisionist.
11. 'U.P. Comrades Revolt against the Neo-Revisionist Leading Clique', *Liberation*, I, No. 1 (November 1967), pp.100-03; see also pp.103-05.
12. See *Liberation*, I, No. 4 (February 1968), pp.78-9.
13. See *ibid*, pp.79-81.

14. See *ibid.*, I, No. 5 (March 1968), pp.93-4.
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16. *Ibid.*, I, No. 4 (February 1968), p.78.
17. *Ibid.*, I, No. 7 (May 1968), pp.93-96.
18. *Ibid.*, p.96.
19. *Ibid.*, p.93 and *ibid.*, I, No. 8 (June 1968), pp.124-34.
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21. *Ibid.*, I, No. 5 (March 1968), pp.92-93.
22. See report of the meeting, *Deshabrati*, November 16, 1967.
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26. Khokan Majumdar, *Bharater Booke Basanter Bajra Nirghosh* (Bengali), pp.38-40.
27. See *Liberation*, II, No. 5 (March 1969), pp.3-7.
28. Lenin, 'The Collapse of the Second International', CW, XXI, pp.252-53-Lenin's emphasis.
29. See M Basavapunniah, 'Reply to Nanda', *People's Democracy*, February 6, 1968; P. Sundarayya, "Sundarayya Answers Nanda," *ibid.*, September 19, 1965.
30. *Liberation*, I, No. 6 (April 1968), pp.7-8.
31. *Ibid.*, p.10.
32. *The Statesman*, March 20, 1968.
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34. 'Resolution on Elections', *ibid.*, pp.29-30.
35. Lenin, 'The State and Revolution', CW, XXV, pp.427-28.
36. Lenin, 'Greetings to Italian, French and German Communists', CW, XXX, p.58 - Lenin's emphasis.
37. Lenin, 'Marxism and Revisionism', CW, XV, p.36.
38. *Ibid.*, p.37.
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40. *Ibid.*, p.99.
41. *Ibid.*, p.58 - Lenin's emphasis.
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43. Lenin, 'The Second Congress of the Communist International', *ibid.*, p.254.
44. Lenin, 'One of the Fundamental Questions of the Revolution', CW, XXV, p.373.
45. Lenin, 'The State and Revolution', CW, XXV, p.429.
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56. See *Liberation*, II, No. 1 (November 1968), pp. 22-27 for the texts of the resolutions.
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85. See Srikakulam District Committee's "Report on Peasants' Armed Struggle in Srikakulam", *Liberation*, II, no.7, p.64.
86. *Liberation*, II, No. 5 (March 1969), pp.3-7.
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89. See Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, 1972 ed. pp.301 ff.
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93. See 'Resolution on Party Organisation', *The Historic Turning-Point: A Liberation Anthology*, I, p.397.
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The Struggle Spreads

When I was in Albania, peasant struggles were breaking out in different parts of India. Naxalbari's influence spread very fast. Objective conditions and the impact of Naxalbari gave rise to some spontaneous movements for crops and land, while other struggles were led by communist revolutionaries. There were waves of struggle by peasants, workers, students, office employees, teachers, etc. Comrades of the AICCCR were active in existing mass organisations as well as building new ones.

Chotanagpur (now part of Jharkhand)

In the Ranchi district Adivasi peasants, who are among the most exploited and oppressed people of India, rose up against the age-old oppression by the landlords, money lenders and government officials. In a clash with the militant Adivasis armed with bows and arrows, the police shot dead 14 peasants at the Chiri village in the Ranchi district. Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, banning meetings, etc., was promulgated throughout the district. Many leading organisers of the struggle were detained under the notorious Preventive Detention Act and centres for target shooting were opened by the army authorities in populated areas. But the brave Adivasi peasants refused to be cowed into submission. Nor were they deceived by the Jana Sangh, that raised the slogan of Christian vs non-Christian or by opportunists like Jaipal Singh.

Greeting the struggle of the Adivasis, the Bihar State Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries wrote that in their struggle to establish their own state, they would have to wage a protracted struggle and that in this struggle the militant working class of Chotanagpur would be their most reliable ally.¹

Late at night on October 27, according to a newspaper report, 8,000 Adivasi militants stormed the Chainpur police station in the Gumia sub-division of the Ranchi district in order to rescue their comrades who had been arrested. They set fire to the police station. The police fired on the Adivasis and killed at least three of them and injured eleven, some of them very seriously.²

The Birsa Seva Dal, the militant organisation of the Adivasis of Chotanagpur, formed in 1968, issued a call for the boycott of mid-term elections scheduled to take place in Bihar in February 1969. It called upon the Adivasi people to build up revolutionary struggles to overthrow the existing regime. In the course of the six months since June, the police fired on the Adivasis three times – at Chiri, Raidih and Chainpur.³

The CPI(M-L) activists worked in Ranchi, Singhbhum, Palamau, Dhanbad and other districts of Chotanagpur. A number of class enemies were punished with death by squads of peasant guerrillas in these districts.

In March 1971, a band of guerrillas from Midnapur made a daring attack on the Rupaskundi police picket in Singhbhum, close to the West Bengal border and seized nine rifles and 105 rounds of bullets after annihilating two policemen and injuring three others.

Among the towns of Chotanagpur that were rocked by militant struggles of workers, youths and students were Ranchi, Jamshedpur and Dhanbad. An industrial strike by workers in Jamshedpur in 1970 developed into a political struggle. Several annihilations of police officers, police informers and others took place. Students and youths raided educational institutions as a part of their struggle against the colonial system of education, destroyed in a big park a big bronze statue of JN Tata, the big comprador who had founded the house of the Tatas, and attacked government offices and other institutions like the Gandhi Peace Foundation. By January 1971, more than 200 arrests were made in the steel town. A joint combing operation was launched by the police and the Central Reserve Police Force.

One can have some idea of police brutality from the following incident. In mid-March, 1971 the police fired even on undertrial prisoners in the court *hajal* in Dhanbad.

Bihar

Led by communist revolutionaries, a peasant struggle soon broke out in about 12 villages of the Mushahari block in Muzaffarpur in Bihar. (Several districts of Bihar were afterwards split, each into two or more districts.) In April 1968, the peasants of a village seized the lands of a landlord. The tyrant *zamindar* organised an attack on the peasants with 300 armed goondas. In the fight with the peasants, the landlord's men were defeated and fled with many casualties

among them. This roused the peasants of many villages who came under the influence of their mass organisation, Kisan Samgram Samiti. A police camp was set up in the area. The land of another landlord was seized. The police party came, arrested a peasant and tortured him. The peasants of several villages gathered, clashed with the police and rescued the arrested peasant. The peasants knew that their struggle was a political struggle – not only for land.¹

A report in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of December 19, 1968 stated that 500 armed peasants led by suspected communist revolutionaries entered the house of a prosperous landlord in a village in Khagaria in the Monghyr district and took away more than 600 bags of harvested paddy and several other bags of foodgrains and fertilisers. The report also said that the communist revolutionaries were active on the Darbhanga, Saharsa and Khagaria border for some time. It added that the above incident was the third of its kind.²

The Bihar State Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries adopted a resolution which was a review of the Mushahari struggle. Among other things, it said that the peasant struggle in Mushahari showed that 'the path blazed by Naxalbari is the only correct path that Indian people must follow for their emancipation from the bondage of imperialism, feudalism and comprador-bureaucrat capital'. The resolution stated: 'The struggle of the Mushahari peasantry was initiated on economic issues but it could take a qualitative leap towards political struggle because by continuous propaganda the mass line of agrarian revolution came to grip not only the minds of the revolutionary cadres but also a substantial section of the mass of poor and landless peasantry...'. 'The State Coordination Committee', the resolution added, 'considers it necessary to point out that the task of further consolidation of the Kisan Samgram Samiti and organizing new ones must be under taken...'.³

The armed peasant struggle spread to Paru, Baribaj and Katra thana areas in the Muzaffarpur district on its border with Champaran. The peasants roused by the communist revolutionaries seized the land of some landlords and forcibly harvested the crops of several landlords' land. They organised their mass organisations Kisan Samgram Samitis and Gram Raksha Dals (Village Defence Groups). They built guerrilla squads, the aims of which were: '(i) to annihilate the landlords and their goondas; (ii) to seize forcibly the properties of rich people; and (iii) to establish people's rule in the villages.' The landlords and their men launched a counter-attack with guns and other weapons on April 17, 1969, but they faced resistance from the peasants. One notorious goonda was killed in the clash and the others fled.⁴

On the night of June 18, 1969, a peasant guerrilla squad raided the house of a notorious landlord in the Baruraj police station area, who had helped the

police to suppress the peasants' struggle. The guerrillas annihilated the landlord and his two accomplices, confiscated all the legal deeds and documents concerning the land and the ornaments pawned to him by peasants. After the raid, the deeds and documents were burnt and the ornaments were returned to the peasants who had pawned them. Again, on the night of July 5, 1969, peasant guerrillas raided the house of the landlord of Narsinghpur in the Mushahari block. The landlord had helped the police to arrest and torture militant peasants. Here two class enemies were killed and twelve others, who were the landlord's men, were injured. No guerrilla could be arrested.⁸ Severe repression was launched by the Bihar Military Police, the Central Reserve Police, a paramilitary outfit and so on. Despite all the repression, the struggle continued unabated and spilled over other districts of North Bihar – Darbhanga, Champaran, Monghyr and Purnea. The struggle raged in Surajgarha in south Monghyr where a total of 6,000 troops were rushed to combat it.

As an instance of the impact of the struggle I shall refer to an experience of mine. I knew a young Bihari darwan in the Bhowanipur area in Calcutta, who was our sympathiser. In 1969, after some annihilations of notorious landlords and moneylenders in the Lakshmi Sarai area in the Monghyr district, many cobblers (*mucchis*) working in Calcutta but with homes in that area became excited. They conveyed their desire to see me through that young Bihari. I told him that my flat might be watched by the police ; so not more than two or three of them should come. On the appointed day, as I opened the door, they entered my room one by one – ten or twelve of them. They told me their tales of oppression in the villages. They expressed their desire to return to their villages to take part in the struggle. They said that one or two of their friends had already left.

Jaya Prakash Narayan rushed to Muzaffarpur, set up his camp there and, to save the feudals, tried to sell the fraud of *bhoodan* (land-gift). Revisionist parties and Jana Sangh cooperated with the armed forces of the enemy.

In Central Bihar, CPI(M-L) cadres were active in Patna, Gaya and Bhojpur districts.

In 1969 and after, the peasant struggle in Muzaffarpur faced reverses when the reactionary government launched a campaign of severe repression. Instead of appraising the situation objectively and carrying forward mass economic and political struggle in wider and wider areas and organising the masses with a view to launching people's war at an appropriate time, the mass line was abandoned and the line of annihilation of class enemies by small secret squads was implemented. Wrong lessons were learnt from the experience of the earlier phase of the Mushahari struggle.⁹ When severe repression was perpetrated by

the reactionary government in Mushahari, the struggle – it was declared – had reached the second phase, the stage of 'armed guerrilla struggle'¹⁰. The article further said: 'Now the peasant struggle had reached the stage when it could be developed only by guerrilla struggle.'¹¹ Guerrilla struggle was wrongly equated with annihilation of class enemies by small secret squads. "We took a long period of nine months in launching the first guerrilla attack.... Repeated pressure of the State Coordination Committee and, later on, the pressure of the local comrades induced the district leadership to go back to the people.'¹² 'Guerrilla struggle' was sought to be imposed when the movement was on the decline and when the district leadership was quite reluctant to adopt the tactic. This sort of 'left' opportunism caused immense harm to the Party and the struggle.

Uttar Pradesh

After Naxalbari, the entire Terai region stretching from the Nainital district to Bahraich in Uttar Pradesh resounded with the call of the peasants' struggle for land – and power. In the early months of 1968, the peasants of the Palia area in the Lakhimpur district under the leadership of the AICCCR unit began their struggle and there was an upsurge locally in May and June 1968. When the armed goondas of the landlords suffered defeat at the hands of the peasants who seized the foodgrains and took away the guns of the landlords, a large force of 3000 policemen was rushed into the area. The villages became camps of the Provincial Armed Constabulary for about two weeks. Then for three months these camps were maintained. At this time, the peasants had no mass organisation, the need for which they felt. The revolutionary peasant committees which the communist revolutionaries tried to set up did not function well either.

The communist revolutionaries realised that the big farmers who owned hundreds and thousands of acres of land, goondas, moneylenders and corrupt political leaders were their enemies. But those farmers who did not engage in feudal forms of exploitation and were sympathetic to the struggle should be treated leniently. The landless and poor peasants, constituting 70 per cent of the population, were the main force of the revolution. All the poor people – the Tharus and Raisikhs, tribal people who were original inhabitants of the once forested vast Terai region, most of whom were driven away to Nepal – people from eastern districts of Uttar Pradesh who cleared the forests, lured by promises of the government and then deceived, and poor Punjabis migrating to this area – were allies. The peasants owning 10 to 20 acres of land, who were oppressed by big farmers, landlords and moneylenders, were also our allies. The communist revolutionaries decided not only to fight for land but also to wage

a mass struggle against payment of land rent, a share of the produce to the landlord, and repayment of debts to moneylenders.

One big, notorious farmer fled, giving his land to another fellow on a share cropping basis. Others were trying to do the same. But communist revolutionaries declared that they would not recognise such arrangements and any right of those to whom lands were transferred on such basis and that all the lands of such landlords belonged to the peasants.

The struggle spread to 30 villages in the Lakhimpur district and gradually to Nainital, Unnao and Moradabad districts. It was a mass struggle to recover land from the usurpers.¹³ The communist revolutionaries felt that a revolutionary Party, mass organisations and more organised batches of fighters were required to wage the struggle of the people.¹⁴

On the eve of the mid-term election in 1969, a 'boycott election' campaign was launched. In the Mau area of Azamgarh district, where it received wide support, the Congress, the Dangeites and the Jana Sangh sought the help of the police to suppress the 'Naxalites' and employed *goonda* gangs to attack them.

Soon the mass line was abandoned and guerrilla squads were formed. Notorious landlords, usurers and police agents were punished with death and, in many cases, their guns and movable properties were seized.

The squad actions in the Palia area of Lakhimpur suffered a setback by the middle of 1970, but several annihilations of class enemies were carried out in the Terai regions of Nainital and Moradabad and in the Unnao-Hardoi (central) region. A few actions took place in Gorakhpur, Jaunpur and Azamgarh and later, in Banda and Allahabad districts. But the campaign of annihilation of class enemies by small, secret bands was suppressed by the reactionary government.

Kerala

In the early hours of November 22, 1968 a group of over 300 workers, peasants, students and intellectuals, armed with homemade weapons, unsuccessfully attempted a raid on the main police station at Tellicherry in north Malabar. Then, on November 24, a large number of revolutionary peasants with country-made guns, bombs and other weapons attacked the police wireless station at Pulpalli in the midst of the hills and forests of Waynad and destroyed it. Then they raided landed estates and sought to rouse the local peasantry. Waynad was the home of tribesmen – the Kuricheans and others. But their land was grabbed by British planters and men from the plains. The tribesmen were reduced to penury.

The peasant revolutionaries who destroyed the police wireless station at Pulpalli, unaware that the raid at Tellicherry had failed, waited in vain in the near-by forests for their comrades from Tellicherry. Helicopters and police

dogs were used by the government, led by Namboodiripad (the CPI(M) chieftain), to hunt them down and they all were arrested. There was a reign of terror. The peasant revolutionaries were victims of severe torture.

Ramji wrote in *Frontier* on December 14, 1968: 'A regular manhunt is going on in these areas to serve the interests of anti-communist vested interests in the name of re-establishing law and order. The police raid houses at will at all times night and day, beat up inmates, molest women and play the role of goondas with a sense of unbridled licence. The young college student, Ajitha, was terribly molested after she was caught.'¹⁵ 'Namboodiripad's armed marauders were not enough; P Sundaraya threatened that his party would, if necessary, field its 35,000-strong volunteer corps to fight the "extremists".'¹⁶

K. Ajitha, daughter of Kunnikal Narayanan, was brutally maltreated. Even her mother, Mandakini Narayanan, was severely beaten. Kunnikal Narayanan had attended the first two meetings of the AICCCR and contributed under the pseudonym 'An Indian Communist' to the first issue of *Liberation* (November 1967) his long article, 'The 'Marxist Leadership in its true colours', exposing and denouncing the revisionist CPI(M). Even after what Ajitha had gone through, she wrote in 1969 in a letter to the Editor of *Frontier*: 'The people of Kerala have chosen a new path to solve the innumerable problems that crush life out of them inch by inch. This is the path opened in 1967 by the revolutionary peasants of Naxalbari and the proletarian revolutionaries of the Darjeeling district - the path of peasants' armed struggle... The Indian peasants and the proletarian revolutionaries will march forward along the path opened by Naxalbari, the path of armed struggle.'¹⁷ And Kunnikal Narayanan wrote to *Frontier*: 'What made these young workers and peasants and young intellectuals resort to armed action? The problems they faced under a century old imperialist and feudal oppressive rule, of the total pauperisation of the peasantry and the mounting destitution of the workers in the beedi, handloom and other industries were beyond solution by "peaceful" parliamentary methods.' Referring to the worldwide revolutionary struggles, he stated: 'It was in these conditions that the first spring thunder broke out in India, in Naxalbari, heralding the new course that the Indian people were to take for their liberation....Tellichery-Pulpalli failed in its objective, but for the time being. But did it gain something precious? Yes, it did. It has spread a new message, the message of Naxalbari in terms of flesh and blood, in the terms of concrete action.'¹⁸

A message dated January 3, 1969 stated that several hundred agricultural labourers, armed with weapons and led by communist revolutionaries, occupied about six square miles of paddy fields in Alleppy district.

Under the leadership of A Verghese, who worked among the Kurichians in Waynad, several annihilations were carried out. Later, this comrade was

captured, sadistically tortured and then killed. The Kuricheans – men and women – who were fighting for a better life were subjected to severe repression – torture, rape, etc. There were many guerrilla actions in Cannanore, Kottayam and Palghat districts in 1970. When Charu Majumder toured Kerala in the latter part of 1969, he held meetings with large numbers of comrades in the districts of Kerala.

The 'Marxist' led the UF government or the 'mini-front' government – its successor in 1970 – led by the CPI and supported by the Indira Congress acted as the spearhead of reaction's vicious offensive against the working people. Let me cite one more instance. The strike of Kerala's transport workers and employees in December 1968 and the manner in which the 'Marxist' Transport Minister was handling it are an ironic comment on the sham Marxists' loyalty to the interests of the working class and their claim of using their ministry to strengthen the democratic struggles of the working people. The CPI(M) Congress, meeting at Ernakulam, described the strike in which 95 per cent of the workers and employees were participating, as unjustified. Kerala's 'Marxist' Transport Minister was accused by the secretary of the Kerala Council of the CPI (a constituent of the United Front) of adopting 'despicable bourgeois tactics' to break the strike. Striking workers were being indiscriminately arrested, and black legs were being recruited in large numbers.¹⁹

In 1989, I met at Trichur (now Trissur) Mandakini Narayanan, a lady with her head unbowed, with her spirit unbroken. This meeting was one of the finest prizes I received for undertaking to go to Kerala, though in ill health, from far distant Calcutta.

Punjab

Under the leadership of communist revolutionaries, landless peasants and agricultural workers seized the land of a notorious landlord and usurer as well as the *nazaul* land (government-owned land) of two villages of Bhatinda district. Two days after, the villages were encircled by the district police who, unable to capture the militant peasants, harassed others. The Revolutionary Peasant Committees of Punjab decided to launch a struggle to seize the *nazaul* lands and the lands of wicked usurers and landlords during the next harvest.

By April 1969, the struggle spread to Ropar, Sangrur and Hoshiarpur districts. Waves of peasant revolt shook Ropar. On the riverbed of the Sutlej stood the 5,000 acres-wide Birla farm. The Birlas had misappropriated custodian property, *shamlat* (collective land) and the land of poor and middle peasants of four villages. Low wages were paid to agricultural workers of the farm. Despite pre-election promises, the United Front government, which included 'Marxists' and Dangeites, refused to distribute the land among

agricultural workers. Communist revolutionaries tirelessly carried on mass work and propaganda through *baithak* meetings and won the confidence of the masses by integrating themselves with the people. The strike struggle launched by the Birla Farm Khet Majdoor Union could not be suppressed in spite of severe repression and was victorious. Even with the help of the police, the management could not bring labour from outside. An armed unit of peasants attacked the Chamkaur Sahib police station on April 30, and shot at the police officer guilty of many atrocities. The peasant upsurge forced the landlord-led government to cancel the lease of the Birla Farm.

Guerrilla units were formed in different districts and successful guerrilla actions took place from about the middle of 1969 – in Basantpur (Kangra) and in all the districts of Punjab except Amritsar. Besides class enemies, police officers and police agents were eliminated; their guns and rifles were seized.

The National Herald of Allahabad reported on August 20, 1969: 'The activities of the Naxalites are on the increase in the region (Patiala division).... Later the Naxalites allegedly shot General Balwant Singh (retired GOC-in-C, Patiala State Army) dead when he was at his Patiala farm.'

On September 23, 1971, a guerrilla unit of landless and poor peasants snatched away 4 rifles and 200 rounds of ammunition by destroying a police post in the Sangrur district. A guerrilla zone emerged in Bhatinda-Sangrur. Small police pickets were withdrawn from villages and small police parties dared not enter them. Many villages in this region were free from class enemies and police agents. Revolutionary peasant committees were set up in villages to guide their affairs and win over classes with which it was possible to unite. Armed struggle also engulfed Hoshiarpur, Ropar, Patiala and Ludhiana. Revolutionary committees of poor and landless peasants functioned in many villages.

In a review of the armed peasant struggle in Punjab, dated December 7, 1971, the Punjab State Committee of the CPI(M-L) stated that their struggle suffered from some shortcomings, which formed the minor aspect of their activities. Among the shortcomings mentioned were lack of an analytical approach, 'Left' sectarianism and 'revolutionary impetuosity'. Before concluding, the review stated: '*...we must resolutely carry on class struggle, that is, the line of annihilation of class enemies and the arms snatching campaigns*'... and thus build up the People's Liberation Army, seize power locally and set up Revolutionary Committees.²⁰

A significant feature of the situation was that an upsurge was taking place among the youth and students of Punjab. They were spurning both the revisionist parties and were rallying behind the communist revolutionaries. Whenever a fellow student, a teacher or a non-teaching employee was

persecuted by the police as a 'Naxalite', the students of the educational institution – a University, College or high school – went on strike or organised other protest demonstrations to secure his release. Sometimes the students of other institutions too went on solidarity strikes. This happened throughout Punjab. Statues of Gandhi were broken by them in several places.

At the initial stage, the students rallied under the banner of the Punjab Students Union, which was indirectly under the influence of revolutionary students. Under its banner a militant student struggle was fought throughout Punjab in 1968–9. One student was shot dead and many injured by the police. But later, under the directive of the CPI(M-L), these students left their unions and some of them went to work among the basic masses. The revolutionary peasant struggle received wide support from the students.

The revolutionary struggle had great influence on Punjabi literature and infused a revolutionary fervour into Punjabi poetry. In October 1971, about 500 Punjabi writers organised a procession in Jullunder to mark their protest against police atrocities on the people. Aping the British masters, the lackeys of the imperialists set up an 'interrogation centre' – a kind of torture chamber – in Amritsar.

The influence of the struggle in Punjab spread to Haryana where some ideological and political work was done. Some issues of the Hindi edition of *Lok Yuddh*, the Party organ, were published.

The influence also spread to Himachal Pradesh where two big, wicked landlords were annihilated.

Andhra Pradesh

The Agency parts of Parvatipuram, Palakonda and Patapatnam taluks and of the Kottur sub-taluk in Srikakulam were the homes of two tribes – Jatapu and Savara – called 'Girijans', the hill people. They constituted more than 90 per cent of the population. The people from the plains, non-Girijans, came to these areas and emerged as big exploiters – landlords, moneylenders and merchants. Among the Girijans there were one or two landlords and a few rich and middle peasants. The rest were poor peasants owning some dry land and agricultural workers. Driven out of fertile lands, the Girijans had to depend on *podu* (shifting) cultivation on the slopes of the hills and were victims of the exploitation by forest officials, besides landlords, usurers, revenue officials and the police.

As in Naxalbari, so in Srikakulam, dedicated communists like Vempatapu Satyanarayana and Adivatla Kailasham had been working among the Girijans for some years and the area saw many democratic movements. The Girijans were organised in the Girijan Samgham and their women in the Mahila Samgham. Between 1967 and May 1968, a mass movement against landlord

and usurious exploitation and against oppression by forest officials and the police swept through the agency areas of the district. In October 1967, two peasants were murdered by the landlords and, early in 1968, the Special Armed Police set up camps and started their offensive. Besides arresting 1500 peasants and murdering two, they committed numerous atrocities.

The crucial questions before the district leadership were: whether armed resistance against the marauders should be organised and, if so, how to begin with the same? After a discussion with Charu Majumdar towards the end of October 1968, to which we have referred, the district leadership drew up a programme of forming guerrilla squads, carrying out annihilations of select class enemies and confiscating their properties, and of putting up armed resistance against the armed forces of the state in the guerrilla way.

Though several squads were formed and given some training in the handling of the gun, the squads – except one – were not active in the beginning. But the situation changed after December 20, 1968. On that day, the police came to the Aviri area to make raids. The people climbed up the hills and called the people of the neighbouring villages. When the police and about two hundred landlords approached them, the peasants aimed arrows and hurled stones at them from hill tops, while hiding themselves behind boulders. The police climbed down and fled firing at random which caused no injury to any Girijan. One circle inspector and two police constables were killed. This mass action roused the enthusiasm of the people. At the persuasion of the communist revolutionaries, guerrilla groups became active and raided many landlord homes. But they were not secret from the people. In their 'actions' they were accompanied by large numbers of people, even hundreds. Besides, their object was not merely to annihilate landlords but also to confiscate their property and distribute it among peasants and to annul all the debts of the peasants. These actions had a mass character. The revolutionary peasants also had their mass organisation. It is the people who brought food to the guerrillas.²¹ Soon there was a high tide in the struggle. Landlords fled to towns, forest officials dared not enter the villages, and the Ryotanga Samgram Samiti was set up as the embryo of people's power in the villages. The flames of struggle reached the plains of Srikakulam and spread to Krishna and Visakhapatnam and as far as Khammam and Warangal in Telangana. On July 5, 1969, *The Statesman* (Calcutta) bewailed: 'From the salwood forests of Srikakulam to the scattered mountains of Telangana, Naxalite bands have of late been very active. Raids on houses of landlords and the ambushing of police patrols have become regular features.... Today Naxalites are active in at least 19 taluks spread over Visakhapatnam, east and west Godavari, Krishna, Guntur, Nellore, Anantpur, Warangal and Khammam districts.' Red political power emerged in 300 villages of Srikakulam (though for a brief period). Here no forest or revenue official or panchayat

Samiti man could enter and the area was administered by the Ryotanga Samgram Samiti, the revolutionary mass organisation of the peasants. It had a membership of 8,000 in the Agency area alone. The people's court settled disputes among the people and held trials of the enemies captured. In his report on Srikakulam, VM Nair wrote in *The Statesman* on December 10, 1969:

It is nevertheless true that about 100 square miles of mountainous terrain, deep in the interior of Parvatipuram Agency, is under the virtual control of the Naxalites. The Andhra Pradesh Government has failed to extend its sway to this red area. The Naxalites have been collecting 'taxes' from the tribals living there.

The armed struggle reached Karimnagar also. In some parts of Khammam guerrilla actions were carried out by activists of the Revolutionary Communist Committee (led by Nagi Reddy and his associates).

The task of a guerrilla squad was not merely to annihilate class enemies and their defenders but also to visit different villages, discuss with the peasants their problems, propagate revolutionary politics, organise them and set up village defence squads.²²

In October 1969, a large CRP force of 12,000 men encircled the Red Zone of Srikakulam and launched a ruthless offensive. They made mass arrests and murdered most of the leading comrades whom they were able to capture. The enemy had learnt his lessons from the US imperialists and set up concentration camps on the model of those built by the US in south Vietnam. Encounters with the enemy's armed forces became an everyday affair for the guerrillas, who carried out many successful attacks against CRP men. There was a central guerrilla squad as the nucleus of the People's Army yet to be organised. Girijan peasants devised ingenious ways of escaping from concentration camps. Under the leadership of Vempatapu Satyanarayana, the brave fighters broke through the encirclement at the end of January 1970. During those four months of 'encirclement and suppression', 26 CRP men were liquidated and many wounded. The number of police officers and men annihilated by the end of November 1969 was 84. The Srikakulam unit of the CPI(M-L), which had been formed in the meantime, also suffered great losses when in November and early December 1969, some leading comrades, like Dr Bhaskar Rao, Subbarao Panigrahi, Thamada Ganapathy, Ramesh Sahu and Nirmala Krishnamurthy, and several brave peasant guerrillas became martyrs. Earlier, towards the end of May 1969, as we noted before, Panchadi Krishnamurthy and six other comrades had been captured one night and shot dead.

Despite indiscriminate arrests, shootings, burning of villages and setting up CRP camps everywhere, successful guerrilla actions against class enemies and police agents continued and the struggle spread to new areas.

On the night of July 10-11, 1970, Vempatapu Satyanarayana, who had become a legend in his lifetime, and his close associate, Adivatla Kailasham, were captured and murdered by the police in cold blood. This was a big blow to the Srikakulam struggle. By March 1971, most of the Party leaders of Andhra had become martyrs, and a few were in prison.

According to the minutes of the meeting of the central organising committee, which went on for four days in early January 1970, a report on Srikakulam was placed at it. (Those minutes are very valuable if one wants to trace the history of our movement. But unfortunately they are lost to us. A copy of the minutes of the early January, 1970 meeting of the Central Organising Committee was given to me by comrade Kola Venkaiah at his daughter's place in Janakpuri in New Delhi. My impression is, these minutes were copied from the original minutes by Andhra comrades attending the COC meeting and seized by the the police when they captured those leaders. Photocopies of them were prepared by the Andhra police and given to the accused in the Parvatipuram Conspiracy Case, the main legal case against revolutionary comrades of Andhra. But the trial was not held because of political reasons. My photocopy of the minutes of the January meeting was signed by an investigating police officer as a 'true copy' and dated September 8, 1971). It is a fairly lengthy report but there is no mention of the name of the comrade who spoke on behalf of Andhra at the meeting. Appala Suri and Nagbhusan Patnaik attended the meeting on behalf of the Srikakulam Committee. Nagbhusan joined the COC after the arrest of Tejeswar Rao on November 28, 1969. The report says that, as a part of the political campaign against the communist revolutionaries, the police 'recently even published a pamphlet carrying a tale that a pamphlet has been issued by the cadres' who severely criticised and demanded the removal of the central leadership. 'Fight against Revisionism', dated March 1971, which was claimed to have been written by the Andhra State Organising Committee, referred to a 'Sixteen pages pamphlet distributed in the name of the Srikakulam District Committee of the party.'²³ The State Organising Committee, which pointed out the different aspects of the Party line, the subject of the Srikakulam Committee's criticism, rejected this document as a thoroughly revisionist one and upheld Charu Majumdar's line. It said: 'The State Committee firmly maintains that we can advance the cause of revolution only by discarding wrong thinking and by carrying on the battle of annihilation on a wide scale relying firmly on the landless and poor peasants.'²⁴ It appears that a number of Srikakulam comrades had issued a pamphlet criticizing the central leadership and the Party line.

The report on Srikakulam placed at the January 1970 meeting of COC stated that 'More than half of the leadership of the district has been shot dead (by the police).' More would follow. But there was no discussion of the report on Andhra. No thought was spared by the COC to find out the causes of the

reverses in Andhra. The COC made no attempt to find out if the Party line was right or wrong, if it was inexorably leading the Srikakulam struggle towards a tragic end. Ignoring the actual conditions in Srikakulam, Charu Majumdar gave the call to the Srikakulam comrades to build the People's Army and a liberated base area. Satyanarain Singh did not want to fall behind and, as the report of the COC meeting in January 1970 states, he too, gave the same instructions. This was the call of the COC when the Srikakulam struggle, thanks to the old line, awaited complete liquidation.

Orissa

The Koraput district, the home of tribal people, is contiguous to Srikakulam and was roused by the struggle there. The Gudem-Rampa rebellion of 1922-4 in the vast agency areas of Visakhapatnam and Godavari districts, which was led by the Alluri Sita Rama Raju and which took the British about two years to put down, had also spilled over Koraput.

Orissa's Chief Minister informed the Orissa Legislative Assembly at the end of February 1969 that 32 cells of communist revolutionaries were active in the forest area of Gunupur subdivision of Koraput. The *adivasis* were organizing themselves to seize the property of the notorious moneylenders and landlords and had already seized the property of some of them. They attacked police parties which went to arrest them and injured some policemen. By February 1969, 79 peasants were arrested.

The struggle spread to the Ganjam district also. Groups were formed and together with armed peasants, they successfully launched attacks on some wicked usurers and landlords who had usurped their lands by fraudulent methods and exploited them cruelly.

Assam

The message of Naxalbari reached Assam. Units of the AICCCR and then of the CPI(M-L) were formed which carried on the ideological-political struggle. Secret squads were set up and some assassinations of notorious landlords were carried out in the districts of Goalpara, Kamrup and Darrang.

A correspondent wrote in the *Frontier* of June 12, 1971: 'Yes, young men in Assam have started thinking on different lines and the movement is fast striking roots in this apparently quiet and complacent state....the existence of the CPI(M-L) is being strongly felt in several parts of lower Assam, particularly in Kamrup and Goalpara. And throughout the state, small dedicated groups are functioning....'

Souren Bose had been sent early in 1969 to Assam to take charge of Party affairs. Vaskar Nandi, who had been working in Assam, said about Bose that

he hardly went out of Guwahati (Assam's capital) and did not miss any film and was an entirely worthless man.²⁵

Tripura

Communist revolutionaries, most of whom were students, went into the interior of certain parts of Tripura and propagated Mao Tsetung thought and the message of Naxalbari. There was some awakening among poor and landless peasants; secret groups of them carried out some annihilations. A correspondent wrote in the *Frontier* of March 6, 1971: 'The CPI(M-L) has drawn most of its activists from among the students. With this the general trend of student activism can be said to have radically changed.... If there is anything left for the Government of Tripura to bother about, it is the growing CPI(M-L) activities in the State.'

But stray annihilations could not and did not pose any real danger to the existing regime.

West Bengal

West Bengal had never before, except in 1945-46, seen such tempestuous struggles as the one that raged from 1966 to 1971 in rural and urban areas. We have referred to the food movement and other struggles of 1966. Militant peasant struggles also broke out in 1967 in several areas like Debra in Midnapur. They were the birthpangs of a new order. But they did not yield what was fervently expected by the militant fighters. They differed from Naxalbari in this respect that they did not have the revolutionary orientation of Naxalbari. They had faith in the CPI(M), which they mistook for a revolutionary communist party. But the main enemy of theirs and their struggles proved to be the CPI(M) and the United Front coalition government, of which the CPI(M) was the largest component. Despite them and all their machinations, people's struggles continued to surge forward. Peasants in different districts - Midnapur (Debra and some other places), 24 Parganas, Howrah and so on - waged militant struggles for land and crops and higher wages during the very days of the Naxalbari struggle. Not a day passed when there were no clashes between *jotedars* and peasants and between peasants and the police. During the harvesting season, West Bengal's countryside was dotted with police camps. Between March and September 1967, according to a newspaper report, some 1,20,000 workers lost their jobs in West Bengal and 269 mills and factories were under lock-out. The workers invented a new weapon - *gherao* - to enforce their demands. But there was no link between these struggles and Naxalbari.

Debra and Gopiballavpur

Debra had a history of militant peasant struggles for its immediate demands. These struggles made the people class conscious. They raided the houses and shops of black marketeers and hoarders; and agricultural labourers rose to demand higher wages. When the *jotedars* threatened with guns, the peasants responded with bows and arrows. Their experience taught them that armed resistance was necessary against an armed enemy. Then, what began with partial demands came to be directed against the entire *jotedari* system – against the entire *jotedar* class. To cow the peasants into submission, the UF government set up a police camp in the area. The peasants refused to relent. The struggle assumed a more serious character during the harvesting season. Among the leaders of the struggle were Bhabadeb Mondal and Gunadhar Murmu.

All this was happening during the Naxalbari uprising and after. Police repression became very severe; warrants of arrest were issued against all comrades and many peasants who were forced to court arrest and to fight court cases or to go underground. On the last day in office in 1967 the UF government promulgated Section 144, banning meetings, demonstrations and the carrying of weapons. Peasant leaders felt that no advance in the struggle was possible without adopting the tactics of annihilating class enemies in the villages.

In the meantime, they had established contacts with those comrades who were working in Gopiballavpur in Midnapur near its border with Singhbhum. Students belonging to the Presidency Consolidation Group had come to the villages of Gopiballavpur to work for agrarian revolution. They heard the Peking radio broadcast of Kanu Sanyal's 'Terai Report', had a joint meeting in March 1969 with comrades of Baharagorah in Singhbhum (contiguous to Gopiballavpur) and decided to join the AICCCR. After the formation of the CPI(M-L), close links were established between comrades of Gopiballavpur and Debra. The report of the struggle in Srikakulam enthused them and they decided to form secret units (which they called guerrilla units) to annihilate class enemies in the villages and the policemen who would come in their defence. Comrades of Gopiballavpur wrote in their report on their struggle in their area: 'The historic report [the report of the struggle in Srikakulam to which we have just referred] placed before us the *great line* for which we were groping for one and half years – the line of starting guerrilla warfare through annihilation of class enemies, laid down by our dear and respected leader Charu Majumdar.'²⁶ Comrades of Debra also wrote in their report: 'When police repression began and section 144 was promulgated, there was no way to carry forward the movement other than by means of guerrilla activity, by forming secret squads and annihilating class enemies.'²⁷

Gopiballavpur started with setting up small secret units and annihilating class enemies in September 1969. Debra and Baharagorah followed suit. During the harvesting season about, 40,000 armed peasants in Gopiballavpur reaped the crop of the big *jotedars*. In the beginning, brave peasants snatched away eight guns from them and the district magistrate took away the other guns from the *jotedars* for fear of their falling into the hands of peasants. The harvesting of crops enthused the peasants, but Charu Majumdar criticised this open mass movement. Usurers were made to return to the peasants the articles they had pawned to them. For some time, the feudal order was demolished and peasant rule was established. The ordinary police failed to prevent these developments.

To restore their rule, the UF government with Jyoti Basu as Home Minister sent 1,200 men of the Eastern Frontier Rifles, a paramilitary outfit, to Gopiballavpur, and 700 such troops to Debra with orders of 'shoot to kill'. And in Baharagorah 500 Bihar Military Police personnel were posted. Besides, there were the ordinary policemen of the three states including Orissa. So, encircled and oppressed by the reactionary forces, the peasants were somewhat demoralized and the 'guerrilla units' lost their initiative.

At this time, Charu Majumdar advised the political leaders and workers to extend their areas of struggle. Instead of remaining confined within the areas in which they were working, the guerrilla units were instructed to move out to other areas, new guerrilla units were to be formed and the area of struggle was to be expanded. The instruction was that at the same time there should be constant political propaganda, the dissemination of Mao Tse Tung thought. Soon the 'guerrilla actions' started taking place in other police station areas - Kharagpur Local, Keshpur and Sankrail in Midnapur - and the Belebera block of Gopiballavpur and in Chakulia adjacent to Baharagorah in Singhbhum. According to the report of the Bengal-Bihar - Orissa Border Region Committee (that is, Gopiballavpur - Debra - Baharagorah - Mayurbhanj Committee of the Party), published in *Deshabrat* on April 23, 1970, the initiative of the peasant masses developed greatly. They were annihilating class enemies in broad daylight and open places. Struggle was also going on in Mayurbhanj in Orissa. There was much optimism among political activists and the peasant masses.

At this stage, Charu Majumdar met the comrades and advised them to launch attacks against the police. There were many police camps in the area. The comrades raided mainly police camps in Bihar. The camp at Rupaskundi in Baharagorah was raided and seven rifles and police uniforms were seized. The police uniforms helped them while raiding other camps. They also raided the police camp at Khairbani in Orissa, close to its border with West Bengal.

These raids were conducted mainly under the leadership of, among others, Lebachand Tudu, a poor young tribal peasant. His wife Koni Tudu also took part in them.

Soon army units spread all over the area. Soldiers were everywhere. Lebachand Tudu was arrested in Kharagpur where he had gone for medical treatment. The struggle received a setback. The Party was isolated from the people. They became passive supporters. They did not want more annihilation of class enemies. The lands that were taken over after assassination of *jotedars* enthused them but they were victims of oppression by the police. Attacks on police camps to Lebachand Tudu, it was the right time to arm the people and also to conduct mass movements for fulfilling the economic demands of the people, while linking them with the ultimate aim of seizure of state power. But these steps were not taken.

Asim Chatterjee wrote to me towards the end of 1970 that Lebachand Tudu had come to Calcutta for medical treatment and wanted me to see him. I went early in January 1971 and met Tudu at the address given by Asim. Tudu told me slowly and in a gentle tone that the leading comrades of Gopiballavpur had left the area and stayed in rented rooms in Kharagpur. That was an indication of their isolation from the peasantry. Though the struggle had suffered a setback, those comrades were claiming in their reports that there was a high tide in the struggle.

At this time, Charu Majumdar was sick of his shelters in Calcutta and wanted Gopiballavpur comrades to arrange better shelters and also look after him. I went, as desired by them, to Kharagpur to meet their representatives. The appointed place was on the right side of the Kharagpur station if one approaches Kharagpur from Howrah. The railway colony is on the left side. I walked for about 25 to 30 minutes to reach the place to meet them. There were several comrades of Gopiballavpur. They expressed their willingness to take charge of Charu Majumdar but on one condition. When under their care and supervision, Charu Majumdar would not be allowed to maintain any link with us or with the rest of the Party. I resented the condition but they were not prepared to relax it. In the meantime, food for lunch came from another house, which, I learnt, was also rented by them.

I came back and reported the matter to Charu Majumdar. He was unwilling to go on that condition. Soon, in May (or June) the Gopiballavpur comrades submitted to the Party centre a document condemning the party line concerning the struggle then raging in East Pakistan. In August 1971, they submitted one more document defining their basic differences with the Party line. We shall return to them later.

Birbhum

Stray annihilations of class enemies were being carried out by secret groups in all districts of West Bengal. Except in areas like Debra, Gopiballavpur and Birbhum and contiguous areas in Murshidabad and Santal Parganas, where annihilations of class enemies were accompanied by mass actions like confiscation of the properties of the class enemies, the masses were not involved and could not be roused and mobilised in struggle. They might support the elimination of hated oppressors, but they remained passive.

In Birbhum, it is the students who were in the forefront of the struggle at the initial stage. The college unions in the Suri Vidyasagar College, Rampurhat College and Hetampur College came under the leadership of our radical students. Some of them went to villages and started working among peasants. They tried to build up mass movements. Movements started to reduce rent and seizure of *Khas* land and land with fictitious names as owners and under the possession of landlords. When it was the decision of the Party leadership to leave mass organisations and refuse to take part in mass movements, the comrades stayed away from mass peasant movements for realisation of the peasants' immediate demands. But the party activists maintained their links with the struggles, which continued without their active participation.

The secretary of the Birbhum District Organising Committee was Sushanta Banerjee. He has claimed in an article by him²⁸ that though he was not a member of the State Organising Committee, he had to attend every meeting of this committee. If my memory does not fail me, I never saw him or knew of him. Banerjee has also claimed that he stayed with Charu Majumdar many times and for many days each time. This claim, like the other claim, is quite dubious. I have come across several people who told me after Charu Majumdar's death that he had taken shelter in their houses. Such claims, made in order to enhance their importance, were quite false.

The district committee was dissolved and a West Bengal-Bihar Border Regional Committee was formed to lead the struggle in the two districts of Murshidabad and Birbhum and in contiguous areas of Santal Parganas with Shyam Sundar Bose, who was a member of the State Committee, as the secretary. *Jotedars* had used firearms to murder a peasant in the Dubrajpur *thana* area and two peasants in the Suri area. These killings of peasants were deeply resented and roused the peasantry of the district of Birbhum where it was possible to build up a strong mass movement. But the Party leadership had abandoned mass organisations and mass movements. Its injunction was to carry on only the campaign of annihilating class enemies and policemen and to disseminate Mao Tsetung Thought, not widely but on a limited scale

necessary for the successful campaign of annihilation. The squads of poor and landless peasants started this campaign in the beginning of 1970, which spread from Bolpur and Suri to the border areas of the Santal Parganas. It further spread to the Sagardighi area in Murshidabad and to Nalhati in Birbhum. The struggle spread over a wide area from Rampurhat, Mayureswar, Ahmadpur to Rajnagar. Annihilations were not indiscriminate: only the most tyrannical class enemies were eliminated after very careful investigation and a public trial, wherever possible. Many *jotedars* were allowed to go unharmed but with warnings. Some were asked to leave the village. When Charu Majumdar issued his call to comrades for seizing firearms of the class enemies and the police, comrades fearlessly carried on a campaign for snatching firearms from class enemies, policemen and even CRP paratroopers to equip the 'guerrillas' with them. The struggle spread to Sagardighi, Jangipur and Jagunji and to the Rajmahal area of the Santal Parganas. A storm of peasant struggle raged throughout the area in the months of May, June and July 1971. The district police was completely immobilised. Attacks on even CRP pickets were made and arms seized. The government deployed the army. In one area of Bolpur 7,500 soldiers and 97 vans were employed for the 'encirclement and suppression' campaign. Even during the military deployment, the snatching of firearms continued.

For some time, there was an administrative vacuum in some areas. Dacoits and other anti-socials took advantage of it and oppressed the peasants. The Party warned them at first and then annihilated two leaders of dacoit gangs and one leader of snatchers.

The organisers met at a conference on July 23, 1971, prepared a report which was full of eulogy for the Party line, especially the line of annihilating the class enemies and policemen. This line was described as a great creative contribution of Charu Majumdar. This report was submitted to the State Committee early in October 1971.

But the tide soon turned. There was a tremendous setback. The army was deployed in every *thana* of the area of struggle. The comrades did not know how to fight the army. Neither the top leadership nor the Regional Committee had formulated a line of how to fight the army successfully. Total ignorance of the military science was one of the weaknesses of the Party. The army went on committing mass murders and created a reign of terror by raiding and destroying houses, even by going to the extent of burning down villages. The biggest peasant struggle led by the CPI(M-L) in Birbhum and contiguous areas met with a disastrous end.

The West Bengal-Bihar Border Regional Committee reviewed their

experience after the setback in a second report which was submitted to the State Committee in March 1972. At that time Dipak Biswas, an ambitious and thoroughly unscrupulous person was the secretary of the committee. Instead of circulating the report together with the Party leadership's reply to it – a practice followed before – Dipak and his associates suppressed it. They did not circulate it even among State Committee Members.

In this report, the Regional Committee criticised the entire Party line after their tragic experience. They confessed that because of their inexperience and immaturity, they had failed earlier to see the negative aspects of the Party line. They also pointed out that the line of class enemy-annihilation did not mobilise the peasants in the struggle. It could mobilise only the adventurous youth who constituted about ten per cent of the peasantry in an area. Many poor peasants gave food and shelter to the 'guerrillas', but they were passive supporters. Some of them considered annihilations as futile and some were afraid of inviting repression on them by such acts.

This report criticised the policy adopted by the Party Congress which declared that the annihilation of class enemies alone could solve all our problems. It criticised our Party's policy as regards mass movements, like harvesting of crops and seizing of lands of the feudals. It also criticised the Party's failure to appreciate the importance of working class struggles and neglect of work on that front. The Party Congress's refusal to see the uneven development of the different regions of the country and instruction to launch a campaign of annihilation everywhere along with the refusal to concentrate on some areas for building them as base areas and to wage a protracted war were subjected to criticism. It said that though in 22 *thanas* of Birbhum and contiguous areas, they had annihilated about 200 class enemies and seized about 200 guns and a few rifles, ultimately they had to face a disastrous setback because of the erroneous line of the Party. The realisation dawned on them too late to avert the disaster despite all the bravery and self-sacrifice of the participants in the struggle. Thus came to an end the last and the biggest peasant struggle led by the Party.

Before concluding their report, the Committee paid its tribute to Comrade Charu Majumdar as the leader of the Naxalbari struggle, who provided leadership in the struggle against right opportunism, who broke a new path – the path of armed struggle for seizure of power rejecting the parliamentary road – and who fought against modern revisionism and upheld Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung thought.

'Guerrilla actions' took place in all districts of West Bengal. When not accompanied by mass action for taking possession of the ill-gotten wealth in *jotedars'* houses, they had little impact.

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8

The Working Class and Other Urban Struggles

Throughout 1968, the struggles of the workers, office employees and others continued to lash at the regime of the ruling class. Here I shall cite some instances.

Four million Central Government workers and employees, including postal, railway and telecommunication workers, went on a token strike on September 19, 1968, all over India. But the results in West Bengal were disappointing because of sabotage by revisionist leaders. The Central Government issued draconian ordinances. And when the strike took place, the police fired on the workers, killing ten of them. Ten thousand employees and workers were sent to prison and over ten thousands were discharged or suspended. In Kerala, the United Front Government led by 'Marxist' leader Namboodiripad criticised the vicious ordinances issued by the Central Government threatening arrest and termination of service of all those who would go on strike, but loyally implemented them. According to Namboodiripad's own admission in the Kerala Assembly, 207 cases were registered by the police in connection with this strike for offences like 'illegal strike', abetment, intimidation and wrongful restraint. A total of 233 persons were arrested. The 'Marxist' Chief Minister, who was also the Home Minister, did not hesitate to use force on the striking workers and employees at Trivandrum (now renamed Thiruvananthapuram) and Trichur (now Trissur).

Seven hundred members of the staff of the Kerala secretariat, besides telephone and lift operators and binders, took 'mass casual leave' on July 26, 1968 after the 'Marxist'-led government had refused to accede to their just demands. On July 27, *the Hindu* wrote 'The Secretariat premises and the gates were heavily guarded by armed police personnel while plainclothes men were found inside the Secretariat buildings.' Namboodiripad even excelled the

Congress masters. His government imposed on the employees a salary cut of one day and, what was most astonishing, ordered a break of their service, thus depriving them of their service benefits. But these shameless stooges of the ruling classes had to beat a hasty retreat when the employees and workers of the Kerala Government took up the challenge and broader sections joined the struggle.

The crimes of the revisionists against the workers and employees during their rule were many. I shall cite one instance. When workers struck work in Birla's Gwalior Rayon at Mavur, Kerala, towards the end of March and in the beginning of April 1968, the police were immediately rushed in there to protect Birla's interests. Birla's spokesman publicly expressed his appreciation of the services rendered by Namboodiripad and his Government. According to a UNI report, dated Trivandrum, March 30, 'Birla's representative DP Mandela feels that the Kerala Government has made an earnest attempt to resolve the labour dispute at the Gwalior Rayon at Mavur in Calicut district.... Mr Mandela told newsmen before his departure from Trivandrum today that the situation at Mavur at present was quite peaceful. Police pickets had been posted inside the company and everything is quiet now, he added.'

After the September 19, 1968 token strike by the Central Government workers and employees, the Posts and Telegraph employees and workers adopted on their own a work-to-rule programme to the great embarrassment of the ruling classes. But within a few days, it was withdrawn under pressure from the revisionist trade union bosses.

A Bengali daily *Jugantar* (now discontinued) stated on November 19, 1967 that 1,20,000 workers were retrenched in West Bengal between March and September of that year. The 'Marxists' and Dangeites in the UF Government served as the bourgeoisie's instrument of struggle against the working class and tried by all means to paralyse the activities of the working class and other exploited people. According to *The Statesman* of October 6, 1967, Jyoti Basu, the deputy Chief Minister said: 'We do not want strikes and lock-out. We seek an amicable settlement.'

An anti-imperialist mood gripped the people. When Robert McNamara, president of the World Bank, a former defence secretary of the USA and butcher of the Vietnamese people, visited India and came to Calcutta in November 1968, a mammoth anti-imperialist demonstration waited to greet him. Worried about his security, the government took him by a helicopter from the airport to the Calcutta Maidan. He landed only a few yards from the Raj Bhavan (the Governor's house) where he was to stay for his sojourn in Calcutta.

Since 1962, there was a spate of anti-Chinese films – Indian and American – screened in almost every cinema hall in India. It was the object of India's ruling

classes to rouse hostility and hatred towards Socialist China and poison the relations between the two peoples. Besides, Socialist China's very existence was a threat by example to the rule of the reactionary classes in India. In mid-1969, thousands of revolutionary youths simultaneously stormed 13 cinema halls in Calcutta and the suburbs, where a rabid anti-China film *Prem Pujari* was being exhibited, explained to the audience their object, stopped the screening and made bonfires of the reels. This served as a salutary lesson to the reactionaries.

Early in August 1970, Samir Bhattacharyya, a young revolutionary was arrested by the police and beaten to death in a police lock-up in north Calcutta as part of reaction's open fascist offensive to suppress the revolutionary struggle of students and other youths. Far from frightening or demoralising the people, this heinous murder roused so much wrath and hatred that the life of the entire city was paralysed for three days. The retaliation was swift and sure. Bonfires were made of several tram cars and state buses, as a result of which these were withdrawn from most areas of the city. The main targets of attack were police pickets and police vans, jeeps and cars patrolling the streets. Scores of policemen, including police officers, were seriously injured, if not killed. The police fired many rounds in different areas and killed several pedestrians. The CRP (Central Reserve Police) pickets and camps at fixed places were withdrawn out of fear of the people. With death-defying valour the revolutionary youth and people of Calcutta forced the enemy to retreat. Defying hardships, defying death, the students and workers were scaling new heights of heroism.

I shall refer here to one instance of militant solidarity between workers and the petty bourgeois youth. The SP Engineering Company of Cossipore, north Calcutta had declared a lock-out quite a long time back. But on August 9, 1970 the police, bribed by the owner, came to remove the machinery from the factory. Led by the CPI(M-L), the workers living in nearby slums and the petty-bourgeois youth of the locality heroically fought with the police and frustrated their plan. The police fired several rounds, yet the workers and the youth set a wonderful example of solidarity and beat back the offensive of the obedient tools of the enemy.

Almost throughout Calcutta and nearby areas, workers, led by the CPI(M-L) cadres, without waiting for directives from the Party leadership, hoisted the Red Flag, symbolising the victory of the working class atop their factories. In the entire Port area (from the KG Docks to the Strand Road), the Taratala-Hyde Road area and various other places, the Red Flag fluttered defiantly over mills and factories, over the head office and tram depots of the Calcutta Tramways Company, the Garden Reach Works (an India government 'defence' production factory), the Cossipore Gun and Shell Factory (a central government ordnance factory) and everywhere else.

Roused by the revolutionary armed peasant struggle, the working class launched a series of struggles in different parts of India. Here we shall refer to a few of them. Many of them were waged on political issues.

On the evening of July 23, 1970, the workers and employees of the North-Eastern Frontier Railways struck work, demanding the release of all those who had been arrested on the charge of attempting to annihilate the officer-in-charge of the Siliguri Police Station within the premises of the sub-divisional officer's court. This strike, started by the workers of the Siliguri Railway Junction, swiftly spread to other areas and paralysed the entire railway system in the north-eastern part of India. The attempt of the government to run the trains with the help of the Central Reserve Police failed. The threat of Nanda, the railway minister, to employ the army to do the task and punish the railway workers and employees had little effect. All the efforts of the reactionary government to terrorise the workers into submission and break the strike with the help of the Eastern Frontier Rifles and the Border Security Force on the one hand and revisionist trade union bosses of both the Dange and Sundarayya - Jyoti Basu cliques on the other, failed. The militant workers put on fire a leaflet in which the revisionists slandered the arrested workers and employees as criminals and anti-social elements. The militant workers and employees had to fight police repression on the one hand and the revisionists who were colluding with the police on the other. On August 2, 1970, in an editorial, 'Mischief on the Railways', *The Statesman* shrieked: 'The role of such a political group in the North-Eastern Frontier Railway strike appears to be much more sinister. Mr NN Tandon, the NFR General Manager, said in Calcutta last Wednesday that the strike was "possibly being led by the extremists" through unrecognised, newly formed staff councils. According to him, the leaders of the two recognised unions were trying for a settlement but were being terrorised by the strike leaders, who were also intimidating the loyal workers. He hoped that once a skeleton service manned by Railway Territorial Army units was started, the loyal workers would resume duty; but the situation there does not seem to have changed. The report that most of the important strike leaders have gone "underground" is still more ominous.'

Ultimately, after eleven days, the government had to surrender to the demands of the brave workers and employees of the NFR led by the 'extremists' from the 'underground'.

The workers and employees of the Posts and Telegraph Department and the State Electricity Board and the students of Siliguri expressed their firm solidarity with the workers and employees of the NFR by bringing out processions and observing strikes in educational institutions.

The strikes and subsequent victories of the workers of the South Eastern Railways were no less significant. On the night of July 26, 1970, some railway workers at the Adra railway station were assaulted by the police. Resenting the brutalisation, the workers went on strike immediately. The strike spread from the Adra division to the Chakradharpur and Kharagpur divisions. The entire railway system in the south-eastern part of India was completely disrupted. It was only when the government surrendered to the brave railway workers that they resumed their work.

Again, on August 1, 1970, the workers of the Bilaspur division of the South-Eastern Railways struck work when some workers of the Bhilai marshalling yard were arrested. From the midnight of August 6-7, the railway workers of the Chakradharpur, Khurda Road and Adra divisions went on strike to express their solidarity with the workers of Bhilai. The railway workers of the Kharagpur division joined them on August 7. A *Statesman* report stated on August 9: 'The loco-shed there (at Kharagpur) was also forcibly closed and the two senior supervisors were dragged out by demonstrators. Electronic loco drivers were pulled out of their locomotives and the engines were lying unattended. At Santragachi, near Calcutta, a crowd of 100 demonstrators was alleged to have turned violent and closed the telephone exchange on Friday night. As the loco staff for shunting engines had not reported for duty on Friday night, work in the Shalimar and Padmapukur yards remained affected from Saturday morning.' Like the previous one, this strike too ended in victory for the railway workers: the government was again forced to surrender to the workers. It was a political strike which the workers waged successfully.

According to a *Statesman* report on August 11, the revisionist trade union leader, Indrajit Gupta, had the shameless impudence to criticise the decision of the workers to resort to a lightning strike. The union, led by the revisionist scabs like Indrajit Gupta, gave a written undertaking that 'they would do their best to discourage wildcat strikes in future'. The lackeys felt extremely worried at the change that the working class was undergoing. They sought to uphold not the interests of the workers but the interests of the ruling classes.

Another strike that worried the ruling classes and their revisionist lackeys was the strike in the Central Dairy, a West Bengal government enterprise at Belgachia in north Calcutta. When a worker comrade was travelling alone at a place outside Calcutta, CPI(M) goons attacked him in a most cowardly manner, severely injured him and then handed him over to the police. On receipt of this news the workers, filled with bitter hatred for the CPI(M) leaders of their union and for the government, went on a strike and did not resume work until the authorities of the dairy secured the release of this comrade and brought him to the midst of the workers. Such was the mood, the temper, of the working class in Calcutta as also other places.

In Durgapur, on June 20, five workers of the Hindusthan Steel Plant, employed by a contractor, were retrenched. Immediately all the workers employed by the contractor *gheraoed* the manager of the plant and one of its top-ranking officers. The CPI(M) and SUCI stooges tried various ways to lift the *gherao*, but the workers chased them away. They brought the police to rescue the officers but the police had to withdraw in the face of the workers' resistance. Then the SUCI scabs brought three truckloads of troops of the Eastern Frontier Rifles. The workers were preparing to resist them with iron rods and other tools. But at an unguarded moment, the EFR men succeeded in rescuing the officers from the wrath of the workers. The SUCI scabs proposed negotiations - a proposal which was spurned by the workers. Ultimately, the management was forced to unconditionally reinstate the dismissed worker.

Reference

1. See Partha Choudhuri (pseudonym of Suniti Kumar Ghosh), "Phrases and Facts: About Kerala", *Liberation*, II, Nos. 2 and 3 (December 1968 and January 1969).

9

Youth Revolt

In early 1970, students and youths launched on their own initiative struggles in Calcutta which swiftly spread to other cities and towns of West Bengal as well as some other states. A large majority of the Indian youth live in dire want and poverty. The spectre of unemployment haunts them. They are victims of an unjust political and social system. After the transfer of power, the educational system of our country, a legacy of British rule, underwent no basic change. Introduced by the British, it was intended to create flunkies of imperialism. But an *unintended* effect was that the large majority of the products of the system became anti-imperialist and were in the forefront of many struggles for freedom.

Mao Tse Tung justly said: 'Thus the Western bourgeoisie created two categories of people in the East, a small minority, the flunkies of imperialism, and a majority which is opposed to imperialism and consists of the working class, the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie, the national bourgeoisie, and the intellectuals coming from these classes.... It was not that the so-called influx of ideas from the West stirred up "ferment and unrest", but that imperialist aggression provoked resistance.'¹

Charu Majumdar was not right when he said that students, while studying in schools and colleges, were brought up to respect everything concerning the imperialist powers and 'became lackeys or agents of these powers'². Facts belie such a statement. Whatever might be the object of the British administrators behind the introduction of English education in this country, students have been throughout the twentieth century at the forefront of India's anti-imperialist struggle. Only a small minority educated in schools and colleges became lackeys or agents of the imperialists to serve their own interests. A few months earlier, Majumdar had something different to say. He stated that

the students and the youth took part in the struggle for freedom at every stage and made enormous sacrifices.¹

Charu Majumdar called college unions baits offered by the ruling classes to divert students from the revolutionary path to the path of reaction. The fact is there was nothing wrong about college unions. It depended on how they were led. Before the Party was formed and before Charu Majumdar decried mass organisations and mass movements, two-thirds to three-fourths of the College unions in West Bengal were under the influence of the AICCCR. Congress influence on the students was almost wiped out and that of revisionist and other reactionary parties was nothing compared to that of the AICCCR. The reactionaries returned to fill up the void when Charu Majumdar exhorted all our comrades and sympathisers to leave mass organisations.

Majumdar asked the students to leave educational institutions and plunge into the political struggle. He wanted them to integrate with workers and poor and landless peasants and educate them in Mao Tse Tung Thought. He asked them to go to the villages to integrate with poor and landless peasants. The rural areas, at least of West Bengal, could not absorb the students and other young men who were keen on going. Only a handful found it possible to go and work among the peasants. The poor and landless peasants who constituted 70 to 75 per cent of the peasantry were themselves half-starved.

Many students left their educational institutions and plunged into work which they themselves decided upon. On their own initiative, they launched struggles against educational institutions. Believing that the semi-colonial, semi-feudal regime was on the verge of collapse, the revolutionary youth and students raided many educational institutions all over West Bengal. Groups of young men entered schools and colleges, smashed some furniture in their offices, classrooms, laboratories and libraries. They also burnt some books in libraries, including public libraries. In some places anti-social elements took advantage: they entered some school, burst bombs to frighten the teachers and students, and took away heaps of books to sell them to second hand bookshops.

The youth and students also started an iconoclastic campaign. It was directed first against Gandhi and Nehru and then against others like the leaders of what is called the 'Bengal Renaissance' – Ram Mohun Roy, Vidyasagar, etc. Their portraits were burnt, their statues were demolished. Drawing inspiration from the revolutionary peasant struggle, which was being waged in the countryside with the aim of overthrowing the feudal authority, the youth and students judged the 'eminent' men – many of whom were household names – by one yardstick: on which side of the barricade were they? Were they on the side of the Indian people's genuine struggle for freedom like the First War of Indian

Independence in 1857 or were they on the side of imperialism and the feudal order? Inspired by the peasant struggles – Naxalbari, Srikakulam, etc. – they subjected not only politics but also history and culture to revaluation from the standpoint of revolutionary democracy. The youth and students sought to resolve ideological and cultural issues in a hurry, not through debates and patient ideological work – which those brief, stormy days hardly allowed – but by action. There were people who had reservations about the manner in which the revolt took place as also about individual targets like Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and Rabindra Nath Tagore. But this revolt was hailed by the leaders of the Party and Saroj Datta wrote in defence of iconoclasm. What is needed is to uproot from the minds of the people the images of the representatives of comprador and feudal culture, whose images have been carefully planted in the minds of people from their childhood. But long, sustained ideological work was necessary to achieve the end. Yet this iconoclastic offensive shook the roots of comprador-feudal culture and was a powerful blow to the establishment historians. This shock therapy achieved permanent gain in the realm of history and culture, and except for the die-hard Establishment historians, many honest scholars had to revise their past evaluations of the 'Bengal Renaissance' and of the 'mahatma' and Nehru who have been idolised by the establishment historians.

All this, including book-burning, was applauded by the leadership except for Sushital Roychoudhuri, to whom we shall return later. The burning of books, including reactionary ones, is not quite right. Saroj Datta argued that as reactionary persons burnt progressive books at the time of the India-China war of 1962, so we had a right to burn reactionary books. The burning of such books hardly serves the cause of progress. For instance, if such books as those by Gandhi, his Collected Works and GD Birla's books were lost, the myth that Gandhi was an apostle of non-violence and the architect of India's freedom could hardly be shattered.

Saroj Datta took up his powerful pen to defend idol-smashing by the youth and students. But he was neither persuasive nor discriminatory.

The attacks on educational institutions and the iconoclastic offensive without sufficient ideological work to back it confused and bewildered the petty bourgeoisie, which as a class is expected to be an ally of the workers and peasants. A section of this class lost its sympathy for the Party. Besides, such reckless statements of Charu Majumdar as 'I would be more glad if the boys destroyed the University with dynamites' hardly endeared the Party to them, particularly to the petty bourgeois intelligentsia.

In the meantime, the walls of Calcutta were plastered with stencilled busts of Mao Tsetung, quotations from his writings and revolutionary slogans. This was done at night.

All this revolt invited severe repressive measures. The revolutionary youth and students did their work at the risk to their lives. Whenever found doing such things, they were shot and killed by the minions of law and order. Many precious lives were lost.

Our young men got involved in another struggle – the struggle with CPI(M) activists. It has been noted that this struggle began on May 1, 1969 when our Party convened a meeting on the Shahid Minar Maidan. As noted before, it was attacked by the CPI(M) hoodlums as well as by the police of the United Front government. The struggle became bitter between the end of 1969 and mid-1971, degenerating into mutual killing. The CPI(M) leaders deliberately encouraged their Party's rank and file to attack our comrades in order to divert them from political issues. Perhaps an appeal to the followers of the CPI(M) from our leadership would have been of some use.

Sometime in early 1970, the Calcutta District Committee of the Party resolved to direct attacks against policemen, military personnel, blackmarketeers and big capitalists to avenge the murder of our comrades by policemen and paramilitary forces. Many policemen, not above the rank of inspector, were killed and injured. At first, the Calcutta police were bewildered and frightened. The top officers began to devise ways of organising a defence in order to go on the offensive later.

In the *Daily Gazette*, Calcutta's Police Commissioner ordered the policemen to fasten their guns or rifles to their bodies (a sight to behold), not to move about singly, to be always on the alert, not to go to market without a companion, to avoid going to places of entertainment like cinemas and theatres, to reach police stations where they worked after dawn and also to leave them sometime before dusk. He instructed them to register their names and addresses at the police stations within the jurisdiction of which they lived.⁴ Ordinary policemen, including traffic constables, who were mostly the targets of attack by revolutionary young men – and some of whom were killed and some more injured – became resentful. They were anxious not only about their own safety but also about the safety of their families. Some families of policemen in Calcutta were shifted to police barracks but the authorities could not make similar arrangements in most places. The two associations of policemen demanded proper arrangements for the security of their family members.

Near Calcutta, a unit of the armed police mutinied; in Krishnanagar the authorities lost control over the police who not only attacked ordinary citizens but also a very senior police officer.

The leadership of the CPI(M-L) issued an appeal to ordinary policemen in November 1970. In a lengthy leaflet they wrote that the ordinary policemen themselves came from poor families – families of peasants, workers or the lower

stratum of the petty bourgeois class. But they were being used as instruments to suppress the poor masses. The leaflet appealed to the ordinary policemen to identify themselves with the masses, turn their guns against their bosses and come over to the side of the revolutionaries who were trying to establish a state ruled by the workers and peasants. But if instead, they continued to be a part of the repressive machinery, they would necessarily be the targets of attack.

In some districts, some policemen came to terms with the revolutionaries to ensure their security.

Soon, 'combing' operations began in Calcutta and the suburbs. Army men would cordon off one area in the night so that none could escape from there, police and paramilitary men would search every house, arrest every young man (youth was then a crime in the eyes of the police) and drag some of them to the police station. After some time they would let go many of them but detain some for interrogation, beating and torture.

A city like Calcutta looked like a war base with policemen and soldiers everywhere, with police and army vans, jeeps trucks and cars, equipped with wireless apparatuses, constantly patrolling the streets. CRP camps were set up even within the campuses of universities and colleges. The local police proved ineffective. The CRP, BSF (Border Security Force) and Eastern Frontier Rifles had to be employed. At one stage the army too had to be deployed. When mopping up operations were undertaken, it was the army that surrounded a whole area so that no one could leave the area and no one could enter it from the outside. The minions of law and order were armed with all unethical laws - the Bengal Suppression of Terrorist Outrages Act of 1936 (which was revived), the West Bengal Prevention of Violent Activities Act (which became a law in November 1970) and the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (1971), which together empowered the police and allied forces to carry out any lawless act. State terrorism at its worst prevailed.

Besides, there were 'guerrilla' squads organised by the police. These police 'guerrilla' squads were the counterpart of the 'resistance groups' formed by the police in rural areas. These police guerrillas were lumpen elements recruited by the police, each one was given a handsome allowance every month and a gun and his only job was killing revolutionary comrades.⁵

A campaign to snatch police guns and rifles started. Daring attempts were made to raid police camps and outposts, kill some policemen and take away their guns and rifles. I saw two cases of gun-snatching from policemen in broad daylight. On a bench at the Jadavpur railway station, several policemen were sitting with guns in their hands. As if from nowhere came a young man, snatched

a gun from a policeman and ran away. On another occasion, I was standing on the balcony of a house near the Beliaghata bus terminus. Some policemen with guns in their hands came near the terminus. All of a sudden a young man - he might be in his teens - came, snatched a gun from the hand of a policeman and fled into the large slum nearby with its maze of narrow lanes and by-lanes. Immediately an alarm was sounded and many policemen came in jeeps and vans. It was death-defying courage that these young men showed. The struggle spread to other towns. Krishnanagar in Nadia district had to be handed over to the army.

One evening, Charu Majumdar and I were going towards the south in a taxi along the Ashutosh Mukherjee Road. North of the Bhowanipur market (Jagu Babu's Bazar), there were a very high wall (I don't know if it still stands there) next to a petrol pump. In big letters it was inscribed on the wall:

'Will Calcutta be liberated?'

The next line was:

'Yes, in two years.'

I drew Charu Majumdar's attention to these lines. He only smiled.

I wanted to form a Party unit to strengthen the underground apparatus. Saroj Datta told me to ask the Calcutta District Committee for help at its meeting that was to be held in July or August 1970. At that time, Saroj Datta guided the work of the committee. When the discussion of the agenda of the meeting was over, I placed my proposal. Only Dilip Banerjee offered to help me. One evening - probably in August - Guru Kundu, Saroj Datta's courier, took me to a house at Baranagar, a northern suburb of Calcutta. It had a small room above the staircase. Some six or seven comrades were sitting there. One of them was a girl.

Before making my proposal for the formation of a Party unit for helping the underground apparatus, I wanted to conduct some political discussion. I asked the comrades whether they thought it was possible to liberate Calcutta at that stage and whether the struggle should be directed towards achieving that end. The unanimous answer was an enthusiastic 'yes'. I reminded them of the slogan 'China's Path is our Path' raised by Charu Majumdar. I explained to them what China's path was. I spoke for about an hour and then invited them to speak. None of them spoke. I asked if they agreed with me. They neither said 'yes' nor 'no'. I then told them the object of our meeting.

I was not invited to meet this group again nor any other group.

It was October. I had arranged a shelter for Charu Majumdar at Baghbagar, quite near to the Ganges. The host was a college lecturer and the hostess a school teacher. After about a week's stay there, Charu Majumdar was leaving for another shelter one evening. Saroj Datta came to escort him to the new place.

While leaving, Charu Majumdar said to me: 'You should not interfere'. Without any more words he left. The host was present. I was stunned. After some time I remembered the Baranagar meeting. There was no discussion among us that the Party line had changed, that our struggle would no longer be an arduous and protracted one. If there had been a discussion, it was confined to Majumdar and Datta. Souren Bose also might have had the privilege of taking part in the discussion. It was about mid-November 1971 (as late as that), when the revolt of the youth and students was suppressed by the overwhelming superiority of the armed forces of the ruling classes. Charu Majumdar wrote:

'We cannot occupy Calcutta and the different towns right now and that is not also possible. Therefore, the Party members who are in the urban areas cannot directly participate in the struggle for seizure of power.'

Our youth and students showed uncommon courage but the loss of precious lives was tremendous. But this was of little help to our long-term objective. Killing suspects was a pastime for the police and paramilitary forces. Thousands were killed and more were maimed. In a statement Jyotirmoy Bosu, MP, said that he as well as three other MPs from West Bengal 'received letters at Delhi from a *Sanyasi*, who sits in one of the burning ghats in Calcutta. He mentioned in his letter that every night he was watching the policemen coming between midnight and early morning and burning bodies of young people, aged between 14 and 30.'

On the proclamation of President's rule in West Bengal on June 29, 1971, Siddhartha Shankar Ray was appointed union minister without portfolio to exercise presidential power in this state. To quote Francine Frankel, 'One of Ray's first acts was to request the deployment of the army to assist the civil authorities in dealing with law and order in the most disturbed parts of the state. By the end of the year... the number of killing reached into the thousands and the number of political prisoners climbed into the tens of thousands....'

There were mass massacres of CPI (M-L) activists and sympathisers - at Diamond Harbour (in South 24 Parganas), Konnagar (in Hughli), Howrah, etc. These killing sprees were believed to have been organised by the power in collusion with 'resistance parties' they had formed. But all records were surpassed by the Cossipur-Baranagar carnage on August 12-13, 1971. To quote from a report in *Frontier* of September 18, 1971:

'Murder of sorts is a familiar thing nowadays. But the Baranagar-Cossipur carnage was neither familiar nor secret. It has broken new ground and set a new pattern with the most ominous sign of the shape of things to come. More than 150 boys were butchered within two days - the Friday-Saturday. Others who were not young also had to die.... The boys were murdered because they were non-conformists and Naxalites.'

Not all of them were activists; indeed very few of them were activists.... The police were officially withdrawn and given the strictest instruction not to interfere.... Practitioners in murder and mayhem were brought in, arms were supplied, the operation started. It started in broad daylight.... Who were the killers? They are now euphemistically called "resistance groups".... They got protection money from the business houses; they extort money from the people on the plea of defending the locality; they are on the payroll of the police for supplying intelligence about the Naxalites. But actually who are they? They are gangsters and murderers. Only the other day it was their daily practice to snap and steal overhead copper wires plunging whole areas into darkness.... The killers are at large. They are reigning at Baranagar. Murders of the most grisly kind were perpetrated; the most ghastly tortures were inflicted. Only two of the countless are being cited. An old man above 60 was literally doused with petrol and burnt alive because he had failed to give news about his alleged Naxalite nephew. A school girl in her early teens had her arm chopped off because she did not know where her brother was. More apologetic crimes like the burning of houses, kicking and punching people to senselessness, etc., need not be mentioned....

'Mr Jyoti Basu of the CPM threatened a *bandh* over the issue. But there was no *bandh*. There simply could not be any. The Baranagar people know that the CPM cadres who had in the past made a strategic retreat from the area of operation, presumably due to the Congress threat, were allowed to come back and they helped the Congress (R) [led by Indira Gandhi] killers flush out the extremists. Thus when the Left leaders made the angry protest the people of Baranagar were not amused; they felt sick. Mr SS Ray visited Baranagar on Sunday and was conducted to the place of incidents by the killers themselves.... The ominous sign is the exhibition of total hypocrisy on the part of the political leaders....

'Fascism is not a figure of speech, it is a grim reality.'

Struggle in Prison

The youth and students converted even prisons into centres of revolt. Though physically battered while in police custody, they carried into the prison the revolutionary spirit which had inspired them outside. The prison walls could not subdue it nor could all conceivable persecutions by the police and the jail staff break it, except in the case of weak reeds.

It was the Party's injunction that the imprisoned comrades should not seek release on bail, nor should they put up any legal defence, nor should those of the petty bourgeois origin ask for classification as political prisoners, which

would entitle them – because of their social status – to facilities denied to worker and peasant comrades. The Party insisted that they should integrate with peasants and workers inside as well as outside the prison. The large majority of CPI (M-L) cadres and supporters spurned better facilities even when offered.

The appalling conditions in jails, the savage persecution and insults made clashes with ruffians who constituted most of the prison staff inevitable. It is a proof of the sanctimonious hypocrisy of India's ruling classes, who are pledged to observe the 'Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners' prescribed by the United Nations Resolution adopted on August 30, 1955 (UN Document A/CONF/6/1 Annexe IA), that every one of them is mocked at by the actual conditions in every one of the prisons in India. The *Salesman* on October 16, 1992 reported under the headline "For Bihar's Undertrials Death is a Blessing" that the Chaibasa Jail in West Singhbhum district, which could house only 343 prisoners, then accommodated on an average 1000 prisoners; that in Seraikela Subdivisional Jail in the same district, which officially had a capacity for only 87 prisoners, 300 prisoners were lodged. Prisoners had to wait their turn to lie down. The conditions in prisons elsewhere were not much better. The Presidency Jail in Calcutta, said to be one of the best in India, has accommodation for 2,000 prisoners but housed 4,000 in 1971 on an average. The lengthy report 'Study of a Jail' by a group of reporters, which appeared in *Frontier* dated December 8-22, 1973, is a partial revelation of the internal conditions in Calcutta's Presidency Jail – utter lack of sanitation, the filth, the stench, almost complete lack of light and air in the cells, the overcrowding, the irregular, insufficient and abominable food, the lack of even clean drinking water, the almost non-existence of medical care, the atrocious treatment meted out to prisoners by the jail staff, the thoroughly corrupt system and so on. It is the ordinary prisoners, not the favoured ones, who have to spend months and years in such conditions. In Indian prisons, contrary to the UN rules, undertrial or unconvicted prisoners are never presumed or treated as innocent. They languish in prisons, most often for years, waiting for trials and may be found not guilty at the end.

The following may give some idea of how atrocious was the persecution. *Frontier* on May 22, 1971 reported that undertrial prisoners in the Dhanbad court hajat were fired upon on March 16, 1971 by the Bihar police 'in broad daylight under the nose of the magistracy and all the senior officers of the town'. On that day, more than 100 undertrial prisoners were locked in rooms which were meant to accommodate 20. When the prisoners refused to pay bribes, the police fired on them from point blank range.

Inhuman conditions in Indian prisons are the norm. So, when tens of thousands of CPI(M-L) cadres and sympathisers were clapped in them after

being converted into physical wrecks while in police custody, it is no surprise that the treatment meted out to them was even more cruel. Every attempt was made to inflict physical or mental torture and heap indignities on them. The physical liquidation of as many revolutionaries as possible within prisons and outside was part of the government's policy.

The CPI(M-L) members and sympathisers were kept in solitary cells for months, even for years, or in very small cells or in over-crowded wards where, in most cases, there was not adequate space for all the inmates to lie down. These cells and wards are most insanitary, most unhealthy, with little ventilation, ill-lit and full of foul smell coming from things around them, especially from the tub placed in one corner of every room where the prisoners are obliged to urinate and defecate, if the need arises, during the hours 5-30 in the evening (earlier in winter) when they are locked up to 6 in the morning. Often many of these prisoners were locked up in them twenty-four hours every day except for a few minutes in the morning when they were let out for having bath, etc. Some of them had their feet bound with chains—*danda-beri* and *shikliberi*—day and night. An Amnesty International's report of 1974 on Detention conditions in West Bengal jails said: 'Fifty-one alleged Naxalite prisoners are kept in chains in Hazaribagh jail, some of them for periods of more than two years.... The use of bar-fetters is also reported from other jails: in Calcutta Presidency Jail prisoners are allegedly kept in fetters for periods of three to six months or even longer.'¹⁰

In her book *My Years in an Indian Prison*, Mary Tyler, a British girl, wrote that on June 30, 1973, after more than three years in jail as a political prisoner, she saw for the first time thirty-five of her fellow-accused at the Jamshedpur prison makeshift courtroom. She persuaded the warder to let her have a quick look at the block where they and other Naxalite prisoners were kept. She saw that 'Their yard is as dreary and desolate, as ugly a place as one could imagine—a cemented yard, a water tap and a row of dark little cells, in which they are locked, five or six to a cell, in fetters, twenty-four hours a day. Even in the day time it is dark. Only if they squat in front of the barred door can they read. At night they do not even have a light inside their cells. And, to cap it all, one complete madman is locked up with them. Yet they laugh, joke and make light of it all.... Physically all are affected. They are thin, pale, dry, attacked by ailments diagnosed and undiagnosed.'¹¹

Those CPI(M-L) cadres and sympathisers who were from petty bourgeois or more affluent homes could escape all these hardships and dangers if they agreed to be classified as Division A or B prisoners, which their class status entitled them to. But, adhering to the Party's principle, the large majority of

them rejected this choice. They carried within them into those houses of crime the spirit of rebellion against wrongs and injustices. Often they defied their tormentors and clashes between the armed ruffians and the unarmed prisoners, so unequal, led to the maiming and murders of CPI(M-L) activists. In those battles, ordinary prisoners sometimes fought shoulder to shoulder with them.

Besides standing up to their persecutors fearlessly, the CPI(M-L) activists resorted to jail-breaking as another means of defeating the plans of their oppressors and going outside to work for the cause they believed in, and showed superhuman courage and the spirit of self-sacrifice. In the clashes that followed many were killed and wounded.

Between December 1970 and November 1972, there were at least 18 incidents of jail-breaking – 14 in West Bengal and four in Bihar. We are afraid this list is far from exhaustive because of our regrettable want of knowledge in these and other states. Attempts at escaping from prison led to clashes twice in the Midnapur Central Jail – on December 16, 1970 and February 4, 1971 – ending in the deaths of many prisoners and serious injuries to many others (according to official versions, 11 deaths and injuries to many); in the Berhampur Central Jail (Murshidabad district), on February 24, 1971 and again on February 20, 1972, when 10 prisoners were killed and 49 wounded; in the Dum Dum Central Jail on May 14, 1971, when 17 prisoners were murdered and 73 wounded; in the Howrah Jail on May 16, 1971 when 11 prisoners were injured; in the Suri Jail (Birbhum district) on June 6, 1971, when the number of casualties was not reported; in the Alipur Special Jail on July 11, 1971, when five prisoners were killed and three seriously wounded; in the Asansol Jail (Burdwan district) on August 4, 1971, when 9 prisoners were killed and 19 wounded and, again on April 19, 1973, when 3 prisoners were murdered; in the Alipur Central Jail on November 26, 1971, when 6 prisoners were killed and 200 wounded; in the Hughli Jail on February 7, 1972 when one prisoner was killed and 3 injured; in the Burdwan Jail on May 28, 1971, when two prisoners were murdered; in the Berhampur Special Jail on November 26, 1972 when 75 prisoners were injured.

In the Bankipur Central Jail (Patna), two prisoners were killed and 40 wounded on July 7, 1971; in the Hazaribagh Central Jail, 8 prisoners were murdered and 36 injured on July 25, 1971; in the Bhagalpur Central Jail, 10 prisoners were killed and 56 injured on May 18, 1972; and in the Gaya Central Jail, one prisoner was killed and 55 injured on September 3, 1972.

Most of the prisoners killed were beaten to death.

The figures of casualties are all from official sources; so they were tailored to suit the publicity needs of those ultimately responsible for the killings. For

instance, on May 14, 1971, the jail bloodhounds beat to death not 17 but 72 revolutionaries and wounded not 73 but more than one hundred of them in the Dum Dum Central Jail. Amnesty International's report on 'Detention Conditions in West Bengal' stated: 'According to official figures.... 88 prisoners were killed in 12 incidents during the period December 1970 to June 1972 in West Bengal and Bihar alone. Unofficial reports from ex-prisoners which have reached Amnesty put the number of prisoners who died in these encounters between prisoners and the jail staff and police at three times that figure.'

We shall refer to one instance of escape from jail. The Party committee within the Dum Dum Central Jail near Calcutta planned an escape and allotted different tasks to different groups of comrades. Some leading comrades would resist the armed policemen and the jail staff while others would escape. On the afternoon of May 14, 1971, some prisoners jumped on the gate-warder and took away his whistle to prevent an early warning to the sentries. Immediately, another group lifted the heavy 14 feet high iron gate and placed it against the outer wall. Within five minutes, before the alarm bell started ringing, more than 50 prisoners used the iron gate as a ladder and escaped (ten of them were captured soon after, and two murdered and the rest reduced to the verge of death by the police hounds). The others resisted with bare hands the hordes of armed sentries who rushed in. Thirty-two of them became martyrs and more than one hundred suffered serious injuries as a result of savage beating with rods and *lathis*. Those who undertook to help other comrades to escape knew quite well what awaited them. Such was the indomitable spirit, quiet heroism and self-sacrifice of the revolutionary youth and other comrades.

The people demonstrated their indignant protest on many occasions when the armed forces of the state murdered CPI(M-L) cadres and sympathisers. The whole of Calcutta observed *hartal* for one day and the life of north Calcutta was paralyzed for three days when, in August 1970, Samir Bhattacharyya, a young revolutionary, was tortured to death within a police station in north Calcutta. I shall cite only one more instance. A correspondent wrote in *Frontier* on March 6, 1971 that, after the killings of CPI(M-L) prisoners in Berhampur Central Jail on February 24, 1971, he saw 'a wave of fierce mass indignation sweeping the whole urban area. There were huge crowds all the time at the hospital gates and people were defying 144 in a most reckless manner. At times, it seemed that direct clashes would take place between the military and the masses of the townspeople. Countless military trucks with stenguns at the ready were patrolling the streets day and night.'

The question is, did the heroic sacrifice of thousands of young men advance the cause of the Indian revolution? Actually, in the struggle between the two

forces so unequal, the revolt of the students and youths was brutally suppressed: it contributed little towards the progress of revolution.

Any revolution can succeed in overthrowing the armed oppressors only by rousing and mobilising workers, peasants, petty bourgeois youth and employees in the struggle, millions and millions of them. The key to the success of a revolution is this mobilisation. What can arouse the people? It is the class struggle for solving daily problems of life, for daily needs and necessities and against oppression. It is the task of a revolutionary Party to build up such struggles, to agitate for every demand of the exploited classes, and to link them with the ultimate struggle to overthrow the existing regime. The Party is to form cells within mass organisations and control the latter not directly but through those cells. Armed struggle, coordinated with mass movements and mass organisations, can lead the revolution to victory. Strategically, the enemy is weak, but tactically he is very powerful. To defeat him, powerful class and mass organisations and people's armed forces are necessary. Not mere exhortations or rousing calls for heroic self-sacrifice but only patient, painstaking work of a conscious political Party to arouse and organise the masses is essential. Nothing else can help where organisation is required. To combat and defeat the organised enemy—his organised armed forces—vaster organisations are required, of which the People's Army is one.

And in late 1968 and early 1969 attempts were made to build an all-India militant political organisation of students and youths. It was under the guidance of Asit Sen that the 'Draft Political Programme for the Revolutionary Student and Youth Movement'¹³ was prepared by our student comrades. It was a valuable document, which was ignored because it came into conflict with the new line adopted by the Party in early 1969.

As the note of the West Bengal State Students' Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries, dated January 31, 1969, introducing the draft stated in *Deshabrati*, the draft was drawn up and circulated among students and youths inviting suggestions for its improvement from all the students and youths taking part in the revolutionary student and youth movement. A largely-attended Convention of the student and youth delegates was held on April 13, 1969 and it was decided to hold a state conference by August 1969 as a step towards building an all-India organisation of revolutionary youths and students. The Convention received messages wishing success from Charu Majumdar, Liberation and comrades imprisoned in the Cannanore Jail.

Besides other things, the Draft said: 'While such agrarian revolution is being developed in the rural areas (Naxalbari, Srikakulam, etc.) it is of great importance to inspire the factory workers and other toiling people, the broad masses of fighting people in the cities with revolutionary politics, to make them

active and to build up class struggle among them to support the agrarian revolution and to organise democratic movements there. To ignore this task will be disastrous for the revolution.'

I shall quote a few more passages from this remarkable document - remarkable in view of the developments that started taking place within the Party at the time. The Draft stated: 'The student movement must be integrated with the struggle of workers, peasants and other toiling people, with the struggle for the people's liberation and a united struggle to support the agrarian revolution must be built up....'

'...the advanced section [of students and youths] must, therefore, lay special emphasis on building up struggles, on the basis of the general political programme of agrarian revolution, against the various problems and difficulties affecting the life of the broad masses of the youth and students with a view to uniting the backward sections and inspiring them to participate actively in the national democratic struggle. The discontent, indignation, revolt and struggle of the youth and the students against any problem they face, including the problems of food, education, unemployment, culture, must be supported and these must be organised into powerful struggles on correct lines and directed to attain the revolutionary objective. At every stage of struggle the methods and tactics which we adopt in our propaganda, programme of action and movement must be such as ensure mass participation by broad sections of the youth and students, enhance their political consciousness and make them active participants.

'While the conscious and advanced elements, guided by the thought of Chairman Mao, work in their respective spheres to build, in theory and in practice, an anti-imperialist, anti-feudal fighting unity among the broad sections of the youth and students through political propaganda and struggle, they must, at the same time, establish contacts with people who live in places close to the areas in which they work, with workers and illiterate people who live in slums in towns and cities, and with the peasants in the villages, and become one with them.... Those youths and students who are more advanced in theory and practice must go to the villages, unless circumstances make it impracticable for them, to work there among the peasants as wholtime workers under the guidance of the revolutionary party.

'...Joint initiative and joint mobilisation, meeting, demonstration, discussion with the other fighting masses have to be organised. Whenever any repression is let loose on any section of the revolutionary masses or against their struggle, the youth and the students must be rallied to resist it and express their indignation against it, and to give full support to the struggle.

The youth and the students must come forward in support of liberation struggle, whether in our own country or anywhere else in the world. Popular opinion must be organised in support of these struggles and the masses must be inspired with the idea of proletarian internationalism.

'Political classes must be organised for the youth and the students. No struggle, be it economic or political, can be sustained if it is isolated and relies on its own strength alone. Only a united and fighting organisation can carry on struggle through to the end in a disciplined manner, along correct lines and according to a definite programme. If the youth and the students are to fulfil their important and historic political task in our anti-imperialist, anti-feudal national democratic struggle in the context of the existing national and international situation, they must have their own mass political organisation. This is indispensable...'

The Draft Programme was completely ignored by the Party which had started moving in a direction entirely opposite to what was outlined here. Great possibilities were lost. As noted before, by April 1969, about two-thirds to three-fourths of the students, organised in college unions in West Bengal, came to accept the political leadership of the AICCCR. All reactionary student organisations in West Bengal, including those controlled by the Congress and the two so-called communist parties, were almost swept away. These reactionary organisations began to revive when the CPI(M-L) decided to abandon student unions and all other mass organisations.

The vast strength in the organised students was not harnessed; that strength was rather frittered away for lack of a well-defined policy. Tens of thousands of students and youths in Calcutta alone responded to the call of Naxalbari. No attempt was made to organise them; nothing was done to provide education to them in Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought. Not a single political class was held. On the contrary, any study of the Marxist classics was discouraged. The struggles of the students and youths were hardly coordinated with the struggles of other toiling people, especially the peasants. Their enormous sacrifice contributed little to the advance of the cause of the national democratic revolution.

References

1. Mao Tse Tung, 'The Bankruptcy of the Idealist Conception of History', SW, IV, p 455.
2. Majumdar, 'A Few Words to the Revolutionary Students and Youths', *Liberation*, March 1970, p.13.

3. Majumdar, 'Party's call to the Youth and Students', *Ibid*, September 1969, pp. 1-2.
4. See Ashoke Kumar Mukhopadhyay (Ed.), *The Naxalite Movement through the Prison Walls*.
5. See Sankar Ghosh, *The Naxalite Movement: A Maoist Experiment*, pp. XX1-XX2.
6. Majumdar, 'A Note on Party's Work in Urban Areas', *Liberation*, July 1971-January 1972, p.16.
7. See Samar Sen et al (Eds.), 'A November Night at Beliaghata', in *Naxalbari: Before and After: A Frontier Anthology*, I p.55.
8. Francine Frankel, *op cit*, p.458.
9. See Samar Sen et al (Eds.), *op cit*, I, pp.159-62.
10. See Samar Sen et al (Eds.), *op cit*, I, pp. 209, 210; for the abridged version of the Amnesty International's Report, see pp.207-12.
11. Mary Tyler, *My Years in an Indian Prison*, p.117.
12. See Samar Sen et al (Eds.), *op cit*, I, p.211.
13. For the programme, see *Liberation*, II, No. 6. (April 1969).

10

The Party Congress and After

A meeting of the Central Organising Committee was held in January 1970. After the general secretary's report, different members submitted reports on the struggles in different states. The lengthy report from Srikakulam was a rather gloomy one. But, despite severe repression and encirclement of the core area by the police, including 12,000 CRPF men, the struggle continued. The government propagated that Tejeswar Rao, secretary of the Srikakulam District Committee, had surrendered to the police on November 28, 1969 and that a pamphlet criticising the central leadership had been circulated. It seems that there was some truth in the government's propaganda, for there is a reference in the Party Letter (March 1971), entitled 'Fight against Revisionism', to a sixteen-page pamphlet issued in the name of the Srikakulam District Committee of the Party. According to the Andhra State Committee, which dubbed the pamphlet as revisionist, it blamed the central leadership and Charu Majumdar for the set-back and suggested an alternative Party line.¹

In his report to the COC, Kanu Sanyal said that 'jail comrades' were opposed to annihilation. If by 'jail comrades' Sanyal meant the comrades who had been to jail or who were then in jail, then the leading comrades of Naxalbari opposed annihilation. Though Appu himself supported annihilation, most other comrades of Tamil Nadu had no interest in it.

Charu Majumdar named four groups led by Kunnikal Narayanan, Asit Sen, Nagi Reddy and Parimal Dasgupta; they swore by Mao Tsetung but opposed annihilation. 'They might try to penetrate into our Party', but, Charu Majumdar said, 'there could be no unity with them on the basis of ideology - Marxism-Leninism- Mao Tse Tung Thought'. Charu affirmed that there could be unity only on the basis of action, that is, agreement as regards annihilation of enemies by secret squads as the form of struggle.

Invited by the COC, Suniti Kumar Ghosh reported at this meeting on his experience in Albania.

The COC convened the Party Congress: it would be held on May 15-16, 1970. (Actually the Congress was held only on May 15). A draft Party Programme and a draft Party Constitution were circulated quite sometime before the Congress. Charu Majumdar was to draft the Political-Organisational Report and circulate it among the COC members by the second week of February.

The COC fixed the quota of delegates from different states and the dates on which state conferences would be held. The total number of delegates to the Congress would be 52; 41 elected by the different states and 11 COC members. Charu Majumdar was to attend every state conference – from Assam to Jammu and Kashmir.

The first to be held was the Bihar State Conference in February. The West Bengal State Conference was held at Behala, Calcutta, in March. Charu Majumdar, Jangal Santal and I travelled in the same taxi to Behala. Santal spoke very little. His tall appearance was impressive. This conference elected seven delegates to the Congress, among whom were Jangal Santal, Shyam Sundar Bose, Asim Chatterjee and Suniti Kumar Ghosh. To reach the venue of the Jammu Conference, Charu Majumdar had to be carried on the back of a stout local man on the last lap. This task of attending all state conferences put tremendous strain on him. He could not always have reserved berths or seats in the trains and had to travel sometimes sitting on the floor. This was too much for his health and on the morning of the day the Congress was held, he suffered a heart attack. Since then, his health continued to deteriorate.

The Congress was held in a hall on the first floor of a large building in the South Eastern Railway colony at Garden Reach, Calcutta. A festival atmosphere was maintained so that there would be no suspicion. A microphone blared all the time in order that the voices inside could not be heard outside.

In the beginning, a presidium was elected. I do not remember the names of the members. Then a resolution was adopted, in which the Congress sent its warm, revolutionary greetings to Chairman Mao. The resolution said at the end: 'The Congress is proud to record that our Party and revolution have received and are receiving the personal care and guidance of Chairman Mao.' This was contrary to facts as also contrary to Mao's teaching. Mao wished victory to our revolution and cherished hopes of the success of our Party. But he held that every Party should formulate its own line and policies: he never interfered in the affairs of other Parties.

The Congress paid its homage to the comrades who had died as martyrs and resolved to carry forward the revolutionary struggle and avenge their deaths. One of the slogans that the resolution raised was to 'carry on the battle of annihilation with ever greater determination.'

The Congress adopted the Party Programme in which it described India as a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country. It pointed out that India was weighed down under four big mountains – imperialism headed by US imperialism, Soviet social-imperialism, comprador bureaucrat capital and feudalism. It said that of all the major contradictions, the contradiction between feudalism and the broad masses of the people was the principal one. The stage of our revolution was the People's Democratic stage. A democratic revolution of a new type could be accomplished under the leadership of the working class and its axis was the agrarian revolution. The main force of the revolution would be the peasantry. It was necessary to build a united front of the working class, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie and the small and middle bourgeoisie, though the last-named class was a vacillating and unstable ally. (At one place—para 4—the entire Indian bourgeoisie was characterised as 'comprador'.) The Programme went on to say that the Front could only be built 'when worker-peasant unity is achieved in the course of armed struggle and after Red political power is established at least in some parts of the country.' The liberation of India could be achieved only by waging People's War. It could be 'waged only by mobilising the masses and relying on them.' Guerrilla warfare would be 'the basic form of struggle throughout the entire period of our Democratic Revolution'. One of the tasks of our Revolution would be to 'Unify India and recognise the right of self-determination' of all nationalities, including the Kashmiris, the Mizos and the Nagas and to 'Give equal status to all national languages.'²

The Programme was adopted unanimously. It had its merits but it had also its limitations. For instance, it was not correct to observe that the united front of revolutionary classes could be built only after 'Red political power is established at least in some parts of the country'. The building of the united front was not a one-stage affair. It was a process which had to start before red political power was established in any part of the country. The establishment of red political power depended on the forging of some kind of a united front.

Next, to assert that guerrilla warfare would be 'the basic form of struggle throughout the entire period of our Democratic Revolution' is far from correct. For some time, at the initial stage, guerrilla warfare would be the basic form but later, when the revolutionary army gained in strength, mobile warfare would be the basic form and guerrilla warfare would be auxiliary, though quite important and indispensable. At the final stage, regular warfare might decide the issue.

Souren Bose has claimed that after discussion, the draft Programme was rejected by the Congress and then he and two others drafted another Programme which was accepted. Like many other claims and statements made by Souren, this claim too has no relation to truth: it is one of his many

glib untruths. Time (a maximum of 12 hours during which the Congress was held) alone would not permit the discussion and rejection of the original draft, appointment of three persons for drafting another draft, the preparation and discussion of it at the Congress, followed by its adoption, when there were several other items for the Congress to consider. The fact is, the Party programme drafted by the Central Organising Committee was adopted unanimously by the Party Congress.

The draft of the Party constitution, which had been circulated among Party units before the Congress, was adopted in its totality.

Charu Majumdar placed the Political-Organisational Report before the Congress. The report said that the US imperialists' attack on Cambodia and extension of war throughout Indo-China marked 'the beginning of the Third World War.' The united front of the three Indo-Chinese peoples was a great victory. (It was wrong to assert that the Third World War started with the US invasion of Cambodia.) The Indian Government was also 'feverishly preparing for an aggressive war to serve the needs' of the US imperialists and Soviet social-imperialists. Charu Majumdar claimed that the emergence in India of the CPI(M-L) and the struggle that had already spread to twelve states would foil all imperialist plans. When the revolutionary line of the Party under the leadership of Charu Majumdar had defeated revisionism, centrism on the questions of the necessity of mass organisations and mass movements for realisation of economic demands, the dependence on petty bourgeois intellectuals for development of armed struggle, etc., was raising its head to divert the Party from the correct line. Under the leadership of Charu Majumdar, many erroneous lines were defeated. The armed struggle of the peasants was rousing youths and workers in the cities and towns and would soon create an upsurge all over the country and culminate under the leadership of the Party in a countrywide victory. It was necessary for the entire Party to study *Quotations from Mao Tsetung* and Mao's 'Three Articles'.

The report said that the battle for annihilation of class enemies was 'the higher form of class struggle and the beginning of guerrilla war and People's War'. It equated class struggle with the battle of annihilation of class enemies. This battle could 'solve all the problems facing us' – 'lead the struggle to a higher plane, raise the political consciousness of the people to a higher stage, create conditions for the emergence of a new type of man... who fears neither hardship nor death, develop the People's Army...' It could liberate the people not only from political shackles but also from the shackles of all backward ideas and prejudices.

The report said that different groups were opposing the battle of annihilation of class enemies – 'the main plank of our struggle' – in the name of Mao Tse Tung. Unity with them would lead the Party to the morass of revisionism.

The report claimed that our battle of annihilation linked together our two tasks – the national task of liberating our country and the international task of banishing imperialism and imperialist war from the face of the earth.

The report urged the Party members to carry on the battle of annihilation with greater determination, extend it to newer and newer areas, rely on unsophisticated arms which alone could unleash the initiative of poor and landless peasants, conduct political propaganda with the aim of developing the battle of annihilation, win over more and more poor and landless peasants, rely on them and raise their political level and help the fighters to take part in the work of production.

The report said that the world was advancing at an incredibly fast speed towards the liberation of all mankind under the leadership of Chairman Mao Tsetung. The Indian revolution was also developing with extreme rapidity. It hoped that the Party Congress would forge the unity of all revolutionaries and give them added strength to transform the present India full of darkness into an India full of light and splendour. The very presence of Mao Tsetung assured us victory.

The report was unanimously adopted.³ While placing the report at the Congress, Charu Majumdar made a speech which too was adopted unanimously as a Congress document.

Charu Majumdar said that the US attack on Cambodia marked the beginning of the Third World War. The forging of a united front by the three Indo-Chinese people under the leadership of China gave the promise of worldwide victory over imperialism.

In India also, the ruling classes were making frenzied war preparations to support US imperialism and Soviet social-imperialism. But the emergence of the CPI(M-L) brought about a change in the internal situation.

Charu Majumdar said that the Party had to be built among the poor and landless peasants. That would develop the armed struggle. Within the Party there was a struggle between two lines – one correct and the other incorrect. Centrism was a danger: it sought to lead to revisionism. On questions like boycott of elections, trade unions, 'working class-based party', work in mass organisations and mass movements, etc., Centrists like Nagi Reddy and Asit Sen were thrown out of the party, Centrists were raising their heads within the Party, attacking the Party on the questions of using firearms, the battle of annihilation, etc.

Majumdar asserted that the battle of annihilation was both a higher form of class struggle and the starting point of guerrilla warfare. He equated class struggle with the battle of annihilation. He said: 'Without class struggle – the battle of annihilation – the initiative of the poor peasant masses cannot be released, the political consciousness of the fighters cannot be raised, the new man cannot emerge, the people's army cannot be created.'

Majumdar asserted that at that stage the use of firearms would stifle the initiative of the peasant masses instead of unleashing it. It would be possible for common landless and poor peasants to join the battle of annihilation with conventional weapons. Then there would be a mighty upsurge. Only when their initiative was released and people's power established, they should take up the gun. According to him, guerrilla war – the battle of annihilation – could be waged in every village in India. He asked the comrades not to concentrate in any area but to carry on the battle of annihilation everywhere. The idea of building base areas flew out of the window.

Majumdar was of the firm view that those who opposed the battle of annihilation would have no place in the Party. The revolutionary armed struggle of the peasants served as an inspiration to other classes – for instance, the petty bourgeois youth of Calcutta. Under the impact of the peasant struggle, the working class was also rising and he was sure that there would soon be a revolutionary upsurge of this class not only in Calcutta but in all other cities.

He advised comrades to wage a vigorous armed peasant struggle all over India after the Congress. He felt confident that a vast mass upsurge in the wake of that struggle would sweep the country. He was sure that the seventies would be the decade of liberation.⁴

A few years ago, the All India Revolutionary Students Federation published a booklet entitled *Naxalbari is Not the Name of a Village*. It said that the question of annihilation of class enemies was one of the important issues debated at the Congress. This is not a fact: there was complete unanimity on this question.

The only issue over which there was debate at the Congress was Charu Majumdar's revolutionary authority. After the Political-Organisational Report was placed at the Congress, some comrades from Andhra said that the important contribution of Charu Majumdar to our struggle should have mention in it. Souren Bose then stood up to assert that Majumdar's revolutionary authority should be acknowledged in the Report. Asim Chatterjee said that if Majumdar went in one direction and the rest of the Central Committee in the opposite direction, he would follow Charu Majumdar. Satyanarain Singh then sprang up to say that in that case, he would refuse to be a member of the Central Committee. The debate went on. During the debate, Charu Majumdar left the hall. The debate was going on when he returned. He requested the comrades to stop discussing the issue. He said that it would be proper if he was not described as the revolutionary authority. Instead, it would be enough if his special contribution was acknowledged in the report. There the matter ended. All other decisions were adopted unanimously – without any debate.

Charu Majumdar placed a panel of names for election to the Central Committee. The panel was adopted unanimously. The members elected were:

(1) Charu Majumdar, (2) Sushital Roychoudhuri, (3) Shiv Kumar Misra, (4) Kanu Sanyal, (5) RP Sharaf, (6) Appu, (7) Saroj Datta, (8) Satyanarain Singh, (9) Vempatapu Satyanarayana, (10) Adivatla Kailasham, (11) Souren Bose, (12) Mahendra Singh (of UP), (13) Rajkishore Singh (of Bihar), (14) Gurbax Singh (of Bihar), (15) Appala Suri, (16) Nagbhusan Patnaik, (17) Kodandaraman (of Tamil Nadu), (18) Asim Chatterjee, (19) Suniti Kumar Ghosh, (20) Ambadi Menon (of Kerala).

I do not remember if Sohal Singh of Punjab was elected a member or a place was left vacant to be filled up later. It may be mentioned here that Ambadi Menon, who attended the Congress as a delegate from Kerala, joined the Congress party soon after.

It was decided to constitute the Politbureau of the Central Committee with 11 members. The following comrades were elected to the Politbureau: (1) Charu Majumdar, (2) Sushital Roychoudhuri, (3) Shiv Kumar Misra, (4) Kanu Sanyal, (5) Saroj Datta, (6) Satyanarain Singh, (7) RP Sharaf, (8) L Appu, (9) Souren Bose.

Charu Majumdar said that there were sharp differences between two groups of comrades of Andhra. After the Party Congress was over, he would go to Andhra and resolve the differences between them and two comrades from Andhra would fill up two places in the Politbureau. It may be noted here that Majumdar failed to go to Andhra after the Congress and the two places remained vacant.

Charu Majumdar was elected General Secretary of the Party unanimously.

The newly elected Central Committee met the following morning. At the very outset, Sushital Roychoudhuri opened the Red Book (*Quotations from Chairman Mao Tsetung*) and read out the following passage on 'strengthening the Party Committee System' without adding any word of his own:

'The Party committee system is an important Party institution for ensuring collective leadership and preventing any individual from monopolising the conduct of affairs. It has recently been found that in some (of course, not all) leading bodies it is the habitual practice for one individual to monopolize the conduct of affairs and decide important problems. Solutions to important problems are decided not by Party committee meetings but by one individual, and membership in the Party committee has become nominal. Differences of opinion among committee members cannot be resolved and are left unresolved for a long time. Members of the Party committee maintain only formal, not real, unity among themselves. This situation must be changed.'⁵

Charu Majumdar said that he would respect the Party Committee system in future. No unilateral decision would be made. In his book *The Naxalite Movement*, Sankar Ghosh wrote with reference to the discussion in the Party Congress on this question: 'One of the staunchest supporters of Mazumdar's

authority was Suniti Ghosh who said that there were some so-called revolutionaries who pretended to accept Mao and the CPC but actually opposed them..." To call me 'one of the staunchest supporters of Mazumdar's authority' is far from fair. I never used the expression 'revolutionary authority' in any of my writings in *Liberation*. I never spoke in favour of it. At first I was indifferent to it. Gradually, I realised its significance and criticised it. At the Central Committee meeting, I said that if Charu Majumdar was not allowed to issue any statement without approval at a Central Committee meeting, it would be difficult to convene meetings of the Central Committee frequently. Between two meetings, a situation might require some statement of the Party's policy on an issue. It was decided that the General Secretary would conduct the Party's affairs in consultation with the Polit Bureau members with whom it was possible to consult the issues.

Four zonal bureaus of the Central Committee – South, North-west, North-central and North-east (Bengal and Assam) were formed. Each bureau would have as its members the Central Committee members of that zone. Souren Bose became the convener of the North-east Zone. Not a single meeting of this bureau was ever convened.

Saroj Datta and I, were given the charge of Party journals.

This was the first and last meeting of the Central Committee. No other meeting of the Committee was held afterwards. Though Charu Majumdar had assured the Congress and the Central Committee that he would act in consultation with others, he virtually acted as the sole 'revolutionary authority.' Whatever he wrote, his unilateral decisions – even on a question like the announcement of the formation of the People's Army – became the Party line. Even PB members like Sushital Roychoudhuri who were available for consultation, were not consulted. Whatever little collective functioning existed before, it vanished after the Party Congress.

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The Chinese Media and Our Struggle

The Chinese press and radio gave us overwhelming support, which was no doubt valuable. They infused courage and confidence into the minds of communist revolutionaries. The writings like the *People's Daily* editorial 'Spring Thunder Over India', broadcast by the Peking Radio in different languages, carried the message of Naxalbari throughout India and helped to bring communist revolutionaries closer to one another.

But the Chinese press did not always respect the teachings of Mao Tse Tung and other great Marxist-Leninist teachers. Chinese articles, including 'Spring Thunder Over India' stressed that the path of the Indian revolution would be the same as China's. It is curious that the Hsinhua News Agency article 'India's Revolution advances along brilliant path illuminated by Chairman Mao', dated December 27, 1967 (the same as the article entitled 'Historic Turning Point in the Indian Revolution'¹ only with some minor changes in the construction of some sentences), while referring to the first declaration of the All India Coordination Committee and mentioning the main tasks that it undertook, omitted one of them. The task that the Chinese article singled out for not mentioning was: 'To develop militant, revolutionary struggles of the *working class* and other toiling people...' Was the omission deliberate and intended to be suggestive? The task of organising working class struggles in India and coordinating them with peasant struggles to lead the revolution to victory seemed not to conform to their conception of the Chinese path. They went against the Marxist principle upheld by Marx to Mao that the Communist Party of every country should work out its own line and policies *independently*, after studying and analysing its concrete conditions as every country has some specific features of its own. Its tasks are to have a grasp over Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought, which sums up the

revolutionary experiences of other countries, to have knowledge of the history of its own country and to investigate and study the conditions - economic, social, political, etc. - of its country and integrate the general theory of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought with the concrete conditions of its country. The International Working Men's Association (the First International) - Marx said, 'does not dictate the form of political movements. In each particular case some special aspect of the problem presents itself, and the workers must address themselves to its consideration in their own way.'

Earlier in the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels pointed out: 'There is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie.'

In the 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', Marx again said: 'It is altogether self-evident that, to be able to fight at all, the working class must organise itself at home as a class and that its own country is the immediate arena of its struggle. In so far as its class struggle is national, not in substance, but as the Communist Manifesto says "in form".'

To quote Lenin: '...the task consists in learning to apply the general and basic principles of communism to the *specific relations* between classes and parties, to the *specific features* in the objective development towards communism which are different in each country and which we must be able to discover, study and predict.'

Lenin also wrote: 'It is now essential that Communists of every country should quite consciously take into account both the fundamental objectives of the struggle against opportunism and "Left" doctrinairism, and the concrete patterns which this struggle assumes and must inevitably assume in each country, in conformity with the specific character of its economics, politics, culture, and national composition (Ireland, etc.), its colonies, religious divisions and so on and so forth... To seek out, investigate, predict, and grasp that which is nationally specific and nationally distinctive, in the *concrete manner* in which each country should tackle a single international task: victory over opportunism and "Left" doctrinairism within the working class movement; the overthrow of the bourgeoisie; such is the basic task in the historical period that all the advanced countries (and not they alone) are going through.'

Addressing representatives of some Latin American Communist Parties Mao Tse Tung said: 'The experience of the Chinese revolution, that is, building rural base areas, encircling the cities from the countryside and finally seizing the cities, may not be wholly applicable to many of your countries, though it can serve for your reference. I beg to advise you not to transplant Chinese experience mechanically. The experience of any foreign country can serve as

for reference and must not be regarded as dogma. The universal truth of Marxism-Leninism and the concrete conditions of your own countries - the two must be integrated.⁷

When Charu Majumdar wrote 'China's path is our path', and it was not challenged, our comrades, as we shall see, betrayed poor grasp of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought.

Secondly, the Chinese media quoted Charu Majumdar day in and day out and seemed to project him as the leader to be followed. A Hsinhua dispatch, dated March 28, 1970, said:

Charu Majumdar, leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), pointed out that the practice of struggle in 1969 proved: rely on the poor and landless peasants; educate them in Mao Tse Tung Thought; adhere firmly to the path of armed struggle; build guerrilla forces and march forward along the path of liquidating the class enemies. Only thus can the high tide of struggle advance irresistibly.⁸

They seemed to put the stamp of approval on Charu Majumdar's line of annihilating class enemies.

Such assessments swept us off our feet.

It may be noted that in the meantime the following articles by Charu Majumdar had appeared in *Liberation*. In 'March Onward by Summing up the Experience of the Peasant Revolutionary Struggle of India', which was published in December 1969, he wrote: 'The people's war is a peasant war'; 'the democratic revolution of every country has become a component part of [China's Great Proletarian] Cultural Revolution'. Speaking of the experience gained from the Naxalbari struggle, he stated: 'The peasant fought not for land or crops but for political power' and 'The peasant relied not on others but stood on his own feet to carry on this struggle'; 'The revolutionary peasants [of Naxalbari and Srikakulam] have demonstrated through their struggle that neither mass movement nor mass organisation is indispensable for waging guerrilla warfare... Mass organisations and mass movements increase the tendency towards open and economist movement and expose the revolutionary workers before the enemy, which makes it easier for the enemy to launch attacks. Therefore, open mass movement and mass organisation are obstacles in the way of the development and expansion of guerrilla warfare'; 'the development and expansion of guerrilla warfare is possible only by relying on the poor and landless peasants; no other class is able to wage this struggle'; 'guerrilla warfare can be started only by liquidating the feudal classes in the countryside... the annihilation of the class enemy is the higher form of class struggle while the act of annihilating class enemies through guerrilla action [by secret groups conspiratorially formed, as Charu Majumdar explained soon after in another article] is the primary stage of the guerrilla struggle.' In February 1970, the

Liberation printed Majumdar's article 'Make the 1970s the Decade of Liberation. He wrote: The advance [made by the peasant armed struggle in India] was possible because the Indian revolutionaries received the guidance of Chairman Mao Tsetung's leadership every day through the radio broadcasts from Peking [Majumdar had Mao Tsetung's name always on his lips and his policies were at complete variance with Mao Tsetung's teachings]. The 1970s is here. Let us make this decade the decade of liberation of the exploited and oppressed masses of India. With Chairman Mao as our leader we will surely triumph.'

During his talks to revolutionary peasant cadres, the notes of which, approved by Charu Majumdar himself, were carried by *Liberation* in February 1970 under the title 'A Few Words About Guerrilla Actions', Majumdar clarified what he meant by guerrilla actions or guerrilla warfare. He said that a guerrilla unit should be formed in *complete secrecy* - secretly from the people who are not vigilant enough and even from Party units which are not sufficiently prepared for illegal work. 'The method of forming a guerrilla unit', Majumdar stated, 'has to be *wholly conspiratorial*'. Propaganda should be carried on among the peasants - preferably poor peasants - that political power should be seized and their villages should be liberated by *eliminating the local class enemies* - by killing some of them and making others flee away. It would be possible then to carry out the work of land reform. Stress should be laid on killing the jotedars, the class enemies. The guerrilla units should not include, if possible, the middle peasant and petty bourgeois comrades. At first the masses would remain indifferent. But more political work would arouse them and they would become active supporters. Majumdar said: 'In fact, a time will come when the battle cry will be, "He who has not dipped his hand in the blood of class enemies can hardly be called a communist". When the jotedars were eliminated, the land and the crops and everything else would belong to the peasants [as if the exploiters' state did not exist.] The struggle would spread to larger and larger areas and 'the flames of people's war [would] engulf the whole of the countryside'.

This piece was quite illuminating. This and the articles that appeared from December 1969 onwards, to which we have just referred, chalked out a line that constituted a complete deviation from Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. But the manner in which the Chinese media projected Charu Majumdar till sometime before the Party Congress, held in mid-May 1970, put to sleep our critical faculties. The fault was no doubt ours, our poor grasp of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought.

These articles perhaps warned the leaders of the CPC and for several months - from sometime before the Party Congress - the Chinese media

deserved silence and did not give the usual support to our Party and our struggle - silence that seemed unusual to us.

We have already referred to the article entitled 'Confession in an Impasse: A Comment on Nixon's "Inaugural Address" and the Contemptible Applause by the Soviet Revisionist Renegade Clique', the original Chinese version of which first appeared in *Renmin Ribao* and *Hongqi*. The English translation was carried by *Peking Review*, No.5, 1969 and was broadcast by the Peking Radio more than once. The article made the astonishingly absurd prophecy towards its end:

'As to "the beginning of the third millenium", that is, the year 2001, it will be the brilliant festival of the worldwide victory of the proletarian revolution, the brilliant festival of the worldwide victory of Marxism, Leninism, Mao Tsetung's Thought.' The article was reprinted in *Liberation*, May 1969.¹ This article marked a turning point in the brief history of the AICCCR and the CPI(ML).

While addressing the May Day rally in Calcutta in 1969, where Kanu Sanyal announced the formation of the CPI (M-L), he said:

The great Communist Party of China has declared that by the year 2001, that is, only 31 years from now, the people of the whole world will be liberated from all kinds of exploitation of man by man and will celebrate the worldwide victory of Marxism, Leninism, Mao Tsetung's Thought. This is no mere declaration, it is a historic directive. Through this the great Communist Party of China points out to the communists of the whole world how excellent the world situation is for making revolution, and, at the same time, directs all of them to march forward boldly.²

A little earlier, *Ghatana Prabaha* (The Stream of Events), our organ in Bengali, wrote editorially:

...the prophecy has been made by revolutionary China that the toiling people of the whole world will be emancipated by 2001.³

A Bengali translation of the *Peking Review* article appeared in *Deshabrati* on June 5, 1969. The editor's note at the beginning says that the article was given much importance by the Peking Radio, which broadcast it more than once at the end of January.

Somewhat later, Charu Majumdar said: 'Even if this fear [the attack by the USA and the Soviet Union on China] comes true, India will surely be liberated by 1975'.⁴ Again he said: 'This is why I believe that it is by the end of 1975 that the 500 million Indian people will complete writing the great epic of their liberation.'⁵ To quote Majumdar again, 'It was when Chairman [Mao Tsetung] saw the possibility of a tremendous explosion among the 500 million people of India that he declared that the history of the human civilisation will enter a new era by 2001.'⁶

To attribute the absurd prediction to Mao Tse Tung was to misunderstand him completely. Communists, Mao held, are not soothsayers. They analyse and point out the general trend of world events but no Communist, however great, can foretell a definite date by which the proletarian revolution would triumph all over the world – even in a particular country. Could the general trend of world events lead any sane person to conclude that Socialism would achieve victory by 2001 in the USA and in countries of Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, etc.?

Speaking of China, where socialism had been achieved in the means of production (but not in the relations between men in the course of production and in the ideological sphere), Mao warned in October 1968 – only a few months before the Chinese commentator's prophecy was made: 'We have won a great victory. But the defeated class will also struggle. These people are still around and this class still exists. Therefore, we cannot speak of final victory. Not even for decades...' ¹⁵ He often said: 'The victory or defeat of the revolution can be determined only over a long period of time.' ¹⁶ Speaking of Socialist China in 'On Khrushchov's Phony Communism and its Historical Lessons for the World' (written in July 1964), Mao Tse Tung said: 'The complete victory of socialism cannot be brought about in one or two generations; to resolve this question thoroughly requires five or ten generations or even longer.' ¹⁷

How did the prophecy affect our Party line? First, the idea of an arduous, long-drawn, protracted war was given up and the faith in an easy, swift victory gained ground. The declaration of the AICCCR, issued in May 1968, said that under the leadership of the working class, the peasantry – the main force of the Indian revolution – would have to 'wage a *protracted* armed struggle' in order to achieve country-wide victory. ¹⁸ The idea that an arduous, protracted struggle must be waged in order to achieve victory in the revolution was emphasised before 1969 in our writings again and again. ¹⁹

But the Party line started undergoing a complete change from 1969 onwards. As already noted, the idea of an arduous, long-drawn struggle gave place to faith in quick, facile victory. In the article 'Make the 1970's the Decade of Liberation', Charu Majumdar declared: 'The 1970's is here. Let us make this decade the decade of liberation of the vast exploited and oppressed masses of India. With Chairman Mao as our leader, we will surely triumph.' ²⁰ There was no investigation, no concrete analysis of the concrete situation in India. It was pure wishful thinking which was encouraged in him by the Chinese article 'Confession in an Impasse'. There was a bit of arithmetic in this declaration. If Socialism was going to win worldwide victory by 2001, India would have to complete the new democratic revolution by the end of the seventies, allowing time to make the transition from New Democracy to Socialism. Majumdar's

speech on the 'Political-Organisational Report', drafted and submitted by him to the Party Congress in May 1970, ended with his emphatic assertion: 'The seventies will surely be the decade of liberation.'²¹ Soon he allowed five more years for the transition. In 'March Onward, Day of Victory is Near' he said: 'When I say 'Make the 70s the Decade of Liberation', I cannot think beyond 1975. The idea of today's armed struggle was first born in the mind of one man. That idea has now filled the minds of ten million people. If the new revolutionary consciousness, born only in 1967, can permeate the minds of 10 million people in 1970, why is it impossible for these 10 millions to rouse and mobilise the 500 million people of India in a surging people's war in 1975?'²² This is not Marxism but arithmetical calculations (all wrong) based on pure subjectivism with added manifestation of Himalayan conceit. That revolutionary consciousness, the idea of armed struggle, was born in India in 1967, and that too in the mind of one man, is preposterous. I think this point needs no elaboration.

Second, Charu Majumdar opposed mass organisations and mass movements to Party building soon after 1969 and considered them impediments to the revolutionary struggle. Earlier, he had different ideas. We have already dwelt on this subject; we shall not discuss it any further.

Third, it was from 1969 that Charu Majumdar extolled guerrilla war by which he meant secret annihilation by secret groups of poor and landless peasants. By annihilation, he meant physical elimination, killings. But Mao's ideas were different. In a parenthesis in 'On Protracted War', Mao wrote: '...to destroy the enemy means to disarm him or "deprive him of the power to resist," and does not mean to destroy every member of his forces physically.'²³ Speaking of the bourgeoisie, Mao said: 'The bourgeoisie will be eliminated but not physically; the bourgeoisie will be eliminated as a class but remoulded as individuals.'²⁴ It was Mao's view that in order to suppress the reactionaries it was necessary to execute 'the worst local tyrants and evil gentry'. He said: 'Every county [sub-division of a province in China] has these major tyrants [who slaughtered many peasants], some as many as several dozen and others at least a few and the only effective way of suppressing the reactionaries is to execute at least a few in each county who are guilty of the most heinous crimes.'²⁵ But to quote him again, 'Reactionaries must be suppressed, but killing without discrimination is strictly forbidden; the fewer killings the better.'²⁶

Jen Pi-shih, who became a member of the CC and also of the PB of the CPC, and made a significant contribution to the agrarian reform in China, said in the course of his speech to an enlarged session of the North-West People's Liberation Army's Front Committee on January 12, 1948: 'We adopt a policy of elimination toward the class exploitative system of the landlords but we do not adopt a policy of elimination toward the landlord as a person....The Communist Party

is resolutely opposed to unwarranted beating and killing and to the adoption of corporal punishment of criminals. Indiscriminate beating and killing and corporal punishment are the products of feudal society. They are only practised by the feudal lord towards his serfs and the warlord towards his soldiers. We are opposed to indiscriminate killing of people, but this does not mean that there is no capital punishment at all. With regard to really arch counter-revolutionary elements and arch tyrannical elements whose crimes are really extremely great and who the people of the whole country say should be executed, after they have received death sentences by the people's courts, and their sentences have been approved by a government organ.... they should be executed and their crimes published (no one may be executed in secret).²⁷

Jen Pi-shih also wrote: 'It should be understood that the uniting of 90 per cent of the rural population is the basic condition for our wiping out of feudalism and winning the war.... Only when the masses of the people are really set in motion, can the feudal classes be eliminated. Simple and hasty methods must absolutely not be applied.'²⁸

Mao Tse Tung also said: '...the revolutionary war is a war of the masses; it can be waged only by mobilising the masses and relying on them.... What is a true bastion of iron? It is the masses, the millions upon millions of people who genuinely and sincerely support the revolution. This is the real iron bastion which no force can smash, no force whatsoever.... By linking the problem of the well-being of the masses with that of the revolutionary war, the comrades in both these places are simultaneously solving the problems of revolutionary methods of work and of accomplishing their revolutionary tasks.'²⁹

Charu Majumdar discovered a tactic of revolutionary struggle, a short-cut to liberation. In some of his 'eight documents' written before the Naxalbari uprising, he instructed, as noted before, his followers to form armed 'combat units' which would be politically educated. He wanted the units to launch attacks against jotedars, hated bureaucrats and policemen and to set fire secretly to jotedars' houses. He held that liberated bases could be created as some landlords would be annihilated and the others would flee.³⁰

But, as noted before, the Naxalbari uprising followed the mass line. During and after Naxalbari-till 1969-Charu made no mention of secret annihilation of class enemies or other enemies and of 'combat units' and the like; for instance, at the meeting on November 12-13, 1967, at which the All India Coordination Committee was formed and undertook four main tasks to which we have referred before.

And as noted before, at its second meeting in May 1968, the Coordination Committee, which changed its name to All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries, declared:

*Not conspiratorial methods but the mass line alone must be pursued if the enemies of the Indian people are to be overthrown.*³¹

But this underwent a complete change in early 1969. In February of that year, Majumdar went to Andhra and set up an Andhra State Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries at a meeting with some Andhra comrades. While returning, he saw the vision of a 'People's Democratic India, Socialist India' and was confirmed in his belief that the struggle would engulf the whole of Andhra in the near future as he read a newspaper report that one class enemy was killed in an attack by peasant guerrillas.³²

The 'combat unit' of the 'eight documents' became the 'guerrilla unit'. Charu Majumdar was impressed by Lin Piao's writing: 'Guerrilla warfare is the only way to mobilise and apply the whole strength of the people against the enemy...'.³³ The sentence is incomplete: Majumdar left out the words: 'the only way to expand our forces in the course of the war, deplete and weaken the enemy, gradually change the balance of forces between the enemy and ourselves, switch from guerrilla to mobile warfare, and finally defeat the enemy.' Majumdar's conception of guerrilla warfare was wholly different from what Lin Piao meant. To Lin Piao (and Mao Tsetung), guerrilla warfare was warfare between two enemies – the people's armed forces and the armed forces of the enemy. Mao Tsetung said: 'What is guerrilla warfare? It is the indispensable and therefore the best form of struggle for the people's armed forces to employ over a long period in a backward country, a large semi-colonial country, in order to inflict defeats on the armed enemy and build up their own bases.'³⁴ At the initial stage, the people's armed forces are much weaker than the enemy's. By adopting the guerrilla form of warfare, and attacking and harassing the enemy's forces from different sides, the people's armed forces change the balance of strength between themselves and the enemy. 'In the later period of the war of Resistance Against Japan and during the Third Revolutionary Civil War', said Lin Piao, 'we switched our strategy from that of guerrilla warfare as the *primary* form of fighting to that of mobile warfare in the light of the changes in the balance of forces between the enemy and ourselves'.³⁵ In China, guerrilla warfare was a form of people's war, which could be waged with the active help of the masses of the people, including old men, women and children. Charu Majumdar's guerrilla warfare was of an essentially different variety. As he explained in 'A Few Words about Guerrilla Actions,' what he called the 'guerrilla unit' was conspiratorially

formed – secret from the people and secret even from Party units 'which have not yet fully mastered the methods and discipline required for illegal work'. The guerrilla action would be the secret killing of a jotedar by a secret group formed conspiratorially. The object would be seizure of power – with some class enemies annihilated in a village and others having power – with some would be liberated (as if the enemy's state did not exist) and it would be possible to conduct land reform 'under the supervision of a revolutionary committee, as a part of the people's state power.'³⁶

The kind of guerrilla action Majumdar envisaged – the secret annihilation of a notorious jotedar – might win the sympathy of peasants, but could hardly mobilise them, except for a few, in any struggle. It was a case of active heroes and passive people. Such guerrilla warfare by small bands of peasants could not seize power or liberate the rural areas – a daydream – which only millions and millions of oppressed people, roused and mobilised, could accomplish. The tragic fact is that Charu Majumdar's type of guerrilla warfare was soon suppressed.

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29. Mao Tse Tung, 'Be Concerned with the Well-being of the Masses, Pay Attention to Methods of Work', *SW*, I, pp.147, 150, 151.
30. See 'What Possibilities does the year 1965 Indicate?'; 'The Main Task today is to Build a Genuine Revolutionary Party through Uncompromising Struggle against Revisionism'; 'The Peasant Struggle must be Carried Forward by Fighting Revisionism'.
31. See 'Declaration of the All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries', *Liberation*, I, No. 8 (June 1968), p.9.

32. Charu Majumdar, 'Srikakulam - Will It be the Yenan of India?' *ibid.*, III, 5 (March 1969), pp.66-9.
33. Lin Piao, *Long Live the Victory of People's War!*, p.71.
34. Mao Tse Tung, 'Introducing *The Communist*', SW, II, p.291.
35. Lin Piao, *op cit.*, p.73.
36. Charu Majumdar, 'A Few Words about Guerrilla Actions', *Liberation*, III, No. 1 (February 1970).

More Differences and Disunity

When differences arose within the Party, no attempt was made to resolve them through comradely debates and discussions in order to reach unity on a higher level. They were treated as antagonistic and meant parting of the ways.

A few months after the Party Congress, the Bihar State Committee submitted a document entitled 'The New Upsurge and Combating Left Opportunism on Some Questions'. In the meantime, after the Congress was over, Satyanarain Singh wrote to Charu Majumdar, asking him to delete from the Political-Organisational Report adopted unanimously at the Party Congress as well as from the report of Charu Majumdar's speech on it, the statement to the effect that the US invasion of Cambodia marked the beginning of the Third World War. He wrote that these reports had not been published by that time; so changes could be made to conform to what Mao Tse Tung declared on May 20, 1970. In his call to the people of the world, 'People of the World, Unite and Defeat the US Aggressors and all their Running Dogs!' Mao said: 'The danger of a new world war still exists, and the people of all countries must get prepared. But revolution is the main trend in the world today.'¹ Charu Majumdar did not delete the said words from the reports. Later, in 'Problems of Indian Revolution and Neo-Trotskyite Deviations: Report,' presented by the Secretary of the Bihar State Committee of the CPI(M-L) – Satyanarain Singh himself – and adopted by the State plenum, it was said "that at the Party Congress the delegation from the state had warned that "Charu and his followers" wanted to establish a parallel line in the international communist movement. Those forebodings had been fully confirmed as the "Charu clique" was preaching its own line on the question of the third world war and taking this line as the theoretical basis of its practical activities.' This 'warning' at the Party Congress by the Bihar

delegates was a fiction – not a fact. The Political-Organisational Report, which Majumdar presented on behalf of the Central Organising Committee of which Satyanarain was a member, was adopted by the Congress unanimously: so was his speech on the report adopted unanimously as a Party document. After the Congress was over, he did not unilaterally delete from the Report and his speech the offensive words – a suggestion worthy of Satyanarain. But in a statement Majumdar issued – ‘Chairman’s call of May 20 ushers in a new age’ – published simultaneously with the Political-Organizational Report and his speech on it, he made the amendment. He wrote in it: ‘By invading Cambodia, the US imperialism has spread its war of aggression to the whole of Indo-China, as a preparation for the Third World War.’² Satyanarain’s charge that ‘Charu and his followers wanted to establish a parallel line in the international communist movement’ was neither fair nor honest. A political careerist, without the least integrity, Satyanarain did not hesitate to tell untruths whenever it suited his interests.

‘The New Upsurge and Combating Left Opportunism on Some Questions’ is basically a left opportunist document. It upholds the tactical line which was initiated by Charu Majumdar. It even extols Majumdar when it says that ‘annihilation of class enemies... is [a] higher form of class struggle and the beginning of guerrilla warfare’. It claims that by pursuing this line ‘In about 12 states, guerrilla zones have emerged and developed and each day they are being consolidated and expanded.’ This was not true to facts. This reckless exaggeration had its roots in left opportunism. The document claims: ‘However, a remarkable feature of the situation has been absolute failure of encirclement and suppression campaign launched by the enemy and complete rout of disruptive ideological attacks of Nagi, Asit and Co., the hirelings of reaction.’ It is far from true that the ‘encirclement and suppression campaign launched by the enemy’ was an ‘absolute failure’, for instance, in Srikakulam. And Singh knew it. The Srikakulam comrade’s report on the situation at the meeting of the Central Organising Committee in January 1970, before the Party Congress, was far from optimistic. Second, to call Nagi Reddy and Asit Sen ‘hirelings of reaction’ was gross abuse: it was Singh’s practice to pour abuse on Asit Sen. But abuse is no answer to ideological-political questions. Asit Sen was neither a conscienceless political careerist nor so poor as Satyanarain in knowledge of Marxism-Leninism. Earlier, Satyanarain wrote. ‘...annihilation of the class enemy was absolutely necessary if feudal authority in the village was to be smashed and [the] peasant’s authority was to be built up.... And, the agrarian revolution solves this question [the question of state power] bit by bit and step by step. Being a long-drawn revolution, it concretely solves the question of seizure of power in one or more villages, then in one or more areas, then in

one or more zones and ultimately throughout the country.³ The question is, can state power be seized in one or a few villages by annihilating class enemies?

It is worth recalling that, after breaking away from the Party, Satyanarain went to Asit Sen's house to align with him. But he was rudely rebuffed by the 'hireling of reaction'.

Speaking of the working class, the Bihar document stated that the peasant struggle was having its impact on the workers. It said: 'The workers are increasingly realising the limitations of economic struggle and have begun to hit back on issues that affect their dignity and honour [instead of fighting on issues like their daily problems, needs and demands]. Their struggles tend to get more protracted and often turn into violent clashes with the police.' Here the secretary of the Bihar Committee appears to be Charu Majumdar's *chela* (devoted pupil). As regards the movement of the youth and students, it was the same left line that the Party was pursuing.

The document went on to say: 'In this fast developing revolutionary situation, our Party CPI(M-L) is called upon to play an effective role to lead the *revolutionary armed struggles in the towns* and coordinate them with armed revolutionary struggle in the countryside so as to be able to emancipate our people from imperialist and feudal bondage and *complete the people's democratic revolution within the present decade*.' This reminds one of Charu Majumdar's call 'Make the '70s the Decade of Liberation.'

The Bihar document supported the left adventurist line of the Party. What were the 'left' trends it wanted to combat? It stated that while right opportunism had been combated and defeated, left opportunism had raised its head. There was an influx of petty bourgeois elements into the Party, who were not proletarianised.

According to the Bihar document, one of the manifestations of left opportunism was that the distinction between landlords and rich peasants was being obliterated. This was narrowing down the revolutionary front and strengthening the reactionary front. According to it, only a tiny section of the rich peasants who had feudal tails would go over to reaction. That was also the Party's view and left opportunism on this question was more an unreal bogey than a real danger.

The document correctly stressed the uneven and protracted character of our revolution and criticised the left trend which made no distinction between the nature of struggle in the town and that in the countryside. Those who represented this trend were in favour of conducting guerrilla actions in the towns also, instead of biding their time, quietly rousing and organising the masses of the urban areas for the revolutionary struggle and going over to the offensive at the right time. The document was in favour of guerrilla actions of a defensive nature in the town.

The document rightly criticised the description of the era as an 'era of self-sacrifice', as Charu Majumdar described it. There is no era exclusively of self-sacrifice. War means preserving oneself to defeat the enemy. But war also demands sacrifice. Self-preservation and self-sacrifice are two opposites of the same entity. There can be no era exclusively of self-sacrifice.

Lastly, the document correctly criticised authoritarianism in the Party and absence of collective functioning. It identified the 'central leadership' (meaning implicitly Charu Majumdar) as the source of the malady. It pointed out that this left opportunism in organisation had to be combated and liquidated.

It may be recalled that it was Souren Bose, Charu Majumdar's loyal devotee until his arrest in March 1971, who had theorised in the beginning of 1970 that Majumdar was the 'revolutionary authority', an infallible leader of the Party who had to be unquestioningly obeyed. We have also noted that, as suggested by Souren, I asked Satyanarain in February 1970, when he came to arrange for Majumdar's visit to Bihar, his opinion about Souren's article. Satyanarain replied that it was all right but it suffered from one deficiency; it did not mention who would be Majumdar's successor as the revolutionary authority. It was implicit in what he said that Satyanarain thought that the article should have mentioned him as the revolutionary authority after Majumdar.

A meeting of the Politbureau of the CC – its only meeting – was held in October 1970. Only four members attended: Charu Majumdar, Shiv Kumar Mishra, Satyanarain Singh and Saroj Datta. I escorted Majumdar to the meeting place.

A tragic incident occurred. While on his way to attend this meeting, Comrade Appu was murdered in Tamil Nadu by landlords' gangs. We received the information later.

It was decided at the meeting to convene a meeting of the CC to discuss the Bihar State Committee's document. But no CC meeting was convened. It marked the parting of ways.

To be brief, in early November 1971, Satyanarain Singh convened a meeting of like-minded comrades. They met and formed a parallel CPI(M-L). This meeting expelled Charu Majumdar and me and elected Satyanarain Singh as the General Secretary of the new organization.

Towards the end of 1972, I completed a document summing up the experiences of our struggles. It was distributed among interested persons. Sometime in 1973, Sibul (whose full name I have forgotten and whose Party name today is Saifuddin and who had joined Satyanarain's organisation) met me one day. After some discussion he asked me if I was willing to see Satyanarain. I refused. Saifuddin made an appointment to meet me another day. That day, without giving me even a hint of it, he took me to a house at

Barabazar in Calcutta. I saw Satyanarain there. He said that, after reading my document he thought that there was no difference between us. He asked me if I would agree to join their organisation. I wanted him to make a self-criticism first. He was unwilling. Our talks ended.

Later, I had occasions to meet him in order to work jointly for the release of political prisoners after the rout of the Indira Congress in the parliamentary elections of 1977. In my experience, he had political ambitions but no political integrity.⁴

After the Party Congress, Sushital Roychoudhuri, Secretary of the West Bengal State Committee and previously Convener of the AICCCR, started voicing his criticism of certain aspects of the movement of the youth and students. In October 1970, he took one month's leave as Secretary of the State Committee for reasons of health and submitted in the same month a document (which is known as Purna's *dalil*). In it he criticised some aspects of the struggles then waged by students and youth in urban areas. He correctly criticised the attacks on educational institutions, breaking of furniture, causing damages to laboratories and disrupting examinations. He described them as Luddite type of actions. After the end of Napoleonic wars, an economic crisis overtook England. Unemployment and hunger oppressed many. In some places in England, industrial workers directed their fury against machinery, thinking machines to be the evil that was crushing their lives. They broke machines and their actions were called Luddite. Here students launched their attacks against educational institutions which were merely tools in the hands of the class of oppressors and exploiters for preserving a reactionary educational set-up.

As already noted, Sushital Roychoudhuri also criticised the destruction of portraits of men like Rammohun Roy, Vidyasagar and Rabindra Nath Tagore.

It is not true that Rammohun was a representative of the bourgeoisie of the old-time bourgeois democratic revolution, as Roychoudhuri claimed. This is hardly correct. The bourgeois democratic revolution, with which the national revolution is closely related, would seek to overthrow colonial rule. But British colonial rule was a blessing to Rammohun. Roychoudhuri has drawn a distinction between the Rammohuns and the Gandhis and said that it was not wrong to destroy the portraits of Gandhi and of those who represented his ideology. To uproot the images of such persons from the minds of people, it was necessary to carry out ideological work instead of burning their portraits. In 'Report on Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan', Mao said: 'It is the peasants who made the idols, and when the time comes they will cast the idols aside with their own hands; there is no need for someone else to do it for them prematurely. The Communist Party's propaganda policy in such matters should be: Draw the

bow without shooting, just indicate the motions.' [That is, while Communists should guide the peasants in attaining a full measure of political consciousness, they should leave it to the peasants' own initiative to abolish superstitions, and other bad practices,...it is wrong for anybody else to do it for them.]⁵ In our case, the destruction prematurely of portraits of those – whether Gandhi or Rammohun – who were household names, without raising the people's political consciousness, without sufficient ideological work, antagonised the petty bourgeoisie. This was driving this class, an ally, to the camp of adversaries.

In criticising some activities of the youth and students, Sushital Roychoudhuri received no support from others. In the State Committee meetings and elsewhere, he was completely isolated. In the State Committee meeting in January 1971, some member asked him what would he say on the issue at a meeting of a lower unit. He answered that he would express the views of the State Committee and in case he was asked his own views he would express them too. Some comrades like Souren Bose and Asim Chatterjee were very aggressive. They said that it would be breach of discipline and demanded the expulsion of Sushital Roychoudhuri from the Party.

Sushital Babu remained cool and unperturbed and quite firm. He showed no trace of agitation. Saroj Datta and I were silent. It was unthinkable for me that he, who was one of the main architects of the Party and whose whole life was dedicated to the cause of revolution, would be expelled from the Party. Majumdar, who had gone out, had by then come back. He said that nobody could expel Sushital Roychoudhuri. If he desired, the State Committee would arrange a meeting of a Party unit where he would be free to express his views only. The clamour ceased. We spent the night together.

Sushital Roychoudhuri passed away in March 1971. Before his death, he wrote an article in Bengali, the English translation of which appeared in the second volume of *Naxalbari and After: A Frontier Anthology* under the title 'Problems and Crises of Indian Revolution'. It was published by Roychoudhuri's admirers after his death. The article has been wrongly dated November 1970. There is reference in the article to Charu Majumdar's announcement that the People's Army was formed. The announcement was dated December 7, 1970. So the article must have been written sometime after the first week of December.

In this article, Sushital Roychoudhuri criticised Charu Majumdar's line. The line that was being pursued by the Party, as 'ultra-adventurism'. He pointed out that the Party had begun well under the leadership of Charu Majumdar but, in the next phase, Majumdar made changes in the Party line. First, it was held earlier that our revolution would be arduous and protracted. But in the next phase it was proclaimed that our revolution would triumph by 1975. Second, the task of arousing and mobilising the masses in the revolution

through class struggle was neglected. Economic struggle, the necessity of which was recognised before, was given up. The task of building a united front of allied classes – which is a process – was not undertaken. Instead, in urban areas, small businessmen and similar persons, our potential allies, became targets of the annihilation campaign. Annihilation of class enemies by conspiratorially formed squads became the tactic of struggle. To Charu Majumdar, annihilation meant killing but Mao Tsetung meant by it depriving the enemy of 'the power to resist'. Majumdar called for secret killings of class enemies by secret squads guerrilla action which became synonymous with guerrilla warfare. According to Sushital Roychoudhuri, in urban activities, the importance of actions was exaggerated in the later phase and the importance of political propaganda was denied, which was a manifestation of revisionist thinking. Earlier, in the same article, Sushital Babu described it as a 'successful development' that a large number of 'guerrilla units' had been formed and there had been the beginning of 'guerrilla war'.

Roychoudhuri also criticised the leadership for not undertaking in the urban areas the task: 'to build up the proletarian base of the Party, to build up all mass struggles which are just and advantageous for us, to conduct all these struggles with restraint and thus to preserve our strength and wait' – the task as enjoined by Mao Tsetung. Instead, without any discussion in the Central Committee, in urban areas, the campaign of annihilation was conducted and students were exhorted to carry on Luddite-type actions.

Party committees did not function: without consulting others, Charu Majumdar arrogated all powers to himself. He also announced the formation of the People's Army without reference to anybody else. Authoritarianism had reached its height.

Sushital Roychoudhuri said that the Party suffered immense losses by trying to create red terror in urban areas. There is no era exclusively of self-sacrifice, as Charu Majumdar held. As Mao Tsetung said, the object of war is 'to preserve oneself and destroy the enemy' but war also demands sacrifice.

Sushital Roychoudhuri concluded the article with the slogan 'Resist the ultra-adventurist trend raising its head in our Party'.⁷

Here I shall refer to a misunderstanding between Sushital Babu and me. After the raid by the police on Deshabrati Prakashani on April 27, 1970, *Liberation* went underground. His name as Editor-in-Chief of the journal was then dropped as all other names of individuals except that of Charu Majumdar were taken off. He did not complain then. But after the January 1971 meeting of the West Bengal State Committee, he wrote to me two bitter letters for the omission of his name. It was my mistake that I had not discussed the matter with him before omitting his name.

In June 1971, the Bengal-Bihar-Orissa Border Regional Committee (BBOBRC – Ashim Chatterjee and his associates) submitted a document criticising the Party's stand towards Pakistan in the struggle that was raging in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). It demanded the Party's unqualified support for the Pakistan government. The main reason was that the Chinese government was extending its support to the Pakistan government. The committee held that the Pakistan government was the government of the national bourgeoisie of Pakistan. It urged that the Party should have engaged in sabotage activities against the Indian interventionists in order to help the Pakistan government. The committee ignored the complex situation in East Pakistan. The Pakistani ruling classes – the comprador bourgeoisie and the feudal class – cruelly exploited and oppressed the people of East Pakistan and committed terrible atrocities on them. The Bengali nationality, which constituted the population of East Pakistan keenly wanted to get rid of the domination by far-away West Pakistan, mainly Punjabis. It became a question of national self-determination. The sympathies of the people of West Bengal lay wholly with the people of East Pakistan engaged in struggle. On the other hand, the US imperialists and later, the Soviet social-imperialists engaged in conspiracies with the Indian expansionists to dismember Pakistan. But the Communist Party of East Pakistan (M-L) was leading an armed struggle in some districts to create liberated areas. It was fighting on two fronts : against both the Pakistani troops and the Awami League's so-called 'Muktibahini' (the liberation army), armed, trained and financed by the Indian expansionists. Our Party rightly supported the struggle that was being led by the CPEP(M-L) and exposed and denounced the Soviet social-imperialists, the Indian expansionists and their East Pakistani agents – the leaders of the Awami League. The Party rightly opposed the intervention in the internal affairs of Pakistan by the Indian expansionists.

The BBOBRC's argument was that as China was supporting the Pakistan government, our Party should have followed suit. Later, certain facts that completely demolish BBOBRC's argument came to light. On April 11, 1971, Chinese Premier Chou En-lai wrote to Yahya Khan, who ruled Pakistan at the time, pledging support to 'Pakistani people'. (The majority of the people of Pakistan was constituted by the East Pakistanis). His message also said: '*The question of East Pakistan should be settled according to the wishes of the people of East Pakistan.*'⁸ *People's Daily* of January 31, 1972 declared, 'The Pakistan Government had made blunders and horrible blunders indeed in the past in handling the question of East Pakistan.'⁹

The Statesman (Calcutta) on November 16, 1998 carried a review of Sultan M Khan's book *Memories and Reflections of a Pakistani Diplomat* by AG

Noorani. Sultan Khan was one of the ablest diplomats of Pakistan. At different times, he became ambassador to China, ambassador to the USA and Pakistan's Foreign Secretary. Noorani wrote, 'Beijing was on the horns of a dilemma, torn between a valued ally and a whole people whom it was suppressing brutally. Sultan Khan went to Beijing on April 9, 1971, ...a fortnight after the crackdown in Dhaka on March 25. Yahya was "puzzled by the lack of response from China" to his messages. Chou asked the visitors some searching questions. "He had spoken with restraint, but...he was clearly expressing concern at the lack of discipline within the army in East Pakistan, the absence of the mobilisation of civilian support, and the absence of a concrete and specific political programme. At the same time, he was stressing the need for a speedy end to the use of force and concerted efforts for economic reconstruction and conciliation in East Pakistan".'¹⁰

Quoting Sultan Khan, Noorani adds: 'Sultan Khan records honestly enough: "I heard Generals talk of starving East Pakistan into submission, cleansing it of the non-Muslim population, or injecting some good Muslim blood into East Pakistanis as solutions to the problem".'

Later, the BBOBRC submitted another document to the Party centre, entitled 'Regarding the Present Party Line.' This document was critical of the Party's tactical line. In an essay published in a little magazine, Ashim Chatterjee has written that 'the few hints that we received from Souren Bose about the Chinese leaders' criticism of the Party's political line became the determining factor in writing this document, summing up our experience and raising the banner of revolt against the Party line.' And they received encouragement from Souren Bose, who wrote to them from Alipur Jail, lending his support.

The BBOBRC document strongly criticised the Party leadership for withholding from the comrades the Chinese leaders' advice. It pointed out the necessity of summing up the experience of the armed struggle led by the Party and urged for a change in the tactical line. It criticised Charu Majumdar for neglecting the tasks of building base areas and the People's Army. It correctly pointed out the uneven development of the Indian revolution and also correctly raised certain other issues like the need for linking mass movements and mass organisations with armed struggle. It also raised the question of uniting the different groups engaged in armed struggle. Armed struggle of its conception included secret class enemy annihilation. It was for class enemy annihilation even in urban areas. It held that 'revolutionary authority' was necessary for the victory of our revolution. The main conclusion of the document was left opportunist – the conclusion that it was revisionism to reject the tactic of class-enemy annihilation and that the correct Marxist-Leninist line would be to combine this tactic with participation in mass organizations and mass struggles both in urban and in rural areas. Then, at

a time when the struggle was disrupted and the leading members of the committee were reported to have left the area for safe shelters elsewhere, the document made the false claim of having a powerful People's Army under their leadership and gave a call for building base areas.

In this document Ashim, Chatterjee and his associates warned that they would not continue any ideological-political debate within the Party and declared that it was implementing its own line in practice. It further implied that they were leaving the Party.

Ashim Chatterjee and his associates joined the Party in 1969 after it was hailed by the Communist Party of China. It was natural that they decided to leave the Party when they had hints that the leadership of the CPC was critical of the Party line. Ashim Chatterjee and some of his associates were arrested from a hotel at Deoghar in Bihar when they were going to attend a meeting convened by Satyanarain Singh to form a new Party. A member of this group attended the meeting which expelled Charu Majumdar and me and elected Satyanarain Singh as the secretary of the new party.

The West Bengal-Bihar Border (i.e., Murshidabad-Birbhum-Santal Parganas) Regional Committee drafted two reports of their struggle: first, soon after mid-1971 when the struggle was in the ascendant and hope told a flattering tale; and second, a few months after, when the struggle which had spread to 22 police station areas met with reverses, when it was suppressed by the enemy's forces, the police and the regular army. The second report was submitted to the West Bengal State Committee – in March or early April 1972. In early 1972, after Sadhan Sarkar's arrest, Dipak Biswas managed by dubious means with the help of his close associates like Dilip Banerjee and Mahadev Mukherjee to become the secretary of the State Committee. They did not circulate the second report, but suppressed it. The report was highly critical of Charu Majumdar's line. It was written on the basis of the actual experience of the members of the Regional Committee. Dipak Biswas did not hesitate to self criticise. To be brief, the report pointed out that class-enemy annihilation could not mobilise the peasants in the struggle except about ten per cent of them who were young. This tactic isolated the militants from the masses of the peasantry when the enemy launched its offensive. In those areas where class enemy annihilation was followed by the seizure of the *jotedars'* movable possessions and distribution of them among the peasants, burning of land deeds and documents, recovery of pawned articles, etc., a section of the peasants was mobilised. In the absence of a mass line, in the absence of any policy of how to face the enemy's armed forces, comrades failed to advance the struggle. The source of weakness lay in the theorisation

that the class-enemy annihilation was the higher form of class struggle, while it was not class struggle at all. The document also sharply criticized the Party's policy of withdrawal from or non-participation in working class struggle.

Though the document strongly criticised Charu Majumdar's beliefs, it did not fail to pay its tribute to him for providing inspiration to the Naxalbari struggle, for fighting revisionism and right opportunism, rejecting the parliamentary path, etc.

I shall refer later to my differences and to my severance of relations with the West Bengal State Committee of the party.

References

1. See *Liberation*, III, Nos. 7-9 (May-July 1970), p.1.
2. *Ibid*, p.3.
3. Satyanarain Singh, 'Building up the Proletarian Party and Agrarian Revolution', *Liberation*, III, No.1 (November 1969), p.51.
4. See Suniti Kumar Ghosh, 'Civil Liberties Movement and Our Recent Experience', *Frontier*, July 23, 1977.
5. Mao Tse Tung, SW, I, p. 46.
6. See Samar Sen *et al* (Eds.), *Naxalbari and After: A Frontier Anthology*, II, pp.298-99.
7. English version of the article, originally in Bengali, which appeared in *Samakal* (a Bengali periodical) on August 12 and 26, 1978.
8. S Nihal Singh, *The Yogi and the Bear*, pp.92, 172 (note 45).
9. *Ibid*, p.103.
10. The quotes within the quote from Noorani's review are from Sultan M Khan's book.

13

The Chinese Leaders' Suggestions and the Party

Peking gave lavish support to our struggle. Every evening, the Peking Radio broadcast reports of our struggles in English as also different Indian languages, Charu Majumdar's articles or extracts from them, as also extracts from *Liberation* editorials, etc. *The Peking Review* and Hsinhua News Agency also published their articles as well as reproduced our reports of struggle going on in India. But for some time before and after the Party Congress, Peking observed complete silence about our Party and our struggle. The documents of the Party Congress were given to a person in India who maintained contact with the Chinese authorities, for transmission to Peking. But the ice did not melt. The silence was uneasy. Our leaders were feeling anxious. On further enquiry, we were advised to send our representatives to Peking for discussion with the Chinese leaders. It was decided to send Saroj Datta, Souren Bose and me. For reasons beyond control, Saroj Datta and I were unable to go and Souren Bose alone left for China via London and Tirana (capital of Albania) towards the end of August 1970. Souren has written somewhere that Charu Majumdar was opposed to my going to Peking. This is entirely untrue.

Chinese Premier Chou En-lai and CPC's PB member Kang Sheng met Souren on October 29. During the interview Souren, as he said to us, was told by the Chinese comrades not to take notes, not to put in writing anything about the interview before reaching India. According to him, he jotted down some notes in his Peking hotel after the interview and these notes were developed into a report after his arrival in Calcutta, one month after the interview. I am reproducing the report without making any change as an appendix to this book. We assume that, on the whole, it is a correct report of what Chou En-lai and Kang Sheng told him.

In the following lines are given a gist of what the Chinese leaders said. For the full report the reader may see Appendix B.

Comrade Chou En-lai emphasised that all Communist Parties were equal: there was no leader or patriarchal Party. The conception of a patriarchal Party was challenged by Mao Tse Tung in 1957. Every Party had to work out its own line. Foreign interference was harmful. That is the teaching of history. It was not right to refer to China's Chairman as the Chairman of the CPI(M-L). Chou En-lai described his experience after the setback in the struggle in China in 1927 and emphasized that the vanguard isolated from the masses could easily be suppressed by the enemy. What was necessary was to arouse the masses and involve them in struggle. Success or failure of a revolution depended on the line the Party followed. The mass line should be pursued. The Party could be purified through criticism and self-criticism. Without criticism and self-criticism by leaders and cadres, the Party was sure to deviate from the correct path. It was not correct to say that the united front of allied classes and groups should be built after seizure of power in several areas. The building of the united front was a process. At different stages of the struggle, it underwent some changes. The united front should be such as to include all those whom it was possible to win over and to neutralise some whom it was not possible to do so. Chairman Mao's leadership was a guarantee of success to the Chinese revolution.

Comrade Kang Sheng spoke after Chou En-lai. He said that the CPC and the CPI(M-L) were equal and their relations were fraternal. It was wrong to call China's Chairman Mao the leader of the CPI(M-L). Kang Sheng appreciated the Naxalbari struggle, its spread to other areas, cadres' heroism, the struggle of our Party against imperialism and revisionism, our support for China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, our profound respect for Mao Tse Tung Thought, etc. He recalled that Mao Tse Tung had said that the CPI(M-L) was India's hope. But it was not possible for the young party to overcome some shortcomings and weaknesses. What Charu Majumdar said about the building of the united front was incorrect.

Besides the article 'China's Chairman is our Chairman, China's path is our Path', the title of which was objectionable, Kang Sheng said that they had objections to certain formulations in Charu Majumdar's article 'March Onward by Summing up the Experience of the Peasant Revolutionary Struggle of India' about mass organisations and mass movements, about trade unions, etc. He said that Lin Piao's 'Guerrilla Warfare is the Only Way', etc., referred to military matters, to a stage when two armies were of unequal strength. The 'annihilation of the class enemy', which was actually assassination by secret groups, divorced from the masses, was dangerous. He said that the CPI(M-L)'s general orientation was correct but some policies were wrong.

China had an agrarian programme on the basis of which the Chinese Party had mobilised the peasantry in the struggle for seizure of power. He suggested that the CPI(M-L) should not take hasty measures but should correct the wrong policies step by step without hurting the feelings and enthusiasm of the masses. It should have an agrarian policy and replace the secret squads by building an army step by step.

After spending about one month in Europe, when leading comrades, especially Charu Majumdar, were anxious to know about the views of Chinese leaders about our Party line, Souren sent a telegram to his wife from London, telling her on which date and by which flight he would be reaching the Dum Dum airport. Fortunately, the cable was not intercepted by the police.

In the evening of November 29, according to previous arrangement, I took Souren Bose to Charu Majumdar's shelter. On meeting Charu he said that Chinese leaders criticised our Party line but that he upheld the line before them. Charu said that Souren should not have contradicted the Chinese leaders. In the midst of the discussions Charu suffered a heart attack and only felt a little better after I brought him some medicines. Discussions about the Chinese leaders' views had to be postponed till the next evening. I had an appointment with Ashim Chatterjee in south Calcutta at that time and was absent when Souren conveyed to Charu Majumdar the Chinese leaders' opinions and submitted a written report.¹

On December 1 or 2, I took Charu Majumdar to Puri. Pitu, a young man who had obtained a first class in M.Sc. in Physics, and his wife, accompanied us to their house which was to be Majumdar's shelter. On the morning of December 7, the day I was leaving Puri for Calcutta, Charu handed to me a note in which he announced the formation of the People's Liberation Army in West Bengal. He wrote: 'It is by snatching rifles at Magurjan that the People's Liberation Army of West Bengal's peasantry has emerged. All the guerrilla squads of poor and landless peasants in West Bengal are today contingents of the People's Liberation Army led by the Party. In electing the commanders every preference should be given to poor and landless peasants.'²

On my return to Calcutta on the morning of December 8, Saroj Datta told me not to disclose to anybody that the Chinese leaders were critical of our Party line.

I expected that the Chinese leaders' comments on our Party line would be placed at least before the leading comrades of the Party and discussed. Even at that stage, it was possible to save the Party. If the leading comrades were given the report, if they met and reconsidered the Party line in the light of our own experience and after giving due importance to the Chinese comrades'

suggestions, there was the possibility of correcting the Party line. Instead, Charu Majumdar did a grave injustice to the Party by withholding the report from it: Saroj Datta and Souren Bose were his accomplices. Souren played an even worse role. Instead of boldly demanding circulation of the report among at least the leading comrades of different states, he dropped hints here and there, which, without leading to a sober and fruitful discussion, merely roused distrust and suspicion. Ashim Chatterjee has written that the very few things about the Chinese leaders' suggestions played a decisive role in their revolt against Charu Majumdar's line. According to Ashim, later, when Souren went to prison in March 1971, Souren wrote to him, defending him in greater details.

An 'open letter' to CPI (M-L) members, signed by Kanu Sanyal, Tejeswar Rao, Souren Bose, Nagbhusan Patnaik, Kola Venkaiah and Bhuvan Mohan Patnaik was smuggled out of the Visakhapatnam Jail and circulated in mid-1972. This letter referred to the criticism by the Chinese leaders, dubbed the Party line as left-adventurist, and blamed Charu Majumdar and the Central Committee of the Party for ignoring the Chinese leaders' suggestions. It was an appeal to everyone to undergo self-criticism and revise the Party line on the basis of the Chinese criticism and their own experience. This was the first time that there was open reference to the Chinese criticism.³

I shall quote Arun Prosad Mukherjee, then Deputy Commissioner, special branch, Calcutta Police. He retired as Director General of Police, West Bengal. In a recent book *Maoist 'Spring Thunder': The Naxalbari Movement (1967-1972)*, he wrote:

'Over the question of his visit to China, he (Souren) was again [during an interrogation in 1972, subsequent to his interrogation after arrest in March 1971] assured by Shri Mukherjee, the DC, SB, that if he came out with truthful details about his visit and discussions there, the disclosure would not go against him in any way whatsoever and the same will be treated as a closely guarded secret for as long as he wished. Moreover, it was pointed out to him that at this stage when he himself reiterated that he had been completely disillusioned about the CPI(M-L) politics [it was the same person who had written 'To win Victory in the Revolution We must Establish the Revolutionary Authority'] and was ready to give up politics if he was allowed to live a normal life... there was no reason for him to hide facts [from the police].

'At this stage of discussion with Souren Bose, Sri Mukherjee as the DC, SB-1, gave an assurance, the "gentleman's word", to Souren that absolute secrecy would be maintained in regard to this part of his statement regarding visit to China and details of discussion with the two CPC leaders. It was mutually agreed that since Souren was already wanted in some of the Srikakulam cases, known as the Parbatipuram

Conspiracy Case of Andhra Pradesh for which warrants were pending with them, total secrecy would be maintained for nearly a fortnight after he was lodged in the Vizag Jail on being sent from West Bengal, under Calcutta Police escort, to Andhra Pradesh, so that no harm could be caused to him in transit or while in the custody of AP Police. The 14-day gap was thought of so that Souren could hold discussions with the AP and other important comrades lodged in the same Vizag Jail regarding the points of criticism by the CPC leadership and other fraternal parties. Souren was confident that after such a discussion, all or most of the leading comrades would come out with a document/inner-party statement bringing out the factual position as pointed out by the CPC and others. Since they would immediately arrange to circulate such document outside the jail, any leakage, if at all, thereafter would not be able to put the entire blame on him. The DC, SB-I saw to it that his word of honour and commitment to Souren were fully honoured, and there was no leakage at all from their side till a joint statement by the party leaders lodged in Vizag jail did actually come out to party circles.⁴

Two things are worth noting if we assume that in the above extract from his book Arun Prosad was not lying. First, Souren gave an undertaking to the DC, SB-1 that he would give up politics if he was freed from prison and allowed to live a normal life. This seems true for this was true to his character. Second, he agreed to Arun Prosad's suggestion to be escorted by the police to the Vizag Jail to meet some leading comrades imprisoned there and to pour out his heart about the Chinese leaders' criticism of our Party line so that they would, along with him, criticise Charu Majumdar and the 'Central Committee' for ignoring the Chinese leaders' criticism and would appeal to all the comrades in an 'open letter' to get the Party line corrected. There is nothing wrong, except for some minor inaccuracies, in the open letter⁵ signed by Comrades Kanu Sanyal, Kola Venkaiah, Nagbhusan Patnaik, Bhuban Mohan Patnaik and Tejeswar Rao, besides Souren, and smuggled out of the prison for the benefit of Party members. Unknown to five of the six signatories, Arun Prosad was the main sponsor of the 'open letter'. Souren played the role of his lieutenant. It appears that DC, SB-1 acted as Souren's mentor. By the time the 'open letter' reached the Party circle in Calcutta, Charu Majumdar was no longer alive. Before his arrest and martyrdom, without consultation with even leading comrades, without summing up the experience of the previous years or without making any self-criticism, he tried in his own way to make some changes in the Party line. As we have already noted, on December 7, 1970, about a week after receiving Souren's report, he announced the formation of the People's Liberation Army in West Bengal. He wrote: 'So

attack must be launched on the armed forces of the enemy. To wage attacks against only class enemies amounts to a certain form of economism.'⁶ In different districts of West Bengal, there were scattered groups for annihilating class enemies. No organisation or preparation was made to build the army. Some time after, Majumdar gave a call to peasants for seizing the crops of the landlords. The call for mass movement came too late. The left-adventurist line had already disrupted the Party. Mass movements cannot be led by issuing mere calls for them.

Charu Majumdar was trying to adjust the Party line in order that it might conform to the suggestions of the Chinese leaders. But the method he adopted was hopelessly ineffective.

Souren's hints dropped here and there before his arrest not only provoked, as noted before, Ashim Chatterjee's group to revolt against the Party line but also the West Bengal-Bihar Regional Committee (Murshidabad-Birbhum-Santal Parganas Committee) to demand circulation of Souren's report.⁸

At quite a late stage, in a letter written under the pseudonym 'Soumya', I made the same demand. My letter was obtained by the police while arresting Charu Majumdar. It was translated into English – not very satisfactorily – by Anura Kumar Samanta, a police officer who became deputy commissioner of the Special Branch of the Calcutta Police at one time. He published the translated version of my letter in his book, *Left Extremist Movement in West Bengal*. I am quoting from the letter as translated by Samanta: '...I think the Party line is required to be reconsidered by summing up the experience of our struggle and by giving due importance to the statements of Chou En-lai and Kang Sheng. So it is absolutely necessary to hand over the notes to responsible comrades for careful study.'

It is reported that in May or June 1972, Charu Majumdar told some comrades – four or five, from Andhra, Punjab and perhaps from Bihar – about the comments of the Chinese leaders and expressed his willingness to make self-criticism. But the comrades are said to have asked him not to do so until they met again. Neither the comments were circulated by Charu Majumdar, nor was his self-criticism made. In suppressing the 'comments', Charu Babu did a great disservice to the Party. In acting as his accomplice, Saroj Datta could not escape blame. Souren's role needs no comment.

I shall refer to an incident in January 1971. After my return from Puri, Saroj Datta and then Souren Bose went to Puri. Souren took with him three or four persons who had no business to know Charu Majumdar's shelter at Puri. They were no political workers but went just to enjoy a brief sojourn there. I was annoyed. I did not want anybody to know his shelter who had no business to know it. When he, Saroj Datta, Souren, Sadhan Sarkar and I

met at the place where Majumdar was living after returning from Puri, I said that I did not like what Souren had done. It was not proper that persons not expected to know Majumdar's shelter should know it.

I wanted to be relieved of the responsibility for making arrangements for his shelter and security. I added that I would help to the best of my ability the comrade or comrades who would be entrusted with the responsibility. Charu Majumdar said that they would have to act as desired by me. Souren and Saroj Datta looked gloomy. They wanted to meet me. We decided to meet in early January 1971 at Charu Majumdar's shelter.

At the meeting, Souren asked me why I had told a comrade not to translate into Hindi and publish until further instruction the two articles by Charu Majumdar, which Comrade Kang Sheng had criticised – 'China's Chairman is our Chairman, China's Path is Our Path' and 'Sum up the Experience of India's Revolutionary Peasant Struggle and March Onward'. I had formed a group for translating Majumdar's writings into Hindi and publishing the Hindi version. I said at the meeting that I thought that leading comrades would discuss Souren's report and come to a decision – also in respect of the two articles. It was my view that, pending that discussion and decision, the two articles should not be published in Hindi. When I said that my instruction to that comrade was to suspend publication *for the time being*, Souren insisted that I had *no authority* to suspend publication of the Hindi versions of the two articles *even for the time being*. Charu Majumdar and Saroj Datta lent Souren Bose their silent support.

References

1. For the report, see 'Comments of Chou En -lai and Kang Sheng on the Party Line' (Appendix A).
2. Charu Majumdar, 'Give Priority to the Task of Establishing the Peasants' Political Power in the Countryside', *Liberation*, September–December 1970, p.31.
3. See Samar Sen *et al* (Eds.), *op cit*, II, pp.322–26. I did not happen to read it before 1978, when it was published in the above book.
4. Arun Prosad Mukherjee, *op cit*, pp. 226-27.
5. For the 'Open Letter', see Samar Sen *et al* (Eds.), *op cit*, II, pp.322–26.
6. Charu Majumdar, 'Build up the People's Liberation Army and March Onward', *Liberation*, January–March 1971.
7. Charu Majumdar, 'A Note on Party's Work in Rural Areas', *ibid*, July 1971–Jan 1972.
8. West Bengal-Bihar Regional Committee, 'Report on the Struggle in Birbhum', submitted in March 1972, but not published and circulated.
9. See Amiya Kumar Samanta, *Left Extremist Movement in West Bengal*, p.327.

Deployment of the State's Forces

When the Naxalbari uprising took place, 'We', says the then Superintendent of Police, Darjeeling district, Arun Prosad Mukherjee, 'were indeed faced with a situation which called for massing of adequate force and it had to be an assorted conglomeration, drawn from different sources like the Eastern Frontier Rifles, the Border Security Force, the State Armed Police in addition to our own district police; moreover, we had to draw officers from the other districts of North Bengal.'¹ Bows and arrows were confronted with modern weapons of trained paramilitary forces and other armed policemen.

A huge force was assembled to suppress the revolutionary movement in West Bengal. The state's police force of about 60,000 men were employed almost solely against the communist revolutionaries, as Sankar Ghosh says.² The state police force was strengthened by several contingents of the Central Reserve Police, the Border Security Force and the Eastern Frontier Rifles – the paramilitary forces under the control of the Central Government. Besides, in the rural areas, an undeclared number of 'resistance groups' and, in the urban areas, 'guerrilla' squads were organised by the police. These groups were formed with lumpens or criminals, each of whom was given a gun and a fairly good allowance. Their job was to kill communist revolutionaries. They were assured that they could carry on their usual criminal activities without interference by the police.

Then, in early 1971, came the army. The immediate purpose was to ensure free and fair election in March 1971 without being interfered with by the communist revolutionaries. Governor SS Dhavan broadcast a speech on March 4, in which he assured voters that the government had taken the 'most stringent measures' to run the election peacefully. He said: 'There is no parallel

in the history of Parliamentary Democracy when the army and the police were deployed in such large numbers to protect the voters....' Lt Gen. Jagjit Singh Aurora, general officer commanding-in-chief, eastern command, wrote: 'We moved roughly three divisions (approximately 40-50,000 men) to West Bengal.... The elections went off peacefully but we retained the troops to help the civilian authorities combat Naxalite violence.'³

All these were among the forces arrayed against the people who sought to overthrow the existing regime. They were suitably armed with 'lawless laws' which made the life and liberty of the people a plaything to them. The Indian Constitution itself gives autocratic powers to the government. The Preventive Detention Act, when enacted by state governments or the central government, can detain *without trial* any citizen. *The Saturday Statesman* of June 4, 1988 in an article entitled 'Daroga Raj in Free India' stated:

'Reports from major metropolitan cities and different States show that the nation's 'custodians of law' are among the major perpetrators of crime against humanity: hundreds of people taken into custody everyday are beaten and tortured mercilessly, which often leads to death.... Be it in Congress (I) – ruled Bihar, Janata-ruled Karnataka or Marxist West Bengal such acts of cruelty are hardly treated with the seriousness they deserve. As a result, deaths in lock-up or killings in police encounters remain shrouded in mystery....It cannot be denied that the police is merely a part of a system that stinks of corruption today.'

As struggles broke out in 1967, the police machinery in West Bengal and other states was overhauled. It was strengthened with superior arms, better equipment, quicker and more means of communication and transport. The intelligence agencies with their spy-rings were reorganised.

The government armed itself with 'lawless laws', for example, the Prevention of Violent Activities Act, which was replaced by the Maintenance of Internal Security Act [MISA] in 1971. West Bengal surpassed other states in this regard. The Bengal Suppression of Terrorist Outrages Act of 1936 was revived. In 1970, two black acts were added to the arsenal – the West Bengal Maintenance of Public Order Act and West Bengal Prevention of Violent Activities Act. Speaking of the latter, Peter Evans, a legal expert of international repute commented in the monthly organ of the International Commission of Jurists, Geneva, that this Act was much more cruel for the internees in West Bengal than the decrees of the 'military dictatorship of Uganda were to its victims. He added that the military dictatorship of Uganda would seem to have been better in its reaction to civil disturbances and the right to civil liberty than the democratically elected government of West Bengal'.⁴

A *Statesman* article stated: 'In the late sixties when the Naxalite movement spread to the State [Andhra Pradesh], Mr J Vengal Rao, the Union Minister who was then Home Minister of Andhra Pradesh, had virtually licensed the police to kill anyone suspected of having Naxalite connexions.'⁵

This practice was followed not only in Andhra but in other states as well. The cold-blooded murder of Comrade Saroj Datta, Secretary of the West Bengal State Committee of the CPI(M-L), a member of its Central committee and Polit Bureau and editor of *Deshabrati*, after being taken to the office of the Deputy Commissioner, Special Branch, at Lord Sinha Road, Calcutta, by the police hounds on August 4-5, 1971 – the very night they captured him – was one among innumerable such instances. Arun Prosad Mukherjee, then DC, SB, was taken to Delhi after a few months and promoted to a higher post.

Speaking on the Maintenance of Internal Security Act in Parliament on May 10, 1973, Union Home Minister KC Pant 'defended detention [without trial] under MISA as being better than people being held as undertrials for long periods under various pretexts'.⁶ He added: 'This was a better method than shooting them when they indulged in violence, for their lives were protected in detention.'⁷

We have already referred to the indiscriminate, widespread slaughter of young men by the state's forces.

Speaking to the Rajya Sabha on July 22, 1975, NG Goray, a Socialist Party MP, asked the government:

'Now the charge is about violence. I would like to ask you "How many people have your police and your Border Security Police killed by shooting innocent people?" Will you please publish your records and say how many times after independence [sic!], police opened fire and how many people were killed?'

'...in West Bengal', he charged, 'the finest flower of youth has been liquidated under the pretext that they belonged to the "Naxalites"'.⁸

Police Devices: Some Personal Experiences

After the formation of the Party, State Organising Committees were set up in different states. Sushital Roychoudhuri was elected secretary of the West Bengal Committee; I was one of its members.

Charu Majumdar then went to Siliguri. It was decided that he would go underground on his return to Calcutta – perhaps in July. On the day he was to come by plane, we sent Asit Sen (of Bally – to distinguish him from the other Asit Sen; he did not live at Bally in Howrah, but had worked there) to the Dum Dum airport. Charu Majumdar came with his eldest child Anita. Asit Babu met them, but for a few minutes they had to wait for a taxi. When a taxi came they boarded it.

It had been decided to put up Majumdar at a college lecturer's flat on the second floor of a building, part of a housing estate quite near to Kankurgachi in east Calcutta, only a few yards from the VIP Road.

When they were coming from the airport, they felt that the taxi was being followed. The taxi, as directed, reached the gate of the housing estate which could be seen from the VIP Road. The taxi driver was paid the fare but he waited a little, until the other cars following him had reached the VIP Road crossing. It was rather a signal to the pursuers where he had dropped his passengers. Obviously, the taxi was a planted one.

We did not know all this at the moment. After some time the host's sisters told us that a number of people had their eyes turned towards the housing estate from the VIP Road crossing; some had come to a spot which was half way between the crossing and the housing estate. Soon the gatekeeper, a Nepali, knocked at the door of the host's flat. He said to the host that some persons had come to the gate of the housing estate and told him that an old man had run away with a girl and entered one of the buildings of the housing estate. They had asked him to find out which flat they had entered and had given him ten rupees as his remuneration. The host chided him and sent him away.

Asit Sen had made a mistake; after entering through the gate he had gone to two buildings on the right and went up instead of coming left. The gatekeeper had seen Asit Sen and Charu Majumdar when they went towards the right but he had moved away when they came left to the right building and the right flat. This mistake proved an advantage to us.

We came to know that the cluster of the three housing estates there including one which overlooked the Maniktala Main Road, had been surrounded by the police. It was obvious that they did not want to arrest Charu Babu at that time. If they did, they could have arrested him at Siliguri or at the Dum Dum airport. In the past one year and a half, Charu Majumdar came to Calcutta on the eve of a meeting of the AICCCR. It was their object, perhaps, to follow him and arrest the entire such committee when it would meet. At that time the Srikakulam struggle was in the ascendant.

Charu Majumdar told us that the police would remain there till 11 PM and come back next morning at 5 AM. If he could be removed from there between 4 and 4:30 AM, things would be all right.

Asit Sen was entrusted with the responsibility of removing Charu Majumdar in a car to a new shelter. He went to arrange a shelter. I brought Anita to our place.

After arranging the shelter, Asit Sen went to a sympathiser who had a car. It was arranged. Before the next morning he took the car and dropped

the driver, giving him a few rupees, at a tea-shop. He reached the housing estate a little after 4.30 AM and shifted Charu Majumdar to the new shelter. We were able to shake off the pursuers. For ten days they kept watch there and were disappointed. Later, to one of our comrades who had been arrested, they expressed their surprise as to how Charu Majumdar had managed to escape from their clutches.

Soon after I left for Albania, Majumdar went to Kerala. He visited several districts of Kerala on that occasion. On his return, Saroj Datta told him that it would be safe for him to take shelter in my flat: the police must be knowing that I was away and must have removed the watch. It showed the utter lack of vigilance on the part of some of our leaders. The fact is, the police then had no knowledge of my passport and did not know if I had gone elsewhere. Charu Majumdar came to our place and stayed for several days together with his wife and their three children.

Comrades came to visit Charu Babu; Saroj Datta would come every day, morning and evening. Several persons in our housing estate had once been close to him. He was quite complacent. The enemy was a paper tiger, even tactically. Many of our leaders did not care to observe the minimum norms that would ensure their security.

One day, Charu Majumdar suffered a heart attack. A doctor who lived quite close to our house had to be called in. The doctor knew us all. Charu Babu was introduced as a relative who had come from elsewhere. He might have had his suspicion as he must have seen Majumdar's pictures in the papers. Perhaps he did not talk about his patient: nothing happened. Our all-knowing police had no knowledge of Charu Majumdar's stay in my place for a number of days nor of the visits of different comrades, especially of Saroj Datta.

One day, much later, after I had returned from underground life, I remarked before some persons, among whom was my younger daughter, Dr Sukti Sanyal: 'Our police were amateurish'. Referring to Charu Majumdar's stay in my house in late 1969 and the visits of comrades, Sukti said: 'You (meaning our comrades), too, were amateurish'. It fitted many of our leaders and other comrades perfectly well.

A house at Chakratirtha in Puri was rented for Charu Babu's stay. It faced the sea. A big mound of sand was on one side near the boundary wall. There were smaller heaps at other places. On the other side of the path that reached the beach was Panthanivasa, a big Orissa government-owned hotel.

Our rented house was a not a pretty one and was quite at the mercy of the sea-wind. Gusts of sand were wafted by it. Before one reached our house or the Panthanivas, there was a lane on the left. As one entered it, one would find a vacant spot and then a well-kept house. The owner, a Bengali, had a sea-garden. He was also our landlord and owned the house we had rented.

Charu Majumdar stayed in that house for several months. Wherever he stayed, two comrades looked after him. When necessary – and it was often necessary – one of them gave him injections, mainly pethidine. When he was shifted from that house to Cuttack, I asked for a 15-day leave, which was granted. I wanted to stay in Puri for ten days with my wife and two daughters. My courier would bring them from Calcutta. The rent for one month would be paid by my wife.

My wife was a teacher and worked in a primary school. Instead of returning from school, she went to my elder brother's house at Shibpur, Howrah. My daughters went to their respective colleges and then went separately to Shibpur. The last one to leave locked our flat. The next day, in the evening, my brother took my family in his car and dropped them at the Howrah station. My courier, Goutam Banerjee, shepherded them to Puri. I was also travelling by the same train but my wife and daughters did not know of it. They were in a coach ahead of mine. When the train reached the Puri station, I saw them walking from a little distance. I followed slowly. I noticed as I came out of the station that they took two rickshaws and Goutam told the rickshaw-pullers to take them to the Panthanivas. I also took a rickshaw and went by another route. When I reached the place, I saw them getting down from the rickshaws. The Oriya caretaker of the house where we were to put up came and said that on the previous night a marriage had been celebrated in that house. The bride and the bridegroom would leave in the afternoon. So he requested us to stay till the evening in the well-kept house of the planter. He opened one room in that house for us. When we were having our breakfast with things brought from Calcutta, I saw through the window a police jeep entering Panthanivas. I was curious. Half an hour later, the jeep went away. Soon a *nulia*, who helped people have their baths, came to the house. He asked us if we would go to the sea to have our bath. He asked, 'Has Suniti Ghosh come? The police have seen him at the station.' I wanted him to repeat what he said. He repeated in clear tones the words he had spoken. He was a prince among *nulias* and chose his clients among well-to-do persons. It seems he was sitting on the verandah on the ground-floor of Panthanivas in expectation of clients. He must have overheard the talks between police officers who had come in the jeep and the managerial staff of Panthanivas. Otherwise, he could not have known my name. When the *nulia* left, I went to the back of the house, climbed the wall and dropped on a heap of sand below. I did not go to the bus station nor to the railway station. After leaving Puri behind, I took the road to Cuttack. I kept on walking and then I purchased a coarse *dhoti* from a roadside shop, went behind some trees and changed my trousers for the *dhoti*. After some time I took a rickshaw, went some distance and then got off. Again I continued to walk. When I had covered a distance of eight or nine miles from Puri, I boarded a Cuttack-bound bus, reached Cuttack and went to Charu Majumdar's place.

I believe a police spy had followed my wife and children all the way from Howrah. He might have seen me at the Puri station. Outside the station he heard Goutam telling the rickshaw-pullers to take them to Panthanivas. Instead of following them or me, he must have gone straight to the local police station and brought more policemen to Panthanivas. He was sure that we would be staying at Panthanivas.

It was a fortunate coincidence that a marriage had been held in the rented house which could be seen from the hotel and the caretaker of the house allowed us to use a room in the house which the planter reserved for his own use and did not give to others on rent. Policemen came later and kept watch at the place only to be disappointed.

If the *nulia* had not warned me, I would have been arrested. It is my experience that poor men are far from friendly to the police. On the contrary, they are friendly towards those, even strangers, who they think are being hunted by the police.

What saved me on this occasion from the clutches of the police was the mistake of the police-spy, the favourable coincidence of incidents and the friendly warning of the *nulia*. If anyone of these factors was absent, I could not have escaped arrest.

The house on Raja Basanta Roy Road from where Saroj Datta was arrested, where Professor Debiprasad Chatterjee lived – was much used. But it is not true, as Manjusha Chatterjee, Debi Chatterjee's wife and grand-daughter of the famous revolutionary, Jatindra Nath Mukherjee (popularly known as Bagha Jatin), was reported to have said, that it was used as a post box or that here a Central Committee meeting was held. Sometime in 1970, I became suspicious that the house had been exposed to the police. At the time of the Party Congress, Ambadi of Kerala (who was reported later to have joined the Congress) told me that he had sent a fat registered letter containing reports of Charu Majumdar's speeches to comrades in Kerala to Debi Chatterjee's address. I do not know who gave him the address. This letter did not reach the addressee and I think it was intercepted by the police. I told Charu Babu and Saroj Babu about my suspicion, but Saroj Babu was firm that the house was quite safe. Debi and Manjusha Chatterjee showered their kindness on all of us who took shelter there but they seemed a little bit partial towards Saroj Datta. And they had a little child of four or five whom we all loved. That house, like a magnet, attracted Saroj Datta too often. He was also very careless about his security.

Charu Majumdar's health was deteriorating. We had him examined by a reputed cardiologist of Calcutta. But nothing helped to arrest the deterioration.

We brought the reputed North Bengal doctor, KN Chatterjee, Majumdar's friend and physician, from Siliguri. On the evening of July 31 or August 1, 1971, Saroj Datta and I met at Debi Chatterjee's place to discuss some arrangements. I was to take the doctor to Deoghar, where Majumdar was staying. Datta said that the car carrying the doctor next morning would come to a place nearby and asked me to stay at Debi's place for the night. I was reluctant and made another suggestion but Datta insisted and I submitted. Next morning, before it was 6:30 AM, Saroj Datta came. I said to him that it was already daylight, many people in the locality knew him and he ought not to have come. Soon word came that the car with the doctor had arrived at the spot where Sardar Shankar Road met Raja Basanta Roy Road. Saroj Babu was eager to go and meet the doctor but I dissuaded him. I then left with no date fixed as to when I would return.

The next day, the doctor examined his friend. That very day he was leaving for Calcutta. On the way to the station, I asked him about the condition of Majumdar's health. He replied that ordinarily a person could not remain alive with a heart like Majumdar's. It was his mental strength that kept him alive. He assured me that there would not be any setback in the near future.

I left Deoghar on the morning of August 5, and reached Calcutta in the afternoon. I went to a house perhaps on Creek Row (a road near Moulali and to the north of Lenin Sarani). A young comrade lived there. Goutam, my courier, came and gave me several letters and Saroj Datta's message that on the evening of the day I returned to Calcutta I should go to Chatterjee's place for some important discussion. It was 7 PM when I finished replying to the letters. It was raining heavily, I waited and by 7:30 there was only a light shower of rain. The young man lent me a waterproof coat and a cap. Armed with them I went out. On the way I took a taxi and reached Lake Market. The house in which Debi Chatterjee lived stood by the side of a very small and narrow lane which branched off from Raja Basanta Roy Road. I went there and rang the bell. Debi opened the door and was speechless on seeing me. Soon Manjusha came and told me that Saroj Datta had been arrested. She advised me to leave the place without delay. She warned me that policemen had followed Debi Chatterjee when he went to his bank in the daytime.

I questioned Manjusha about the date and place of arrest. She replied that Saroj Babu had been arrested the previous night from their house. I learnt later that he had been feeling worried and wanted to talk with me, for Souren had been talking in prison about the Chinese comrades' criticism of our Party line. It was a residential locality: there were no shops with bright lights. The pale light and the drizzle might have induced the policemen who kept watch there to move to a more comfortable place. My waterproof coat and cap must also have helped. I evaded arrest one more time.

It was late 1973. I was then staying at a shelter in Hughly. I was trying to rebuild the Party together with Sohul (whose Party name was Sharma) of Punjab, Ramnath of Uttar Pradesh and others whom I joined on their invitation. Before leaving for Delhi to attend a meeting in November, I told my host that I did not know when I would be able to return. So I requested him to stay on there even on the following Saturday, when he usually left for his home near Basirhat town. He agreed. On November 22-23, I returned at about 10 in the night. I found the door of our room locked. I opened it with my key. On entering, I saw that a police raid had taken place. I lit a lantern, my host and all my books and things had been taken away. I was on the train when the raid took place. It seems that the police raided our place as soon as they got some information. I went next door and knocked. A helper to masons, who stayed there, replied that the police had come the previous night and taken my host away. Had they waited and watched for less than 24 hours, they would have been able to arrest me. They did not wait to see if I was there. I left for the Hughly Ghat station in a hurry. Thanks to police efficiency, I was saved on this occasion too.

I shall cite another instance to show how clever and efficient the Indian police were and how some of our leaders were least cautious about their personal security. Before Souren Bose came back from China, he sent a cable from London informing his wife of the day of his arrival and of the flight by which he would reach Dum Dum airport. The cable was not intercepted by the police. Souren Bose wrote somewhere that he had sent a letter to his wife by post. That too was not intercepted. After he came back in late November, he spent his days in his wife's rented house near Phoolbagan in Calcutta. This PB member led a normal family life except that he made short trips to one or two places. He was arrested in March 1971 from his wife's place. Unfortunately, RP Sharaf was arrested in Jammu and Kashmir in February or early March 1971. Souren's address, the address of his wife's rented house, was found in his diary. Saraf had come to Calcutta to meet Majumdar in January. I gave him two addresses in Calcutta through which to contact us when he would come to Calcutta. Souren also gave Saraf his address. It was his address found in Saraf's diary that led to his arrest in March. Souren was arrested with many important documents which he carefully kept with him, for which many innocent men who had sympathy for our cause suffered. As an instance, he kept his passport with him. I had arranged it. It bore a fictitious name with a fictitious address. It was issued by the passport authorities as it was countersigned by a West Bengal government officer, an elder brother of one of our sympathisers. The officer

had to suffer when the passport was seized by the police from his wife's place. He had even preserved a small note I sent him three or four days before his arrest, asking him to come to Palm Place for a meeting and telling him to destroy the note as soon as he finished reading it. He did not come but preserved the note. Bhaskar Nandy has mentioned this small detail during his interview to the writer of *Antaranga Charu Majumdar* (p.70). The premises number in Palm Place was not mentioned. The house belonged to Bhaskar Nandy's father and the ground floor was then occupied by Bhaskar's sister and his brother-in-law. I was staying there at the time. (Charu Babu had taken shelter there earlier.) On learning of Souren's arrest, I left for Puri the same evening to remove Charu Majumdar from there (this shelter was known to Souren) to another place. Before leaving, I warned Bhaskar's sister that she might expect a police raid that night. She seemed to have no fear. The raid took place the same night.

In late March, a few days after Souren's arrest, my flat was raided by a large police party, armed men mostly, led by Bibhuti Chakrabarty, the Deputy Commissioner of the northern division of the Calcutta Police. This raid was followed by two other raids in the same week. They took away everything from my flat except utensils, beddings and clothes. They also took away articles of furniture, electric fans, books, etc. A police officer, perhaps Bibhuti Chakrabarti, showed some entries in my bank passbook – too many for a College lecturer according to him – and asserted that this was CIA money. A neighbour and colleague pointed out to him that we received our monthly pay not in one installment but in at least three installments: first our College pay; second, dearness allowance from the government; third, the difference between the College pay and the pay fixed by the University Grants Commission from the UGC. Besides, we also receive remuneration as examiner and head examiner from the Calcutta University and/or the Board of Secondary (or Higher Secondary) Education. The same police officer showed a torn piece of paper in my handwriting as a positive proof of my receipt of CIA money. The facts are: I had resigned from my College in 1970 and my wife received my provident fund amount in 1971. On learning this, I wrote to her that she should not keep the money at home or at one place as the police might confiscate it if somehow they got scent of it, but should keep it with different relatives at different places. My letter to my wife was found and taken away by the police and a convenient piece torn from it was shown to my neighbour. This was the kind of deliberate, mischievous attempt at character assassination, indulged in by the police and their agents, seemingly respectable or not.

On August 21–22, 1971, some days after Saroj Datta's arrest and martyrdom, my wife and elder daughter were taken by the police to the office of the

Special Branch (SB) of the Calcutta police at Lord Sinha Road. The deputy commissioner of the SB said to my wife that it was not befitting a learned man like me to involve myself in the politics of assassination and that my wife should persuade me to go to England for which they would make arrangements. (When sometime later, an associate of Ashim Chatterjee was arrested at Deoghar, the police allowed him to go to England instead of sending him to prison.) My wife said that if I was a learned man and preferred this path, it would not be possible for her to persuade me to leave it. She added that the police too were assassinating people. The deputy commissioner said that those assassinations were reprisals. Disappointed at my wife's answers, he said that they would show my dead body to her in three months or earlier. Then my wife and daughter were allowed to leave.

The police tried to use the services of certain persons to get me arrested. One of them was a chartered accountant and rather well placed. Earlier, this person had seen Sushital Roychoudhuri proposing to write for *Liberation*. The latter sent him to me. *Liberation* published about two articles of his – one of them fairly long. In those days when I wanted to go to Albania, he and a friend of his helped me to obtain my passport. He was arrested in February 1970. A friend of his got him released in a few days from police custody. He did not maintain any contact with us. After our Party Congress, we received a letter from Baruipur, his ancestral home. We were informed that after reports of the Congress appeared in *Deshabrati* and elsewhere, he was summoned by the police and admonished that he had not given them prior information of the Congress. He was reported to have said that he himself had no prior knowledge of the Congress. And that was true.

Soon after, this man went to the sympathiser Bimal (name changed) who acted as my link with other persons with a letter for me. In that letter he expressed his eagerness to meet me. I returned the letter to Bimal, asking him to give it back to that person and to tell him there was no longer any link between Bimal and me. He insisted on Bimal keeping that letter with him and sending it to me whenever possible. He kept coming to Bimal's place from time to time, only to be disappointed. On May 1, 1971, *Deshabrati* published a 'special notice' warning that a person named Tapan Mitra was claiming to belong to the CPI(M-L) and creating confusion among people in Baruipur and Dhalsan areas. The people were being informed on behalf of the West Bengal State Committee that this person was in no way connected with the Party.

Today, this person writes all kinds of falsehood in an obliging little magazine. Some months after Majumdar's death in police custody, a stranger came to our flat and gave a letter to my wife, in spite of her unwillingness to receive it. In that letter he informed me that a very large number of people in the BBD Bag

area had faith in my leadership and were waiting keenly to meet me. He wanted me to send my courier on a particular day and at a particular hour to the pavement near Kamalalaya Stores (a departmental shop which was situated near the junction of Nirmal Chandra Street with Lenin Sarani), beside an electric pole, where this person would be waiting with a certain paper in his hand. On meeting my courier, he and my courier would fix up a time and place when and where I would meet my admirers. I sent back the letter to my wife telling her to return the letter to that stranger and to tell him that there was no contact between us.

Then came a letter from Bhaja, the nickname of a young man whom I had known as a sympathiser of our Party. I had read his name among hundreds of people who were arrested after Charu Majumdar's death in police custody in the newspaper. It appeared that he was released one month after his arrest. In his letter to me, which he forced on my wife though she emphatically said that she had no link with me, he wanted my courier to see him in a shop on the Bidhan Sarani between particular hours or I could go straight into the house where he lived near the Vidyasagar College. I sent back the letter, as usual, to my wife. Bhaja kept coming to our flat, at first every week, for about a year until my wife rudely asked him why he came to our flat. Then the visits stopped.

The police approached Ranjit Das of Garden Reach and asked him to see my wife and send me a letter with a request to see him and help the police capture me. We knew each other well and our relations were comradely. I had once taken shelter in his flat. He told the police that he did not know my wife's flat. The police offered to lead him there. He then refused point blank. He was arrested but under the pressure of the Garden Reach unit of the South Eastern Railwaymen's Union, he had to be released in a few days. Earlier, too, he had been under arrest and remained behind bars for a fortnight or so. The same pressure had worked then as well. He was secretary of the unit for some years. One night his wife came to our flat to warn my wife that the police had approached her husband and were approaching others in the Garden Reach Railway Colony with the same purpose. One day Pranab Chakrabarti of that colony, who also had given me shelter once, came and asked my wife quite loudly (for the benefit of the policemen below who had brought him to the flat) to accept a letter for me. When my wife was refusing, he said in very low tones that he did not wish to come but was forced to come. He was a good but unhappy man. His wife was in bad health and they were a childless couple.

These were a few of the attempts the police made to capture me. Swapan Goswami, a close neighbour for a number of years who joined the movement and remained underground for some years, came home in about December 1976. He was arrested in a day or two, thanks to a police

spy who lived next door. He was tortured for ten days by Runu Guha Neogy, a notorious police officer, and during the torture Guha Neogy had only one question to ask him, 'Where is that professor?' Guha Neogy said one day that they had captured all Central Committee members from West Bengal except for the professor. He added that *this marked their defeat*.

One night, after the usual sadistic torture, Swapan was thrown into the lock-up where he vomitted blood. The inmates of the lock-up who had been brought there on criminal charges shouted and banged at the door, demanding that medical aid should be given to him. Next morning Guha Neogy told Swapan that he was sending him to a doctor not because he wanted him to get cured but because he wanted to have some papers to make things appear proper. He rang up a doctor in a hospital with whom he seemed to be on intimate terms. He warned Swapan that he should not mention the torture. He was taken to the NRS Hospital where the doctor gave him some medicine and a prescription. On return to Lalbazar, Guha Neogy took away both the medicine and the prescription.

The police also failed to capture Sushital Roychoudhuri, who died in a nursing home in 1971. They also failed to arrest Charu Majumdar so long as he was under my care. It was only two months and a half after the transfer of responsibility for looking after his security to Dipak and Dilip that the police could arrest him – betrayed by that political careerist named Dipak Biswas.

Before I conclude this chapter, I would refer to the abundant sympathy that some very poor people felt for me. At one time, a very old woman served in our flat as a domestic help. The police went to her small *bustee* near the Rangana theatre and put many questions to her – whether I came home occasionally, whether strangers came and stayed in the flat and so on. The old woman's daughter came, related all this to my wife and asked her to tell me to be careful. The sweeper woman, Saraswati, who worked in our housing estate, also told my wife that the police had gone to her *bustee* near the Khanna Cinema and put the same questions which they had asked the old woman. Saraswati pointed out the watcher in front of our housing estate. She sent her good wishes to me. I have already referred to the *nulia* in Puri, without whose warning I was sure to be arrested. In Hughly in 1973, as I have noted, I came to my shelter a day after the police raid had taken place in order to collect a few things. I had lit a lantern, and in a hurry, I had put it before the open door. A helper of masons, who was among the few who had come, chided me and asked me to remove the lantern from there so that others would not be able to see. There were many such instances of fellow feeling. These people did not know the cause I was serving; yet they were interested in my safety. I do not know the

reason why. I have thought over this and have come to think that to them the police were oppressors and anybody whom the police hunted deserved their help and sympathy. Did they feel in their subconscious minds that we were on their side?

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Is China's Path India's Path?

As we noted before, the Chinese press insisted that the road to be followed by the Indian revolution would be the same as China's. It said: 'This is Mao Tsetung's road, the road that has led the Chinese revolution to victory and the only road to victory for the revolution of all oppressed nations and peoples.'¹

Charu Majumdar had also said: 'China's path is our path'.

But, as we have pointed out before, Mao Tsetung himself held a contrary view. During his talk with representatives of some Latin American Communist Parties, Mao said: 'I beg to advise you not to transplant Chinese experience mechanically... The universal truth of Marxism-Leninism and the concrete conditions of your own countries – the two must be integrated.'² The Communist Party of each country has to work out its path itself. Though all revolutions have been armed revolutions, no two revolutions have followed the same path. Each had its distinctive character, for the national and international conditions in which they occurred were different.

The vast world is divided into nations and classes. Countries do share some common features, but each has also its specific features. No party, group or individual, however great and wise, can have a correct understanding of the specific conditions in various countries other than their own, conditions rich in complexity and some of them unique in character. The communist party of every country has to wage a class struggle in order to achieve Socialism. But it has to make a scientific analysis of the concrete conditions of its country in the light of Marxism, Leninism and Mao Tsetung Thought and to learn from the experiences of other countries to work out its own line and policies independently. The communist party that wages successfully the struggle for Socialism and wins victory is guided by Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung

Thought and knows how to integrate it with the specific conditions of its own country. It also produces its own theoreticians to serve the political tasks facing it. It, thus, contributes new theories to the treasury of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought. Learning from his bitter experience, Mao, while welcoming mutual consultations and help, opposed in principle the interference of one party, however big, in the affairs of another party. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China said:

'Marxism-Leninism holds that there are common fundamental laws in the development of human society, but that in various nations there are strongly *differentiated features*. Thus all nations pass through the class struggle, and will eventually arrive at communism, by roads that are *the same in essence but different in specific form*. The cause of the proletariat in a given country will triumph only if the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism is properly applied in the light of its specific national features. And so long as this is done, the proletariat will accumulate new experience, thus making its contribution to the cause of other nations and to the general treasury of Marxism-Leninism. Doctrinaires do not understand that the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism manifests itself concretely and becomes operative in real life only through the medium of special national characteristics. They are not willing to make a careful study of the social and historical features of their own countries and nations or to apply in a practical way the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism in the light of these features.³

All great Marxist-Leninists have emphasised that the proletarian party of a country should 'use the Marxist-Leninist stand, viewpoints and methods to carry out deep-going investigations and study of the class relations in society, make concrete analyses of the present conditions and the history of its own country and the characteristics of the revolution in that country, and solve the theoretical and practical problems of the revolution *independently*. It is necessary to learn from international experience which, however, should not be copied mechanically; a proletarian party should *creatively* develop its own experience in the light of the realities of its own country; only then can it guide the revolution to victory and contribute to the cause of the proletarian world revolution.⁴

India has similarities with pre-liberation China as well as dissimilarities. Both are vast countries – the two most populous ones in the world. Both were semi-colonial and semi-feudal. Both were mainly agricultural and under-developed. For the regeneration of their people, both had to accomplish national and democratic revolutions – revolutions which are separate but closely related – the overthrow of the direct or indirect rule of imperialism and its native domestic compradors and the abolition of feudalism under the leadership of the working class.

There were important differences, too. India is the home of many nationalities with their different languages. There is not a single nationality which constitutes the majority of the population. In China, on the other hand, 94 per cent of the population were Hans. In India, the administration of the country after 1948, when Hyderabad, the last of the princely states (563 of which existed in undivided India with British Residents or Political Agents in them and as stooges of the British colonial power), acceded to the Indian union, has been centralised. It is a centralised state apparatus that governs the whole of India. India is a union – not a voluntary union and not a federation of states and some union territories. Each state has a governor, an appointee of the Central Government, and on his report the President of India can dismiss the elected ministry of a state and suspend or dissolve the elected legislature. The President's rule in such a state means the unbridled exercise of power by the Central Government. Under the Indian Constitution, which has been in force since January 26, 1950, the Central Government administers all important subjects – defence (the army, the navy, the airforce and several paramilitary outfits) and industries related to defence, atomic energy, foreign affairs, railways, important highways, shipping and navigation, major ports, airways, posts and telegraphs, telecommunication services, currency, external trade, banking, insurance, important industries, mining, important institutions for scientific and technical education, certain universities, the Supreme Court, the high courts, income tax (other than tax on agricultural income), excise duties on many goods, customs duties, corporation tax and so on. The Constitution has empowered the Centre to appropriate all important sources of revenue and the sole right to print money. It should be noted that India is under the indirect rule of imperialist powers.

Unlike India, China had no unified state apparatus. Before and after the Ching (Manchu) emperors were overthrown in the 1911 Revolution led by Sun Yat-sen, there were several cliques of Northern warlords – Chang Tso-lin, Yuan Shih-Kai, Tuan Chi-jui, Wei Pei-fu, Tsai Kan and others – who ruled large territories and were tools of imperialist powers, particularly Britain, the USA and Japan. As Mao Tse Tung said, 'The imperialist powers have waged many wars of aggression against China' and 'seized or "leased" parts of her territory'. For example, Taiwan and the Penghu Islands were seized and the port of Lushun was leased by Japan, and Hong Kong was seized by Britain. After inflicting defeat on China in many wars, the imperialist powers 'acquired the right to station land and sea forces and exercise consular jurisdiction in China' and 'carved up the whole country into imperialist spheres of influence'. They 'gained control of all the important trading ports in China' and 'marked off areas in many of these parts as concessions under their administration'. They 'also gained control

of China's customs, foreign trade and communications (sea, land, inland water and air). Imperialist powers not only controlled 'China's vital financial and economic arteries but also her political and military power'.⁵ Because of the contradictions between the imperialist powers and between the warlords, there was 'the unusual phenomenon of prolonged and tangled warfare within the ruling classes'. And also because of 'prolonged and tangled warfare within the ruling classes' and absence of a 'unified regime', 'the existence and development of the Red Army and the guerrilla forces, and together with them, the existence and development of small Red areas encircled by the white regime', became possible in China alone.⁶

Writing in December 1939, Mao said: 'Among the Chinese proletariat, the modern industrial workers number from 2,500,000 to 3,000,000, the workers in small-scale industry and in handicrafts and the shop assistants in the cities total about 12,000,000....'⁷

In India, on the other hand, there were in 1967-8 about five million factory workers; about 13.5 million workers employed in mines, plantations, railways and post and telegraph; about 15.0 millions employed in small-scale enterprises⁸ and about 2.0 millions in shops, restaurants and similar establishments. The total number of workers constituted a little above 7 per cent of the total population. The percentage far exceeded pre-liberation China's. Pre-liberation China's factory workers were much more concentrated: 90 per cent of them in or near coastal areas in the east – Shanghai, Tientsin, Tsingtao, Hankow, Hong Kong and Kowloon. In the India of the sixties and the seventies, though industrially underdeveloped, factories had sprung up in various parts of the country.

Transport and communications were much more developed in the India of the sixties and the seventies than in pre-liberation China. There was a railway network in India and road transport was also developed.

Speaking of the Chinese proletariat, Mao said:

'Since there is no economic basis for social reformism in colonial and semi-colonial China as there is in Europe, the whole proletariat, with the exception of a few scabs, is most revolutionary.'

The Indian working class fought many heroic battles against Indian capitalists as also British imperialism. It was during the Congress session in Calcutta at the end of 1928, when Congress leaders except for Subhas Bose were lending their support to the Nehru Committee Report (which asked for 'much less than dominion status', to quote Jawaharlal Nehru), despite Subhas Bose's opposition, the Congress pandal was captured for two hours by about fifty thousand workers, led mainly by Communists, who voiced the demand from that platform for complete independence and establishment of an

'Independent Socialist Republic of India'. It was the workers who wrote a glorious chapter in the history of their anti-imperialist struggle when, in May 1930, they staged an uprising in the textile city of Sholapur, Maharashtra. Undeterred by the firing carried out by British soldiers, who killed and wounded many, the industrial workers led the toiling people to wipe out all traces of British rule in Sholapur, which was under their control for three days.

As the working class emerged as a political force and fought many class battles after the end of World War I (the Russian revolution also occurred in the meantime) and trade unions, rare before, were being formed, the Indian big bourgeoisie (perhaps the shrewdest in the colonial world), aided by some petty bourgeois liberals, rushed to guide the working class movement along a safe channel with the help of their agents – NM Joshi, CB Baptista, Chamanlal, Shiva Rao, VV Giri and others of their ilk. The All India Trade Union Congress was founded in October 1920, presided over by Lala Lajpat Rai and attended, among others, by tycoons like Lalubhai Samaldas, Lalji Naranji and HP. Thackersey and their agents. Rai Sahib Chandrika Prasad, the Chairman of the AITUC session held in Delhi in March 1927, declared: 'We strive to solve all disputes between employers and workers by negotiation, arbitration and through conciliatory bodies – there has been no occasion up till now for the All India Trade Union Congress to call a strike of any kind.'⁹

From about 1927, the Communists made their presence felt in the working class movement. '1928', as RP Dutt wrote, 'saw the greatest tide of working-class advance and activity of any year of the post-war period. The centre of this advance was in Bombay. For the first time a working-class leadership had emerged, close to the workers in the factories, guided by the principles of the class struggle, and operating as a single force in the economic and political field.'¹⁰ Though the upsurge was the greatest in Bombay, the tide reached all other working class centres – in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Madras and the Punjab – and affected all industries, the railways, etc. An intelligence report of the India Government lamented that 'a handful of agitators [communists working through the Workers and Peasants Parties] has succeeded in temporarily paralysing essential services and important industries...' 'By the end of 1928, therefore,' it said, 'there was hardly a single utility service or industry which has not been affected, in whole or in part, by the wave of Communism which swept the country during the year.'¹¹

From about the mid-thirties, the Communist Party leadership degenerated and sank into the morass of opportunism. They dragged the working class down and the class mostly lost its revolutionary character, except on occasion. The following details may illustrate the extent of opportunism which overwhelmed

the communist leadership.

First, the first Congress of the CPI was held in Bombay (now Mumbai) from May 23, to June 1, 1943. 'On either side of the dais', wrote the *Indian Annual Register*, 'were hung two big portraits of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr MA Jinnah against the background of the Congress and Muslim League flags, respectively.'¹²

Could class appeasement go any further?

Second, in *Congress and Communists*, which appeared in November 1944, PC Joshi, general secretary of the CPI, wrote: 'To us the Congress is our parent organisation, its leaders our political fathers.' He characterised his own party men as 'Communist Congressmen'.¹³

Third, BT Ranadive, who was elected a Polit Buro member along with Joshi and GD Adhikari at the first Party Congress, presented a long report 'Working Class and National Defence' at the Congress. The substance of this report was that the workers, though 'the conditions of labour' were 'horrible', though they were driven to 'hellish' and 'intolerable' conditions by their employers who were reaping super-profits as well as by the Government, should submit to those conditions and strive to produce more and must not go on strikes to improve their conditions; for that would mean stabbing the country 'for the misdeeds of selfish employers'. The task of the communists was to prevent strikes – and break them, if they occurred in spite of them – and get the workers to maximise production and avoid waste.¹⁴

This was national capitulationism and class capitulationism at their worst.

The revolutionary character of India's working class revived and was fully manifest in the days immediately after the end of World War II. Together with other sections of the militant people, the working class of India rose up to demolish the very foundations of British rule in India. 'India in the opinion of many,' said PJ Griffiths, the leader of the European group in the Central Legislative Assembly, 'was on the verge of revolution'.¹⁵ Turnbull, Secretary to the British Cabinet Mission that came to India in March 1946 wrote: 'The only hope is that the big boys of Congress and League are said to be much alarmed lest their followers break loose and of Russia'.¹⁶ And Sardar Mota Singh 'thundered' at the Meerut session of the Indian National Congress, held in November 1946, 'that the British were using Pandit Nehru and his colleagues as "political cows" to prevent the masses from attacking the British power standing behind the cows'.¹⁷

The revolutionary situation which emerged in the post-Second World War days and in which India's working class played the main role, failed to give rise to revolution, to lead to the overthrow of imperialism and its props in this

country, because there was no revolutionary party to unify the people's struggles and lead them to victory. Instead, it led to a counter-revolution – partition of the country on communal lines and continued integration of the two new states into the imperialist system as satellites and consequent underdevelopment.

In the late sixties and the early seventies of the previous century, workers' trade unions were mostly controlled by the two revisionist 'communist' parties. The Indian working class lost its revolutionary character for the time being. It became the task of the revolutionary communists to carry out protracted, painstaking work to rouse them and to mobilise them in their millions to unite with militant peasants to overthrow the indirect rule of imperialism and abolish feudalism. It is not by ignoring the present needs and problems of the workers but by leading them in the struggles to solve them and by linking these struggles with the ultimate goal that the workers can be aroused and mobilised. It would be quite wrong to run away from them by raising the bogey of economism. It would not be economism if economic struggles were linked with political struggles. In *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Marx and Engels wrote long ago: 'The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement.'¹⁸ Mere rhetoric about seizure of power without fighting 'for the attainment of the immediate aims,' 'for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class' (and of the oppressed peasants) is worse than cow-dung. (Cow-dung fertilises the field but such rhetoric only leads people astray.)

The revisionist hold on the workers continued in the main as the communist revolutionaries, carrying on propaganda for seizure of power, neglected the task of taking part in the workers' class battles for fulfilling their immediate needs and demands.

Unlike China before 1949, India is supposed to be the largest democracy in the world with a parliamentary system and adult suffrage. Though elections can change ministries but not the political system; they can be taken advantage of by a revolutionary party to disillusion the people about the parliament and to propagate revolutionary politics. In pre-liberation China, the parliamentary system was non-existent and from the beginning, armed counter-revolution had to be faced with armed revolution.

In China, after the defeat of the first revolution in 1927, in which workers, especially the workers of Shanghai, played a heroic role and in which a large number of them were butchered because of the betrayal of the bourgeoisie, Communists, as Edgar Snow wrote, 'were obliged to fall back on the rural districts' in central and south China. There they built up several liberated bases

depending mainly on the peasantry. To quote Ho Kan-chih, 'For a long time, with the centre of work placed in the countryside, the Party had been separated geographically from the working class.'¹⁹ In 1934, they met with defeat in the fifth 'encirclement and suppression campaign' launched by Chiang Kai-shek with a vast army. The defeat was due to serious mistakes by the 'leftist' leadership of the Communist Party, who ignored Mao and Chu Teh and were helped by Otto Braun, a German who was the Communist International's representative and was supposed to be a military expert. After the defeat, the main contingent of the revolutionary forces was forced to leave their base in the Hunan-Kiangsi-Fukien border area in the south and to undertake the historic Long March of about 12,500 kilometres across eleven provinces. At Tsunyi in Kweichow province, during the march, Mao's leadership was established at an extended meeting of the Political Bureau of the Party. Defying the terrors of nature and the terrors that Chiang Kai-shek could pile up along their path, the revolutionary forces reached Shensi in the north-west of China in October 1935 – one year after the march had started. The revolutionary forces were reduced from 3,00,000 when the march began to about 30,000 when it ended. The Shensi-Kansu-Ninghsia Border Region became the national headquarters of the Chinese Revolution. It was far, far removed from the working class centres in and near the east. To quote Edgar Snow: 'There was no machine industry of any importance in the North-West. It was farming and grazing country primarily.'²⁰ 'For hundreds of miles around', wrote Snow, 'there was only semi-pastoral country, the people lived in cave houses exactly as their ancestors did milleniums ago... the horse, the ass, and the camel were the latest thing in communications...'²¹ The revolutionary forces led by the CPC, which liberated China, were completely isolated from the working class centres, then mostly in east China. They had to rely mainly on the peasantry and on the urban petty bourgeoisie. In his 'Report to the Second Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China', presented on March 5, 1949, the eve of the countrywide victory, Mao Tse Tung said: 'From 1927 to the present the centre of gravity of our work has been in the villages – gathering strength in the villages, using the villages in order to surround the cities and then taking the cities. The period for this method of work has now ended.'²² It was a disadvantage to carry forward the struggle without the great help that working class struggles could render. India's conditions are different: working class centres are in different parts of the country. As already noted India had a far-flung railway network and developed road transport. Why should India make a virtue of China's disadvantage? And even if India tried to follow China's path, making the villages the centre of gravity of the Party's work, mobilising the peasant masses to wage guerrilla struggle (aided by mobile warfare at a certain stage), creating base

encircling cities, finally taking them and achieving countrywide victory the struggle of the peasant masses *alone* was likely to be crushed by the centralised Indian state.

What are the forces that can defeat the centralised Indian state with its big apparatus of coercion, and overthrow the existing ruling classes? It is the close union of the urban working class and the peasantry with the urban petty bourgeoisie as an ally that can carry the democratic revolution to victory in our country. If in a large rural area, topographically suitable, masses of peasants can be aroused through patient, painstaking agitation and class struggle, struggle for land and struggle to defend it, accompanied by social boycott of landlords, no-rent campaign, etc., a time will come when guerrilla warfare – guerrilla warfare relying on the masses – will be on the agenda. What can give added strength to the fighting peasantry is the struggle of the urban working class, their struggles in strategic industries like transport and electricity, besides other industries. The working class may also build their armed detachments. They may go on general strike and cripple the administration. It does not matter if the peasant struggle outstrips the working class struggle or if the working class struggle outstrips the peasant struggle. The close coordination and combination of working class and peasant struggles will lead the revolution to victory. In 'The Agrarian Programme of Social Democracy in the Russian Revolution', written in 1908, Lenin said: 'A peasant agrarian revolution *cannot* be victorious in Russia unless it defeats the central authority....'²³ In India also, it is the combined strength of the working class and the peasantry that can defeat the 'central authority'. Lenin also said 'that in view of the growing peasant movement, which may flare up into a regular insurrection in the very near future, it is desirable to work for combining actions by the workers and the peasants, in order to organise, as far as possible, joint and simultaneous fighting operations.'²⁴ To quote Lenin again, 'In actual fact, the Russian revolution will begin to assume its real sweep, and will really assume the widest revolutionary sweep possible in the epoch of bourgeois-democratic revolution, only when the bourgeoisie recoils from it and when the masses of the peasantry come out as active revolutionaries *side-by-side* with the proletariat.'²⁵

Marx wrote to Engels on April 16, 1856: 'The whole thing in Germany will depend on the possibility of backing the proletarian revolution by some second edition of the Peasant War. Then the affair will be splendid...'²⁶ In India, the workers' and peasants' struggles should support each other: their struggles should merge in a mighty torrent that will sweep away feudalism and the indirect rule of imperialism. 'Then the affair will be splendid....' It would be even more splendid if the enemy's armed forces or a section of them, consisting mostly of sons of peasants in military uniforms, come out in support of the revolution.

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The Tragic End of a Momentous Period

After Sushital Roychoudhuri's death and Souren Bose's arrest – both in March 1971 – and Saroj Datta's martyrdom in early August, the West Bengal State Committee coopted Dipak Biswas and Dilip Banerjee as its members at a meeting in September. At that meeting, Sadhan Sarkar was elected secretary. After Saroj Datta's martyrdom, I took charge of editing *Deshabrati*.

Sadhan Sarkar was arrested in January 1972. By very dubious means like, seeking to hold the next meeting of the State Committee in north Bengal (the name of the exact place not being disclosed), sending notices of the meeting to members very late, etc., Dipak, with the help of Dilip and Mahadeb Mukherjee, got himself elected secretary of the West Bengal State Committee.

Earlier, some time after Saroj Datta's martyrdom, Dipak Biswas sent us a note in Bengali. He claimed in his letter that it was the gist of Saroj Datta's speech before the North Bengal-Bihar Regional Committee. The following is the English translation of the note after some lines were edited out:

'Every Party will apply Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought after evaluating the concrete situation in its own country. Our relations with other [Communist] Parties will always be fraternal. If, at the time of leading the revolution in our own country, our views differ from those of the international leadership, we shall have to follow our own assessment. Chairman Mao is the international leader; but the Chinese Party can never be the international authority. Its relations with other [Communist] Parties will be fraternal. So, the Chinese Party and Chairman Mao are not the same.' Criticising those who supported Charu Majumdar after listening only to Radio Peking, Saroj Datta was reported to have said: 'Those who depend only on heat from outside and refuse to see the internal development cannot understand dialectical materialism.'

'Lenin built the Bolshevik Party; Mao Tsetung built the Chinese Party. The history of India has entrusted Comrade Charu Majumdar with the responsibility of completing the historic task of building the Party in India. That is why in the present situation in India, Comrade Charu Majumdar is the Central Committee of the CPI(M-L). To establish Charu Majumdar's line is to destroy the counter-revolutionary revisionist line.'

Dipak Biswas's note reached me in Deoghar where Majumdar was then staying. I read out the note before him. After listening to it, he said that it could not be published. I agreed with him. I had serious doubts about the authenticity of the above version of what was claimed to be Saroj Datta's speech.

In December 1971, Dipak wrote to me, wanting to meet me. At the meeting Dilip Banerjee, Sadhan Sarkar and some others were present. Expecting that the matter for discussion would be the note on Saroj Datta's speech that Dipak had sent, I took that with me. Dipak asked why the note was not published. I pointed out that there were certain objectionable remarks as regards the Chinese Communist Party. Dipak and others said that those sentences might be edited out and the rest should be published.

When I saw Charu Majumdar and related the matter to him, he said, 'Don't publish it.' I said that I could not stop publishing it; they all insisted on its publication. Publication could be stopped only if Majumdar wrote a letter saying that he objected to its publication. He said he would write such a letter. After half an hour, he changed his mind and said that, when they wanted its publication, 'let it be published'. I asked what should be the title of the piece. The title he suggested was 'There can be no revolution without revolutionary leadership'. The edited note was published under that title in *Deshabrat* when I was in charge of it. Sometime after, when I gave up all Party responsibilities, it was reprinted under the title 'There can be no revolution without revolutionary authority'.

At the request of Dipak and Dilip, we met again in February 1972. They asked me why I did not use the expression 'revolutionary authority' in my writings. I questioned them why they said 'revolutionary authority' instead of 'revolutionary leadership'. They answered that 'revolutionary authority' must be unquestioningly obeyed. I told them that Mao Tsetung had said: 'Communists must always go into the whys and wherefores of anything, use their own heads and carefully think over whether or not it corresponds to reality and is really well founded; on no account should they follow blindly and encourage slavishness.' They replied: 'Sarojda [Saroj Datta] believed in "revolutionary authority".' I said that he might believe in it, but I would acknowledge it if they could convince me of its correctness. Dipak and Dilip

then said that they wanted to see the 'respected leader'. Charu Majumdar was then staying at Cuttack. I gave them directions about how to reach his place. Perhaps they left for Cuttack the same night.

Charu Majumdar had been listening to many complaints about my refusal to accept his revolutionary authority and about my differences from the Party line. On March 9, 1972 he dictated the following note for the enlightenment of comrades:

'We can work together with those people with whom differences of opinion arise, but there can be no compromise.... We can carry on debate by relying only on "Red Book" [Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung] with him who has read many books.

'Bourgeois individuals raise a hue and cry by referring to "whys and wherefores". Their object is to create doubts about the proletarian authority and impose their own authority. But we, communists, do just the opposite when we refer to "whys and wherefores". We strengthen proletarian authority, apply the Party line in a living way and question bourgeois authority....

'Bourgeois influence exists within the Party and remains for some time. That is reflected in interpreting the quotation with a bourgeois outlook. Chairman has said that "nothing should be done blindly" – that does not mean that there should be doubt about everything. Why should we question Party directives? We should do so in order to grasp their intensity and significance, to apply them in the best way....'²

I was the target of this attack. I was accused of representing bourgeois influence within the Party. Though the bourgeois element seeking to impose its authority replacing proletarian authority in the Party was identified, yet proletarian elements could work together with it in the proletarian Party; perhaps I was deemed necessary for some particular work.

This note was published in *Deshabrati*, April 22 – May 1, 1972, then under the control of Dipak Biswas and Dilip Banerjee.

I next saw Charu Majumdar on April 11. After preliminary talks I said to him: 'Five years have passed since the Naxalbari struggle. If you sum up the experience of these five years, we can correct our mistakes. You alone can do the summing-up.' He felt that I was questioning the correctness of his line. In a somewhat bitter tone he said, 'Why, you too can do it'. He was far from well. I had heard from the comrade attending him that he had pain in his heart at every night. So I did not want to excite him and told him after some time that before I left the place I would inform him of my views in writing.

I stayed with Majumdar for two days. On the morning of the third day, I was getting ready to leave for Chowduar on the Mahanadi on the opposite side of Cuttack, where lived a sympathiser (who had given Majumdar shelter for a month or more). I was to return in a few days. When I was almost ready, Dipak

and Dilip entered. They said they had brought the second report on the Birbhum struggle submitted by the West Bengal-Bihar Regional Committee. I said: 'Instead of going to Chowduar now, I would go in the afternoon. Let me first listen to the report.' Charu Majumdar said: 'You have already prepared to go; so you better go now to Chowduar. When you return to Calcutta, you will have a copy of it.' So I went to Chowduar. No copy of the report was given to me by Dipak or any of his comrades. The report, which I obtained from others, was very critical of the Party line. It severely criticised the Party line on the basis of the Birbhum comrades' experiences. But it paid a tribute to Charu Majumdar as the leader of the Naxalbari struggle, the leader who rebelled against right opportunism, rejected the parliamentary path, and laid emphasis on the role of poor and landless peasants in our revolution.

On April 19, evening, my host and I came to Charu Majumdar's shelter. (It was my host who had arranged the shelter.) My host and Arobinda, who looked after Majumdar, sat in the front room, while Majumdar and I on the verandah inside. He seemed full of suppressed excitement. With his piercing eyes, he seemed to probe my mind. It was very uncanny. From the front room Arobinda's loud voice could be heard but the words were not distinct. He seemed to tell my host not to give me shelter; Majumdar felt embarrassed. Twice he asked loudly what was going on in the front room. Arobinda replied that it was politics they were discussing. It was a very hostile atmosphere.

When I prepared to leave, Charu Babu asked me for the piece of writing containing my views on the Party line which I had promised. I said I would give it when I came next, before I left for Calcutta. Today it seems to me that he was excited because he was anxious to know if I had formed a faction within the Party with Murshidabad-Birbhum comrades. This is merely a conjecture, however.

It was a very unusual and unpleasant experience. Close comrades of yesterday became hostile. I was in two minds – whether to go myself to hand over to Charu Majumdar the promised writing or to send it through my host. I decided to face the worst. On the evening of April 23, I went to Charu Majumdar's place. But my fears proved wrong. Things were unexpectedly different from what I had feared. He was free from all traces of excitement. He sat on a chair on the verandah. Arobinda sat beside him on the floor, quite silent and docile.

I went to hand over my piece of writing to Majumdar. He asked me to read it out. I began reading: it was quite long. In the beginning I criticised the Party line. I called the Party line left-adventurist. He asked me if I really believed it to be so. When I emphatically said that I did, he did not say anything more on it.

Then I requested him to relieve me of all responsibilities. I said that I would like to be attached only to *Liberation*, not as editor but as an ordinary worker. He said: 'How shall I manage if you give up all responsibilities?' I then said that Dipak and Dilip had taken over the responsibility regarding him. He said I might continue to bear responsibility regarding him. I answered: 'When there was so much distrust and lack of faith among us, how was it possible for me to bear this great responsibility?' He did not say anything more.

For some time I had been feeling anxious: I felt it was very risky for me to bear this responsibility when there was so much mistrust among us. The best possible arrangement could be made to ensure his security. But one could not be sure that under no circumstances the police would not be able to trace him. At a meeting in December 1971, I requested comrades to relieve me of the responsibility. In March 1972 again, I made the same request to those present at a meeting – Dipak, Dilip and Mahadev. They were all silent. A few days later, Dilip wrote to me that the police planned to arrest Charu Majumdar by arresting me first. There was an implication that, after arrest, I would disclose to them his shelter. I wrote back that the plan of the police could be foiled if they took Majumdar's responsibility. Even if the police could arrest me, they would not be able to trace him. Dilip informed me that they were taking the responsibility. That was towards the end of March 1972. But the arrangement that I had already made was not disturbed in April. On May 1 or 2, they brought him to Calcutta.

I asked permission from Majumdar to reprint in *Liberation* – first, his note of March 9, 1972 where he accused me of representing bourgeois interests within the Party and giving a bourgeois interpretation of the quotation from Mao Tsetung beginning with the words 'Communists must always go into the whys and wherefores of everything;' and second, the report of the speech claimed by Dipak Biswas to be that of Saroj Datta at a meeting of the North Bengal-Bihar Regional Committee, which Dipak Biswas sent to us after his martyrdom. I said these were published in *Deshabrati* and they should also be published in *Liberation*. Majumdar said that his note of March was quite unimportant and was dictated at the importunities of others and should not appear in *Liberation*. Second, Datta had written better things. They should be published instead of this one. He had objections to publishing both these pieces in *Liberation*.

I gave Majumdar the paper containing my views and when I rose to leave, he came along with me. He asked me to convene a meeting, inviting others to solve the problems. I said that he was the Party's general secretary: he could

convene a meeting, not I. He said he would convene such a meeting, and asked me if I would come. I said that if he asked me to come, I would certainly do so. He stood on the verandah overlooking the road when I bade him goodbye. That was the last time I saw him.

On reaching Calcutta on the morning of April 25, I learnt with horror from my host that some Party members and sympathisers had invited Kamal Sanyal, Secretary of the South Calcutta Regional Committee and Agni Roy, Secretary of the Ballygunge-Tiljala Area Committee on April 16-17 and then brutally murdered them. A leaflet in the name of the Party was distributed after the murder, stating that Sanyal and Roy had been police spies. The murderers declared in the leaflet that more murders would follow. It appeared to me that Dipak and Dilip could not evade their responsibility for this horrible act. I also learnt that Satish Banerjee, a member of the Regional Committee, had also circulated a leaflet in retaliation, calling police spies those who had been responsible for the murders. Kamal Sanyal and Satish Banerjee had been members of the Calcutta District Committee of the Party and carried out many important Party jobs. They had proved themselves completely dependable and responsible comrades. I heard that lately they were expressing lack of faith in the 'revolutionary authority'. That seemed to be the crime for which they were annihilated. Left-adventurism was in the blood of Dipak and Dilip from the beginning. They leaned more and more towards the left as the Party-led struggles faced setbacks, one after another.

Full of anger and anguish, I wrote to Charu Majumdar of this tragic act. I said that whether he was the revolutionary authority was a political question. I asked him if this was the way of settling this question. I wrote that those who were responsible for the murders were leading the Party to ruin and his immediate open intervention was necessary to save the Party. He should publicly condemn them. Besides, the Party line should be reviewed in the light of our experiences and after proper consideration being given to the comments on our Party line by Comrades Chou En-lai and Kang Sheng. I requested him to give copies of Souren Bose's note containing the comments to responsible Party comrades. I added that I was severing my links with those who were responsible for the murders.

I decided to leave my shelter that very night. It would be no wonder if I was the next victim. But I refused to be one. Khokan Majumdar has written that a few days before Charu Majumdar's arrest when he met Majumdar, the latter told him in a tone of despair that Dipak and his associates had treated even Suniti Ghosh badly.³

I had been in that shelter for several months. My host had been to a foreign country where he was a teacher for a number of years. Filled with hope and enthusiasm on reading reports of our struggle, he came back. He was not known to the police and only a few of the Party members knew him and his residence. His parents and relatives lived in a village in Midnapur.

I left that same night. It was somewhat late, for two comrades from Bihar, one of them Jahar, came to see me, accompanied by a local comrade who knew my shelter. After Satyanarain's desertion, a leading team in Bihar was nominated. Jahar was a member of this team. The Party had given me charge of looking after Bihar affairs and guiding the leading team. I told them that I had given up my responsibility regarding Bihar. They insisted on my retaining the responsibility, for they seemed afraid of the arbitrary acts carried out by Dipak and Dilip.

I stayed in other shelters in Calcutta for a few days. My host, Atul Samanta, whose help until the beginning of 1973 saved me in those very difficult days, was to go on a tour of some villages in connection with some assignment. He arranged a shelter for me in a small town in the Santal Parganas. The house belonged to a friend of his. There I received Dilip's letter of May 27, in which he said that Charu Majumdar wanted to see me. He wrote that Majumdar had criticised them severely and wanted to have discussions with me. Dilip wanted to see me first before I met Majumdar.

On receipt of Dilip's letter of May 27, I wrote to Charu Majumdar that those who were responsible for the murders of our Party comrades had circulated a leaflet that they would commit more murders. Those who murdered our comrades, especially those responsible for the murders – had placed a noose round the neck of our Party. The noose would gradually tighten and bring about the end of the Party, if he did not take immediate measures to remedy the situation. I also wrote that Souren's note containing the comments of Comrades Chou En-lai and Kang Sheng should be given to responsible comrades of different states and the Party line should be reviewed in the light of our experiences and after giving due consideration to what Comrades Chou En-lai and Kang Sheng had said. I added that I wanted to discuss with him some organisational issues besides political ones, and that I was quite eager to meet him and have these discussions with him. I hoped to have his reply.

Writing to Dilip, I acknowledged the receipt of his letter of May 27. I wrote that whether I would give him an opportunity to see me would depend on his replying to several questions that I put. One of the questions was whether Dilip and Dipak admitted their responsibility for the murders of the secretary of the South Calcutta Regional Committee and that of the Ballygunje-Tiljala Area Committee. I asked them whether they were prepared to criticise themselves.

I received Dilip's reply to my letter in the second half of June. He enclosed with his letter a handwritten copy of a self-critical report by him and Dipak, written under the pseudonyms 'Biren' and 'Arun', respectively. Dilip wrote that they were eager to meet me.

I wrote to Dilip that he had evaded the questions I had asked and that their self-critical report was a formal one. I also sent a letter to Charu Majumdar along with the reply to Dilip. I wrote to him that I was eager to meet him and that I awaited his reply to my letters.

Dilip's eagerness to meet me before I saw Charu Majumdar was suspicious to me. I was not prepared to place myself at the disposal of Dipak, Dilip and company, which included Guru Kundu.

I could not imagine that Charu Majumdar would be arrested so soon. They had taken actual charge of him in the beginning of May and he was arrested on the night of July 16. A few hours earlier, Dipak, Dilip and some others had been arrested. And it was Dipak who betrayed his master. He told the police where Charu Majumdar was staying before he was hardly subjected to any torture.

Charu Majumdar lived for ten days in police custody and then passed away. During those ten days, he was made to undergo a long and harassing interrogation. The fruit of it was the fraud of an unusually long 'Statement of Charu Majumdar', most of which is the product of fertile police brains but attributed to Charu Majumdar.⁴ He refused to sign the statement.

Within a few hours of the end of the interrogation, Charu Majumdar was made to make his exit from this earth. Thus ended a tumultuous period in the history of India.

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4. See Ashoke Kumar Mukhopadhyay, *The Naxalites through the Police Eyes*: Appendix A for the 'Statement of Charu Majumdar' and Appendix B for 'Some Comments' by Suniti Kumar Ghosh.

Appraisal

The basic line of the Communist Revolutionaries was correct. They rejected the peaceful, parliamentary path to People's Democracy and Socialism and pursued the revolutionary path. They opposed revisionism and upheld Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. That is why our Party roused so great a hope among the long-suffering people of our country. That is why, referring to our Party, Mao Tsetung said to our Party's representative: 'By you [meaning the CPI(M-L)] India has hope.' But some major policies that were followed – not throughout the period of the revolutionary struggle but at an important phase – were wrong and shattered the Party, at least for the time being. From the beginning there was a left-adventurist trend. At first, it was weak; later, at a certain phase it became dominant.

The period from the end of March 1967, when peasants started preparations for the Naxalbari uprising, to July 1972, when Charu Majumdar was arrested, was rather a brief one, a little over five years, but Communist Revolutionaries did not pursue the same policies throughout this time, though their basic line remained the same. If we take note of the differences in policies, the brief period may be divided into three phases. Earlier, there was a preparatory phase from 1965 to early 1967 when Charu Majumdar wrote his essays known as 'Eight Documents', sent them to Naxalbari peasants, and prepared the political and ideological basis for the Naxalbari uprising. If we include this preparatory phase, there were four phases between 1965 and mid-1972.

First Phase

Let us start from the beginning; for, the 'Eight Documents' prepare us for the basic line as well as for some of the erroneous policies that we followed at

one phase or another. During the great worldwide debate then raging between Marxism-Leninism and modern revisionism, Charu Majumdar defended Marxism-Leninism and gave a call for fighting revisionism. He greeted the victory of the Chinese revolution and hailed Mao Tsetung as the greatest Marxist-Leninist after Lenin. He held that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had become a revisionist party and that the Soviet Government was fighting in collusion with US imperialism for domination of the world. The revisionist Soviet Union had become an enemy of the world's peoples, including the Indians. It was necessary to build a revolutionary party by fighting revisionism and the revisionist leadership of the CPI(M). Groups of activists should be formed to propagate the politics of agrarian revolution. The stage of the Indian revolution was new democratic and its main content was agrarian revolution. The poor and landless peasants would be the main force of the revolution. The existing system could not be overthrown and power could not be seized by peaceful means but by revolutionary violence – armed struggle. The revolution in India would have to follow the path of the Chinese revolution. Power would have to be seized area-wise in the countryside; base areas would have to be established in rural areas; cities would be encircled and captured and then the struggle would end in countrywide victory. The importance of mass movements and mass organisations like the trade union and the peasant association for realising partial demands was recognised by Charu Majumdar at this stage. (Kanu Sanyal's assertion in *'More About Naxalbari'* that the struggles during the Naxalbari uprising compelled Charu Majumdar to change his view and acknowledge the importance of mass organisations and mass movements is factually untrue. Charu Babu recognised their importance in the second of his 'Eight Documents' written early in 1965 as well as in the seventh document written in 1966 or early 1967. We shall not mention the eighth document written in April 1967, where too he recognised their importance. Charu Babu held that legal struggles, where necessary, should be utilised). He gave a call for utilising the 1967 general elections as an opportunity for propagating widely revolutionary politics – the politics of agrarian revolution. He correctly pointed out that our struggle would be a protracted one. He held the view that unity should be forged with all the nationalities like the Nagas, the Mizos and the Kashmiris who were fighting to realise their right to self-determination.

All these ideas were not cherished by Majumdar alone. While several groups and individuals circulated them in a clandestine manner, Charu Majumdar took them *openly* to the peasants. They marked a bold departure from the sickening outpourings of Joshi, Ranadive, Ajoy Ghosh and company. They broke the long spell of opportunism in the Indian communist movement and indicated a new path of the Indian revolution.

But there was a 'left' adventurist trend in these writings. Charu Majumdar did not reject the mass line but the main emphasis was on building groups, 'combat units', to annihilate policemen and military officers, hated bureaucrats and class enemies. According to him, this was the teaching of Mao Tse Tung. As we shall see, this was contrary to the teachings of Mao Tse Tung. According to Charu Majumdar, such attacks to annihilate targets could be launched in all places - urban and rural. He said that the peasant militants should be taught all kinds of tactics, including setting fire to the houses of class enemies. He stressed the importance of snatching firearms from the enemies. According to him, if armed units were equipped politically, they would be able to create base areas in the countryside and thus the People's Democratic Revolution could succeed. He held the view that the urgent task of the peasant movement was to build liberated areas. According to him, an area was liberated if it was free from class enemies. He ignored the state machinery without contending with which and without defeating which no area could be liberated. In 1966, when there was no revolutionary party, he gave the slogan for building partisan struggle. Partisan war cannot be waged and liberated bases cannot be built by small groups of activists without the people's active participation.

Another dangerous idea lurked within these writings. Majumdar said that the Marxist truth about democratic centralism was that the directive of the highest leadership in the Party must necessarily be obeyed, for the highest leader was he who had established himself in the course of struggle and theoretical debates as a Marxist. This contained the seed of the 'revolutionary authority' of Charu Majumdar, which sprouted later. Such unquestioning faith in a supposedly all-knowing person, a *guru*; is a legacy of the feudal ages. Marxism abhors such an idea.

Besides the left- adventurist trend, there are some inaccuracies in the 'Eight Documents'. The Tebhaga struggle of 1946-47 did not mark, as Charu Majumdar said, the highest stage of class struggle - it was not a struggle aimed at overthrowing the existing political system. The Tebhaga struggle was a militant peasant struggle, which was both economic and political; it was a partial struggle for the realisation of an economic demand.

Charu Majumdar made a mistake when he said that India's *peaceful* path to socialism ended, finally, when the exploiting classes killed 80 persons going in a peaceful procession in Calcutta in 1959. It was revisionism to hold that Socialism could be achieved in India before 1959 by peaceful means, without revolutionary violence.

Charu Majumdar wrote of unilateral withdrawal of Chinese troops in 1962 from Indian territory. The territory which was then called the North-East Frontier

Agency (NEFA), from which the Chinese troops withdrew after inflicting a decisive defeat on the Indian troops, was not then *Indian* territory but a disputed area.

There are a few other minor errors in the 'Eight Documents' which were legacies of the past – the long opportunist movement of the Communist Party and by which Charu Majumdar was unconsciously influenced.

Second Phase

The second phase extended from the end of March 1967, when organisational preparations for the Naxalbari uprising started, to about early 1969. Naxalbari followed the mass line; the question of annihilation by 'combat units' did not arise. Here thousands of adivasi peasants, armed with bows and arrows, rose in a struggle to confiscate the land of the landlords and *jotedars* and their other possessions and for their distribution among the peasants as well as for setting up Peasant Committees and establishing their authority in all matters of the villages. This mass struggle for land and power made every peasant a fighter. In his Terai Report, Kanu Sanyal wrote: 'An important aspect of the struggle of the heroic peasants of Terai is its success in gaining the support of the Tea Garden workers and other toiling people and thus intensifying the struggle still further by building a United Front in the anti-feudal struggle.'

There was no manifestation of the left-adventurist trend in this phase. No mention was made of 'combat units' and annihilation by them of individual enemies. Stress was laid on mass organizations and mass movements of the toiling people and on their task of building class struggle.

The revolutionaries, then in the CPI(M), of seven states decided at a representative meeting in Calcutta to form an All-India Coordination Committee. Its first declaration, as noted before, stated that it would seek to 'develop and coordinate militant and revolutionary struggles' of the peasantry, the working class and other toiling people and 'orient these struggles towards agrarian revolution'. Another task would be 'To wage an uncompromising ideological struggle against revisionism, to popularise the Thought of Comrade Mao Tsetung' and to unite on this basis all revolutionary elements, within and outside the Party [CPI(M)].

Meeting in May 1968, the All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries, as noted before, declared unambiguously:

'Not conspiratorial methods but *the mass line alone* must be pursued if the enemies of the Indian people are to be overthrown.'

It needs no mention that Charu Majumdar played the leading role in the meetings of the All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries. In different writings of Charu Majumdar at this phase, the

emphasis was on the mass line—mass movements and mass organizations. In the article 'To the Comrades who are Working in Villages', he urged these Comrades to make class analysis and then 'clearly expound the mass line'. In 'To My Comrades', he said that 'class struggle is the summation of economic and political struggles'. He pointed out the importance of mass movements for the realisation of economic demands like the seizure of crops.¹

In his article 'Develop Peasants' Class Struggle Through Class Analysis, Investigation and Study'², Charu Majumdar wrote that 'we are not to impose our views on the peasant masses' and that 'the first principle is that we must not impose anything at all against the will of the masses.' He went on to say: '...economic struggles against the feudal class are necessary, not only in the present, but in the future also.... *The political consciousness and organisation in a given area will determine the form that this struggle will assume.* The poor and landless peasants, under the leadership of the working class, can build up the fighting unity of the broad peasant masses. The more rapid such unity is achieved, the quicker will the struggle assume a revolutionary character. 'We must bear in mind the teaching of Chairman Mao: *Revolutionary war is a war of the masses. It can be waged only by mobilizing the masses and relying on them.*' According to Majumdar: 'The working class and the revolutionary intelligentsia are today faced with the task of making the peasants class-conscious and organising *broad class struggles.*' When he remembered Mao, the 'combat units' vanished.

The talk also of authority is absent at this phase. On the other hand, there is expression of modesty, which should be the characteristic of a communist. He does not pretend to be an all-knowing authority who should be unquestioningly obeyed by others. In 'Undertake the Work of Building a Revolutionary Party' he wrote: 'It [the protracted struggle to build a regular people's armed force and develop the struggle into a People's War] is a formidable task and can only be accomplished by correctly applying the weapon of criticism and self-criticism. We have come together to serve the revolution. So, we should not be afraid of criticism. On the other hand, if we are unwilling to undertake self-criticism we shall not be able to change ourselves qualitatively and we shall prove ourselves unable to carry out the tasks confronting us as communist revolutionaries.' In 'To my Comrades', he wrote: 'The more I am trying to have a clear understanding of the Thought of Chairman Mao, the more I am learning ever newer lessons from it. Comrades in every area will have similar experience and only then will our understanding deepen and we shall become better Marxists.... Learning from the masses is a very difficult task. Subjectivism is an offshoot of revisionism. Our struggle against revisionism has only just started. We have still a very long distance to go.'

Though the Naxalbari uprising was suppressed, the politics of Naxalbari – the politics of armed agrarian revolution – spread to different parts of India. As noted before, the Mao Tsetung Thought was widely disseminated. Thousands of copies of the writings on Indian questions were also published. A bitter ideological and political struggle was waged against revisionism. Political and organizational work was carried on among workers, peasants and the urban petty bourgeoisie, especially students and youth. Struggle was launched against all sorts of opportunism. The tactic of forming small, secret armed units for annihilating individual enemies was not mentioned *even once* in any writing of this phase. On the contrary, the policy of arousing the people by participating in their struggles for fulfilment of their daily needs and by linking the struggles with the struggle for democratic revolution, was followed. As already noted, in May 1968, the AICCCR adopted a lengthy resolution on trade union work.

It was only in late October 1968, when two representatives from Srikakulam, Andhra – Tejeswar Rao and Panchadi Krishnamurthy – met him for his advice that Charu Majumdar returned to his old policy of forming groups and annihilating individual landlords and policemen who would come to their defence. The struggle of the hillmen – Girijans – in some taluks of the Srikakulam district had reached an impasse. The Girijans were victims of severe oppression and exploitation by landlords and usurers. When they put up some resistance, the landlords fired upon them and killed two of them. The leadership of the Srikakulam District Committee did not know what to do and sought Majumdar's help, and he gave them the above advice.

One of the weaknesses of the CPI(M-L) was that no thorough investigation of the complexities of the class relations in the Indian countryside was ever made. There was one remarkable exception. Influenced by Charu Majumdar's 'Develop Peasants' Class Struggle Through Class Analysis, Investigation and Study', a peasant organiser of the Murshidabad district made a thorough study and investigation of a village in that district and made a detailed, concrete class analysis which was remarkable for its depth and insight.³ Unfortunately, his example was not followed.

Without a correct understanding of the class relations among the peasantry and without a correct agrarian programme, it is not possible to unite 90 per cent of the peasantry. This unity is the basic condition for abolishing feudalism and winning victory in the revolution. In China Mao Tsetung, Yen Pi-shih and others made thorough investigations and succeeded in mobilising the overwhelming majority of the peasantry in their struggle.

Third Phase

We have already referred to the article 'Confession in an Impasse: A Comment on Nixon's "Inaugural Address" and the Contemptible Applause by the Soviet

Revisionist Renegade Clique' by Commentator in *Renmin Ribao* and Hongqi. Its English version, as noted before, was carried by *Peking Review* 1969, No. 5 and was broadcast by the Peking Radio. This article played a decisive role in determining the policies of the CPI(M-L) at the third phase which extended from 1969 to about the end of 1970.

One major weakness of our Party leadership, especially Charu Majumdar, was the utter dependence on the Peking Radio and unquestioning faith in whatever it aired. The Communist Party of China was not a monolithic organisation without any contradiction among the members. It appears that some anti-Mao faction had considerable control over the Chinese media. But our acceptance of whatever the Peking Radio broadcast or Chinese journals wrote was uncritical.

One can have some idea of Charu Majumdar's extent of reliance on the Peking Radio from the following words.

In April 1967, Majumdar wrote to an organiser comrade: 'To listen to the Peking Radio everyday should be regarded as a task which must be done by us. The international leadership is giving us *directives* almost every day. We have to understand those directives and carry them out.'⁴ On August 21, 1967 he wrote to a comrade of Naxalbari: 'You can surely hear the Peking Radio.'⁵ In 'Make the 70s the Decade of Liberation', written in early 1970, he stated: 'The revolutionaries of India listened to the radio broadcasts from Peking to understand the significance of this event [the victories won in 1967].' In the same article he also wrote: 'This advance was possible because the Indian revolutionaries received the guidance of Chairman Mao Tsetung's leadership every day through the radio broadcasts from Peking.'⁶ It is a pity that he attributed to Mao Tsetung what the latter never did. Mao wanted every Communist Party to work out its own line and it was contrary to his principle to interfere in the affairs of parties other than his own.

During my association with Majumdar, for a few years, I hardly saw him with a book except *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tsetung*. He had a good transistor set with him. Every evening he would listen to radio broadcasts from Peking.

At the end of January 1969, as noted before, Peking Radio broadcast the article 'Confession in an Impasse' with its absurd prediction. The absurdity was overlooked by our leadership. There was an abrupt change in the Party line. This article strengthened Charu Majumdar's left-adventurist trends and contributed new ones. At this phase, left-adventurism had a full flowering. The Party Congress in mid-May 1970 gave full expression to it.

Now Majumdar came to believe that the *only* form of struggle was secret annihilation of class enemies in villages by 'guerrilla units', formed conspiratorially. (The 'combat units' of the first phase became 'guerrilla units')

at this phase.) When some class enemies were killed and others fled away, the village was, according to Majumdar, liberated. In this way, vast areas would be liberated. The revolutionary activists – politically educated – would themselves build the People's Army, the base areas, and constitute the ruling power there. As the process went on, there would be a huge upsurge which would culminate in the victory of the revolution.

At this phase Charu Majumdar denounced mass organisations and mass movements on the ground that they would lead to revisionism and class capitulationism. On this spurious plea, the Party abandoned the mass line, gave up the patient, painstaking work of rousing the masses and withdrew into its own shell. Mao Tsetung's teaching 'Communists must never separate themselves from the majority of the people or neglect them by leading only a few progressive contingents in an isolated and rash advance, but must forge close links between the progressive elements and the broad masses' was ignored.

What the Party leadership lacked was a dialectical approach. Instead, it was steeped in subjectivism. There was never any concrete analysis of concrete conditions, which Lenin called the 'living soul' of Marxism. Charu Majumdar urged the comrades to 'Make the 70s the Decade of Liberation'. Soon he brought the day of liberation of the 500 million people of India nearer. He was sure that by 1975, India's liberation would be complete. Faith in easy, swift victory replaced the earlier formulation that an arduous, protracted struggle would be necessary to achieve victory.

Our leader, Charu Majumdar, was a staunch revolutionary. He was dedicated to the cause of revolution and made every sacrifice, even his life, to achieve it. He was a Marxist, a hater of revisionism and opportunism. But he was theoretically weak. He always had Mao's name on his lips but he most often acted contrary to his teachings. He belittled the study of Marxism-Leninism, 'the summary of the world's revolutionary experience' and was content if young revolutionaries read only *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tsetung* and Mao Tsetung's 'Three Articles'. His range of study was narrow; so was his range of experience. His deviations from Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought were many. He never sought truth from objective facts. He never investigated and analysed any concrete situation. Instead, he depended on his subjective aspirations, assumed the role of the 'revolutionary authority' and issued directives. Subjectivism led him to absurdities. In a letter to an organiser comrade in Naxalbari, he wrote on June 9, 1967: '... if we can annihilate five to ten persons, five to ten rifles will be in our possession. The fighting spirit will be enhanced with rifles in hand. And if attack can be launched with these rifles, the peasant struggle of the Terai region will reach the stage of the struggle in Vietnam.'

Even when there was a serious setback, he refused to analyse its causes and to make self-criticism. Mao Tse Tung has said: 'Unwilling to carry on systematic and thorough investigation and study of the specific conditions inside and outside the country, the province, county or district, they [many comrades] issue orders on no other basis than their scanty knowledge and 'it must be so because it seems so to me'.⁸

Mao also said: '...this subjectivist method which is contrary to science and Marxism-Leninism is a formidable enemy of the Communist Party, the working class, the people and the nation; it is a manifestation of impurity in Party spirit.... Only when subjectivism is overthrown can the truth of Marxism-Leninism prevail, can Party spirit be strengthened, can the revolution be victorious.'⁹

Revolutionary terrorism had a sway over Bengal and some other parts of India in the early decades of the twentieth century. There was a time when many of the best sons and a few best daughters of Bengal took to this path and, passionately seeking to liberate their country from British colonial rule, set examples of extraordinary courage, heroism and self-sacrifice. They indulged in terrorist actions to combat state terrorism and fervently believed that such actions would arouse the people. Gopal Haldar, who had himself been at one time a revolutionary terrorist, wrote: 'Many of them accepted these [terrorist actions] as temporary and unwelcome devices of defence and counter-attack. Almost all took to these as necessary steps in the process of revolution, in the preparation for guerrilla campaigns, defection of Indian forces, and finally for armed insurrection on a wide national scale.'¹⁰

Gopinath Saha, a young revolutionary, mistook one Mr Day for Charles Tegart, a hated police officer, notorious for his brutal methods of torture of Indian revolutionaries, and shot him dead in January 1924. Gopinath Saha was arrested and executed in March 1924. When the judge pronounced the sentence, Gopinath Saha declared in the courtroom in a loud and distinct voice: 'May every drop of blood of mine sow the seed of liberty in every Indian home.'¹¹

The revolutionary terrorists gradually realised that, however admired were their deeds of self-sacrifice by their countrymen, they remained passive: they did not become active participants. From the thirties they began to lean towards Communism. Charu Majumdar seemed to have political kinship with the young revolutionaries – Gopinath Saha, Binay, Badal, Dinesh, Pritilata Wadeddar and so on, who held life cheap in the fight for the liberation of India. The assassination of individuals was the form of struggle of both. Both believed that ultimately this would lead to a country-wide upsurge culminating in the liberation of the country.

Charu Majumdar said: 'Class struggle can be carried on only by *our own* class – the landless and poor peasants.'¹² This is not Marxism. It is closer to

what Russian Narodism (Populism) was. I shall quote a few more lines from Majumdar to describe his unconscious affinity with the Narodniks. He said, addressing peasant revolutionaries: '...You are today the *only* force for revolution, the *only* force for progress in India, and no power can prevent the onward march of Revolution.'¹³

He wrote:

'This people's war is a peasant war'.¹⁴

'The peasant relied not on others but stood on his own feet to carry on this struggle.'¹⁵

And '.....the development and expansion of guerrilla warfare is possible *only* by relying on the poor and landless peasants; no other class is able to wage this struggle.'¹⁶

The Political-Organisational Report adopted unanimously at the Party Congress stated: 'We must build up the Party among the landless and poor peasants and on this *alone* the revolutionary striking power of the Party and the revolutionary people depends'.¹⁷

In the late 1890s, the Narodniks in Russia held that the principal revolutionary force was the peasantry, not the working class. They went to the peasants to make revolution, to overthrow Tsarism. When the peasants did not respond to their call, they adopted the tactic of secretly assassinating individual enemies. They assassinated even Tsar Alexander II. It was first Plekhanov and then Lenin who demolished the Narodniks ideologically.¹⁸

Speaking of the Socialist-Revolutionaries, who were the political successors of the Narodniks, Lenin said: 'Advocated by the SRs [Socialist-Revolutionaries] as the chief method of struggle against the autocracy, the tactic of individual terrorism was greatly detrimental to the revolutionary movement, and hampered organisation of the masses for revolutionary struggle.'¹⁹

Charu Majumdar's politics at the third phase was a strange blend of three ideological elements – Marxism, petty bourgeois revolutionism and Narodism.

At the second phase, as we have noted, he was very modest, as a communist leader should be; and there was some collective functioning. But at the third phase, especially after the Party Congress, there was little collective functioning. At this phase, Majumdar grew highly egotistical and conceited. He had too much confidence in himself and in his policies. Addressing students and youths, he said:

'Train yourselves in learning by heart and in propagating in toto and in identical language whatever the central leadership of the Party says directly or through the Party organs.'²⁰

Again he said:

Today, revisionism is even using ultra-left facade to spread its poison. It is doing this in a manner so as to foster in the minds of Party comrades doubt, distrust and lack of confidence in one another, in the *central revolutionary authority*, and in the revolutionary character of the broad masses of the people.²¹

To quote him once more:

So, you should boldly and proudly assert, not once but repeatedly, that it is the central leadership of this Party – and only they – who have grasped Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought and are applying the same correctly in this country, and that none else understands or can possibly understand even the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought.²²

Fourth Phase

The fourth phase began when Souren Bose came back to India at the end of November 1970 with the comments of Comrades Chou En-lai and Kang Sheng on our Party line. Charu Majumdar was completely shaken and decided, perhaps after consultation with Saroj Datta and Souren, not to divulge them to anybody else. One day while at Puri, soon after he received Souren's report, he broke down, wept. During the few years I was associated with him, I never found him so weak. I expected that he would place the comments before at least leading comrades of different states and the Party line would be subjected to a thorough discussion in the light of our own experience and the comments of the Chinese leaders. After my return from Puri on December 6, Saroj Datta went to Puri. And after he came back, Souren went and brought Majumdar back to Calcutta towards the end of December. I felt that he was no longer weak, he was his old self. My hope of a thorough discussion of the Party line by leading comrades withered away. It was my impression that Saroj Babu and Souren had made him firm as before.

He had already started amending his line in doses so that the Party line might conform to what the Chinese leaders suggested. On December 7, the day I was leaving Puri for Calcutta, he handed to me a note announcing the formation of the People's Liberation Army of West Bengal with action squads scattered throughout the state as its contingents.²³ The importance of the *only* form of struggle that he insisted upon in the third phase – the annihilation of class enemies – was now undergoing a change. In the article 'Build up the People's Liberation Army and March Onward', he wrote: 'So attack must be launched on the armed forces of the enemy. To wage attacks now against only class enemies amounts to a certain form of economism. If we fail to wage attacks against the armed forces of the enemy simultaneously with our attacks

on the class enemies, we shall land ourselves in the mire of a certain kind of economism.²⁴ In later writings like 'One Year Since the Party Congress', 'To the Comrades of Punjab', etc., the class enemy annihilation as a form of struggle seldom appears. In his letter to his wife, dated July 14, 1972, two days before his arrest, he wrote: 'We have been conducting very few anti-imperialist struggles as too much importance has been given to annihilation. This is a deviation and we are overcoming it.'²⁵

There was another important change. In 'A Note on Party's Work in Rural Areas', Charu Majumdar wrote: 'The movement for seizing crops is a mass movement. This is the first time that we are leading a mass movement since we started the armed struggle. Without conducting the mass movement we can in no way realise our objective – the objective of making every peasant a fighter.'²⁶ In the previous phase, he said something completely different. In 'March Onward by Summing up the Experience of the Peasant Revolutionary Struggle in India', which appeared in *Liberation*, December 1969, he wrote: 'The revolutionary peasants have demonstrated through their struggle that neither mass movement nor mass organisation is indispensable for waging guerrilla warfare. Mass organisation and mass movement increase the tendency towards open and economist movement and expose the revolutionary workers before the enemy, which makes it easier for the enemy to launch their attacks. Therefore, open mass movement and mass organisation are obstacles in the way of the development and expansion of guerrilla warfare' (as Charu Majumdar conceived it). Now that policy was being rejected.

In the article 'It is the People's Interest that is the Party's Interest', written about five weeks before his arrest, Majumdar acknowledged that there had been a setback. He wanted the Party to be built among workers and peasants and hoped that the struggle would be raised to a higher level. US imperialism and Soviet Social-Imperialism were faced with crises and might unleash a world war. He was sure that 'A vast, widespread, revolutionary upsurge will bring our victory near'. There was discontent throughout India. The people's resentment would create a countrywide upsurge. If agrarian reforms could be implemented by us in some areas, they would take place *spontaneously* in many other areas during the upsurge. We should have a broad united front with 'leftist' parties as well as with those who had been enemies before.²⁷

Though perhaps unaware himself, this article is a confession of Charu Majumdar's failure as a leader. He abandoned the annihilation of the class enemy as a form of struggle, but did not know what other form should replace it. He only hoped that a *spontaneous* nationwide upsurge would lead the Party to victory. He did not say how agrarian reforms could be implemented by us in some areas. He depended mostly on spontaneity.

Like Charu Majumdar, our cadres too had a weak grasp of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought. Much of the responsibility lay with Charu himself. He discouraged study. He asked the youth and students not to take books with them when they went to villages. He asked comrades to confine their study to the *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse Tung*, compiled by Lin Biao, and Mao Tse Tung's 'Three Articles'. Rarely would he advise them to read Lin Biao's *Long Live the Victory of People's War* or Mao Tse Tung's *Military Writings*. *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse Tung* and the 'Three Articles' are like tablets and capsules by taking which one can hardly have a good grasp of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought. Mao Tse Tung spoke of shooting the arrow at the target'. Our target is to accomplish the Indian Revolution and the arrow is Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought. If our grasp of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought, the summary of the world's revolutionary experience gained so far is weak, then we shall miss the target. And if our knowledge of the target, of the history of our country and present-day conditions in it is not adequate enough, the attempt to hit the target will fail. The Party leaders and cadres must have sufficient knowledge of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought, the world's treasure-house of revolutionary experience; and our country's history and present class-relations, in order to integrate Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought with the conditions in India.

The Marxist method of knowing and analysing a thing is the dialectical method. Everything has two sides. If a person sees one side and ignores the other, his knowledge will be one-sided, subjective, and he is sure to go wrong while dealing with it. Our leaders and cadres lacked the dialectical approach and saw only one side or aspect of a problem and suffered from subjectivism.

It is because of this lack of dialectical approach that our leaders and cadres equated annihilation of individual class enemies with class struggle; regarded mass organisations and mass movements as opposed to party building and as obstacles to the growth of revolutionary struggle. All our main errors stemmed from the lack of a dialectical approach.

Our leaders and cadres suffered from another serious weakness – the inability to make concrete analysis of concrete conditions. After a brief visit to Andhra in 1969, Charu Majumdar wrote that Srikakulam was going to be the Yenan of India.²⁸ He wrote, 'The 1970's is here. Let us make this decade the decade of the liberation of the vast exploited and oppressed masses of India. With Chairman Mao as our leader, we will surely triumph!'²⁹ He said: 'Today, it is therefore impossible for the reactionary Indian government to carry out the 'encirclement and suppression' campaign even by mobilising five hundred thousand soldiers against the armed struggle of Srikakulam'.³⁰ He then wrote: 'That is why I believe that it is by the end of 1975 that the 500

million Indian people will complete writing the great epic of their liberation.³¹ We shall not cite more instances. In all these words, there is no scientific analysis of the actual conditions prevailing in India. And so we became victims of subjectivism.

Instead of developing and enriching the political line followed in Naxalbari and instead of formulating the ways of building a People's Army, we deviated from 1969 into a left-adventurist line, foreshadowed to some extent in the 'Eight Documents'.

There were many other shortcomings and errors. But I remember that our Party, brave and revolutionary but young and inexperienced, set examples of dedicated service to the people, examples of heroism and self-sacrifice, and enriched the revolutionary traditions of our country. With all the weaknesses and limitations of our leaders and cadres, the revolutionary force that Naxalbari, Srikakulam, Birbhum and so on represent can never die, despite the numerous setbacks. They marked a historic leap. The road to victory is paved with many defeats.

Mao Tse Tung said:

'Fight, fail, fight again, fail again, fight again...till their victory; that is the logic of the people, and they too will never go against this logic. This is another Marxist law.'³²

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4. *Collected Writings of Comrade Charu Majumdar* (in Bengali), p.54.
5. *Ibid*, p.62.
6. *Liberation*, III, No. 4 (February 1970), pp.4, 5.
7. Mao Tse Tung, 'The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War,' SW, II, p.201.
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17. *Liberation*, July 1971 - January 1972, p.18.
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19. Charu Majumdar, 'Srikakulam-Will It be the Yenai of India?', *Liberation*, II, No. 5 (March 1969), p.69.

29. Charu Majumdar, 'Make the 1970's the Decade of Liberation', *Liberation*, III, No. 4 (February 1970), p.10.
30. Charu Majumdar, 'March Onward, Day of Victory is Near', *Liberation*, September - December 1970, p.2.
31. *Ibid*, 5.
32. Mao Tse Tung, 'Cast away Illusions, Prepare for Struggle', *SW*, IV, p.428.

Appendix A

Confession in an Impasse. A Comment on Nixon's 'Inaugural Address' and the Contemptible Applause by the Soviet Revisionist Renegade Clique

By Commentator of 'Renmin Ribao' and 'Hongqi'

Lyndon Johnson has stepped down and Richard Nixon has taken over. This happened in the last year of the 1960s. On January 20, this jittery chieftain of US imperialism delivered an 'inaugural address' amid angry roars from the American people. No sooner had it been broadcast than it drew gloomy public comments in the capitalist world to the effect that the address made in a 'cold grey' plaza was 'very low keyed' and 'vague', and the tone 'more muted than bold', that it reflected 'almost superhuman difficulties' and 'near-insuperable difficulties' and was 'a grim warning'. In short, even in the capitalist world, it was keenly felt that the 'low-keyed' address reflected the difficulties of US imperialism which finds itself at the end of its rope and is closer to its doom. It was a confession by the US imperialists (and, in fact, by the Soviet revisionist renegade clique and all the reactionaries as well) that they are beset with difficulties both at home and abroad and are at an impasse.

The US monopoly capitalist class thrust Nixon into power with an eye to extricating the imperialist system from crisis. The event had been intended to be a joyful occasion. But it was run like a funeral. Secret service men and police ringed Nixon with protective cordons and even the platform from which he made his inaugural speech was screened off by bullet-proof glass. The Western press ridiculed Nixon's inaugural address as a 'speech made from a glass cage'. However, it serves as excellent teaching material by negative example for the revolutionary people throughout the world. It enables us to see more clearly the very weak, paper-tiger nature of US imperialism and helps us recognize the counter-revolutionary tactics that US imperialism is going to adopt.

Chairman Mao has pointed out: 'All reactionary forces on the verge of extinction invariably conduct desperate struggles. They are bound to resort to military adventure and political deception in all their forms in order to save themselves from extinction.' An outstanding feature of Nixon's address was that US imperialism is relying more on the tactics of political deceit to cover up its military aggression. Nixon said: 'In these difficult years, America has suffered from a fever of words.' His address was typical of precisely this 'fever of words.'

What are the 'words' Nixon juggled with? First, 'unity'; second, 'peace' and third, 'spirit'.

Confronted by unprecedentedly fierce class contradictions at home, the rapidly mounting consciousness of class struggle of the American working class, students and other youth and the oppressed black people, and the vigorously growing revolutionary mass movement of broad sections of the people, Nixon had to admit that US imperialism is in 'the valley of turmoil' (which should read: the angry torrents of the people's revolution). In mortal fear, he cried out in alarm: 'We are torn by division'. The 'division' between the American people, who account for more than 95 per cent of the population, on the one hand and the monopoly capitalist class which oppresses and exploits them and its political system on the other is an excellent one. This 'division' marks the people's awakening. It shows the big progress of the proletariat and broad sections of the oppressed people in the United States in their class struggle against US imperialist ruling circles. It augurs a great proletarian revolution and will finally send US imperialism into the 'valley'. Nixon's fear of 'division' reflects the alarm of the bourgeoisie at the great revolutionary forces of the people. What is to be done? Nixon shouts himself hoarse for 'unity', for all to 'go forward together' and for things 'to be done by the government and people together', and so on and so forth. How could there be 'unity' between the masses of black people and the racists, between the workers and the capitalists and between the broad masses and the reactionary ruling circles? Nixon wants to 'go forward together' with the American people. Doesn't that mean 'going forward' to the 'valley of turmoil', which spells doom to imperialism? It is enough to make you laugh your head off to hear a wolf, while devouring a sheep, tell it: 'Let's do something together!' This clumsy deception of class conciliation fully shows Nixon's feeling of impotence when confronted by 'division', i.e., by the revolutionary struggle of the oppressed people, and, therefore, he could only utter nonsense to deceive people in a vain effort to lessen the wrath of the American people and give himself some consolation.

In the face of the surging angry torrents of revolution of the people throughout the world, Nixon helplessly said that the world is 'falling into raucous discord' and 'caught in war'. He time and again used the word "peace",

phrases like 'we are ... wanting peace' on more than 10 occasions in all. There is indeed 'raucous discord here on earth' and the world is not at all peaceful, but the root cause of all this lies in imperialism headed by the United States in accordance with modern revisionism with the Soviet revisionist clique as its centre, both of which, having bought over a handful of running dogs, want to enslave and exploit the people the world over and to launch wars of aggression. There will be genuine peace in the world when US imperialism, Soviet revisionism and their lackeys are overthrown and the system of exploitation of man by man is eliminated. Messrs. US imperialists, are you keen to be 'peacemaker'? Why don't you dump into the sea the over 80,000 million US dollars of military expenditures used to slaughter the people? Why don't you withdraw your troops of aggression from the Taiwan Straits, from Vietnam, from Asia, Africa and Latin America and from all the places in the world that you have occupied? Why don't you kick aside all your lackeys, big and small? If you do not do this, not only will there be 'raucous discord here on earth', but there will be more big storms of proletarian revolution and people's revolution and more raging flames of revolutionary war until you and all other pests are swept away. Writing on the perspectives for the world situation this year, *US News and World Report*, mouthpiece of US monopoly capital said: 'No matter where the new US president looks across the face of the earth, he will find troubles. Storm warnings are flying in country after country, in region upon region'. It said that for the US reactionaries, 'few bright spots are to be seen on the global horizon.' These statements reveal the background to Nixon's alarm and anxiety in our times.

Nixon alleged that 'to a crisis of the spirit, we need an answer of the spirit.' Is your 'crisis' just of the 'spirit'? It is a general crisis in the political, economic, military and cultural fields as well as in the field of 'the spirit'. The fact is that American society is rotten to the core, its financial crisis grows sharper day by day, the economic situation continues to deteriorate, inflation is growing seriously, the international payments deficit is huge, the position of the US dollar is shaky and an 'overproduction' crisis is looming large. This series of danger signals is crystal clear to all. How can they be covered up by a couple of deceptive words like 'abundant society'? Nixon's predecessor Johnson had to admit before he left office that the United States was in a grave financial and economic crisis and had met with 'difficult' 'challenge'. Did this 'challenge' disappear in a flash immediately Nixon entered the White House? Nixon is trying to cover up US imperialism's material and political difficulties with talk about 'a crisis of the spirit'. This ostrich trick is more stupid than that of the thief who posts a marker saying: 'The missing treasure is not buried here'. Nixon confessed that US imperialism 'ragged in spirit'. How true! The US

imperialists, the Soviet revisionists and all reactionaries in the world indeed are 'ragged in spirit' to the extent of utter impotence. The great spiritual power of Marxism, Leninism, Mao Tse Tung's Thought has awakened and is awakening hundreds of millions of the people all over the world to rise up in battle and to throw all the reactionary ideology of the exploiting classes on to the garbage heap. Muttering incantations and asking God's blessing, Nixon racked his brains to dredge up such planitudes as 'goodness', 'kindness', 'love', etc., only to evoke sneers from the people. How can his rambling block the victorious advance of Marxism, Leninism, Mao Tse Tung's Thought throughout the world!

As Nixon looks around the globe, he finds no kin to turn to, apart from the big and small reactionaries around the world and the Soviet revisionist renegade clique – number one accomplice of US imperialism – on which he pins the greatest hope. In his inaugural address, Nixon took over the Soviet revisionists' slogans; he loudly preached 'peaceful competition' with Soviet revisionism and pledged to 'cooperate' with it and 'go to the new words together', and so on and so forth. On its part, the Soviet revisionist renegade clique pins its greatest hope on US imperialism. This gang of renegades nauseatingly lavished the most shameless praise on the newly inaugurated Nixon, extending their 'best wishes' and calling for 'joint efforts ... to solve the ripe international problems'. As an inauguration gift and to curry favour, they lost no time in dishing up a 'policy statement' on disarmament the very day Nixon took office. In addition, they made special arrangements for a 'noted' church head and 'theoretical physicists' to 'enplane for the United States' that day. The Soviet revisionist press went so far as to claim that Nixon 'could allow American capitalism to finally get out of the most complicated crisis.' This is the utmost servility and flattery!

'Fellow sufferers sympathise with one another!' How true the saying is! The confession by Nixon of an impasse, in fact, also reveals the state of mind of the Soviet revisionist renegade clique which is now at the end of its tether. The struggle of the Soviet working class and other labouring people against the reactionary rule of the Soviet revisionist renegade clique is growing day by day, and the invasion and occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet revisionist renegade clique is like an ever-tightening noose that it has put around its own neck. Things are getting tougher and tougher for the Soviet renegades. In these circumstances, the Brezhnev-Kosygin clique lost no time in putting its hopes on support from the new US imperialist chieftain in a futile effort to redivide the world through US – Soviet collusion, so as to save itself from utter defeat. However, two drowning men tugging at each other only sink faster. The

indignus performance by Soviet revisionism can only make the people of the world see more clearly its counter-revolutionary features as an accomplice of US imperialism and accelerate its own downfall.

In 1947, when speaking of US imperialism as outwardly strong but inwardly weak, our great leader Chairman Mao pointed out: 'The strength of the United States of America is only superficial and transient. Irreconcilable domestic and international contradictions, like a volcano, menace US imperialism every day. US imperialism is sitting on this volcano.' Chairman Mao also taught us: 'Make trouble, fail, make trouble again, fail again ... till their doom; that is the logic of the imperialists and all reactionaries the world over in dealing with the people's cause, and they will never go against this logic. This is a Marxist law.' Nixon's inaugural address, while reluctantly revealing US Imperialism's difficulties at home and abroad and its dire plight, indicates at the same time that US imperialism intends to continue its deathbed struggle. Nixon did not hide the fact that he would continue to use the counter-revolutionary dual tactics both at home and abroad in a vain attempt to get US imperialism out of its grave political and economic crisis and to carry out its counter-revolutionary global strategy. He made a lot of empty promises about 'freedom' and 'welfare' to the American people on the one hand, and on the other he blustered that 'law' and 'order' must be maintained with a view to suppressing the American people even more. While talking glibly about making 'peace', he ranted; 'We will be as strong as we need to be for as long as we need to be.' All this shows that Nixon is resolved to recklessly pursue the beaten path of Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson. The historical experience of class struggle tells us that whenever U.S. imperialism loudly sings about 'peace', it is getting ready to take further steps for arms expansion and war preparations. We must firmly bear in mind Chairman Mao's teaching: 'The oppressed peoples and nations must not pin their hopes for liberation on the 'sensibleness' of imperialism and its lackeys. They will only triumph by strengthening their unity and persevering in their struggle'. We must heighten our revolutionary vigilance a hundredfold and carry the great struggle against imperialism, modern revisionism and all reaction through to the end.

Up against the wall, Nixon had the cheek to speak about the future. It is curious that he even talked about the 'beginning of the third millennium', and that 'eight years from now' the United States would 'celebrate its 200th anniversary as a nation'. A man with one foot in the grave tries to console himself by dreaming of paradise. This is the delusion and the desperate struggle of a dying class. Our era is the great new era of world revolution, the era in which imperialism is heading for a total collapse and socialism is advancing to

worldwide victory. Since its Declaration of Independence in 1776, the United States has gone through the process of rise and fall. During a history of near 200 years, US imperialism has carried out all kinds of evil in the world and the US dollar drips with the blood of the working people of the world. Now that US imperialism is on its last legs, it can only rot day after day with 'each generation worse than the one before'. This determines that the plight of the Nixon administration can only be worse than his predecessor's, and the plight of Nixon's successor can only be even worse than his. No matter who is picked by the US monopoly capitalist class to be 'president' 'eight years from now', his plight can only be still more gloomy than Nixon's. Such is the answer of reality. As to *'the beginning of the third millennium'*, that is, the year 2001, it will be the brilliant festival of the worldwide victory of the proletarian revolution, the brilliant festival of the worldwide victory of Marxism, Leninism, Mao Tsetung's Thoughts. (Emphasis mine). The revolutionary people will use the prediction in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* as their song of victory: 'The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win'.

(From *Peking Review*, No. 5, 1969)

Appendix B

Comments of Comrade Chou En-lai and Comrade Kang Sheng on the Party Line

In mid-1970, the leadership of the CPI (ML) decided to send Saroj Datta, Souren Bose and me to Peking for discussions with the leadership of the Communist Party of China. For reasons beyond control, Saroj Datta and I were unable to go and Souren Bose left for China via London and Tirana (Albania) towards the end of August. He met with Comrades Chou En-lai and Kang Sheng on October 29. He was told by the Chinese comrades not to take down notes, not to put anything in writing about the meeting until he reached India. So Souren Bose said to us, he jotted down some notes in his Peking hotel after the interview and those notes were developed into this report after his return to Calcutta towards the end of November. Souren Bose's report is reproduced here without making any alterations; even very obvious mistakes have not been corrected. The report first appeared in *The Historic Turning-Point: A Liberation Anthology, Vol. 2*), edited by Suniti Kumar Ghosh.

Comrade Chou En-lai

Congratulate the formation of your Party. It is born fighting against revisionism, imperialism, and reaction. There were always dark forces in the international movement but social-imperialism is new; they are different because they hold state power. You have initial success, a new situation for you after the second world war.

Chairman said in 'People's Democratic Dictatorship' that we won for three reasons, viz, 1. Party, 2. Army, and 3. the United Front. 'The Party has conscious etc.' (Quotation). When we refer to Mao Tse Tung Thought that means how to arm the Party with Marxism-Leninism, i.e., how to integrate with the concrete conditions. Chairman became great because he practised Marxism-Leninism with Chinese Revolution and developed it to new height. He led the Chinese Revolution in crucial moments and also leading it now. He has taught us what is concrete application of Marxism-Leninism, not mechanically follow the forms, organizations of other countries. Cultural Revolution is not only an ideological revolution but also the seizure of power, it is something new in socialism.

As conditions in each country differ, each party should apply Marxism-Leninism concretely. This is not modesty but acting according to fact. Your path can be worked out only by you.

We don't deny that Chairman is the international authority and after Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin he upheld Marxism-Leninism and raised it to new heights. Chairman says that we should not go beyond the limits. His instructions to China cannot be transplanted. Relation between our two parties is of fraternal friendship, relation of exchange of opinions. But if we go beyond this limit that is against Mao Tse Tung Thought. It is not right to tell our Party leader as your Party leader. In 1957, Chairman told in Moscow that he was openly against one Patriarchal Party. Then some party supported and some were against.

The first International was necessary at the initial period to develop Communist movement, even then each country followed its own example. Paris Commune. October Revolution under Lenin's leadership was successful only when the 2nd International became revisionist and played no role. After that it was necessary to help communist movement and help working class in different countries to come out of revisionism. But it is often proved that when the International goes beyond these tasks and starts ordering it fails. The world is so large and conditions differ so much that in one's own country only one can work. International interference is wrong. We were successful when Third International had no role. Take into consideration this historical lesson. In fighting against revisionism we must exchange opinions, but if some parties interfere into internal organizational affairs that is mistake. Some parties occupying power make revisionist mistake, some fight enemy, some split becoming more than one left. Only through test or struggle it will be proved who is right.

Chairman has said that when comrades from Marxist-Leninist Parties come to our country they are welcome. But the suggestion of the formation of

International is incorrect. We should help fraternal parties, but we cannot give orders; that is dangerous. Therefore, whether or not we establish our relation with other fraternal Parties is not vital for the revolution of that country. Revolution in one's own country depends upon the summing up of the experience of that country. We have explained this time and again.

World is divided into classes and nations. Proletariat of each territory is to achieve liberation of its own country; so we cannot but take consideration of national limits. To regard the leader of one country as the leader of another Party is against the sentiment of the nation; it is difficult for the working class to accept it. To respect a great Marxist-Leninist is one thing, but to think him as one's own leader is a different matter. This is a question of principle.

Chairman has said that Party is to be closely related with the masses. Two questions are there: 1. Party is a fighting organisation, 2. Vanguard must closely link with the masses or it will lose. During the Proletarian Cultural Revolution personally led by Chairman, masses integrated themselves with Mao Tse Tung Thought, i.e., even after seizure of power we are to go through mass line.

Right opportunist comprising with big bourgeoisie (Chen Tu-shiu) and on the other hand three 'left' opportunist lines during the Agrarian Revolution were all divorced from the masses. They only relied on small vanguards and not on the masses, i.e., they did not do painstaking mass work.

I was in Shanghai city. At that time we held flying meetings. We mobilised small number of vanguards or cadets. We would choose some festival day, such as May day, we would suddenly appear in the busy centre, and distribute leaflets. At the beginning there will be some more people, but in the end there were only the small vanguards. When the ruling class suppressed (white terror) we organised small groups and finished reactionary police officers (Kang Sheng: this was because of the defeat of 1927). Such things can go for only some time. In the rural areas armed struggle which were successful when we followed Chairman's Thought; we mobilised poor peasants to carry out agrarian struggle and distribute lands. They snatched firearms and always relied upon the broad masses. In individual cases they killed very hated landlords only after trial in the people's court. Only in this way peasant movement can develop like waves, army can develop and base areas can be established. In these base areas we must seize political power, protect fruits of struggle. This is dealt in the first volume of Chairman's work. There were failures and giving up of temporary territories, but in all circumstances the armed struggle must always be connected with open mass struggle, land policy should be open which (in our case) afterwards became our land policy; base areas develop from small into big as Chairman says.

After failure of 1927 there were other experience of left adventurism. They relied on only a small number of persons. They went to villages and killed

landlords. They could mobilise people temporarily. As they did not link themselves with the masses, they did not have a mass basis; the small number fled from place to place and were suppressed. These types all ended in failure. Therefore the key question which is vital is the line – what line and policy is taken. When the party takes the line not to mobilise the masses it would fail. Third question which Chairman said is to purify through criticism and self-criticism. If one boldly criticises and self-criticises, he can carry on properly, when leadership does not do it they are bound to land in devastation [deviation? – SKG] (case of Wang Ming). Though we held big base areas, still we had to resort to Long March. Because of this we lost 90 per cent to 100 per cent – lost armed forces to 30,000. As Chairman puts, party must be based on Marxism-Leninism and practice integration in its own place. The line is to be tested among the masses. We go to the masses, come from them, generalise and again go to them and raise it to higher level. If we don't correct our mistakes, we cannot carry on. If there is an erroneous line, discipline cannot be followed – as PMS (party members) do not have faith, Lenin said this.

Chairman summed up (crystallising experience including successes and failures and many failures) that the second weapon used by the Party is an army led by the party. In 1935, in Tsunyi Conference, Chairman's leadership was established. Since then our forces has increasingly developed; in fighting against Japan we fought all kinds of wrong ideas. Then we were able to develop the army from 20,000 to 1 million. During this time there was rectification campaign; 7th congress held and then there was the nationwide victory achieved.

United Front – of Revolutionary Classes, strata, all groups and party – don't know about you – but think it is common in the people's Democratic Revolution. Chairman dealt with this in 1928 in the 6th Congress which was held in Soviet Union. Mao did not attend the Sixth Congress of the CCP held in Moscow in 1928. Whatever mistakes there were in the Party line as formulated by the Sixth Congress were corrected by Mao afterwards. In it the adventurist line was corrected but it could not correctly handle the question of the bourgeoisie. Here in China, very small bourgeoisie started as comprador, later ran their own factories. There were bound to be two sections among the bourgeoisie – one the traitors and the other patriots. They began to have contradictions with the imperialists and big bourgeoisie. 6th Congress regarded all bourgeoisies something to be overthrown, did not apply the theory of one divides into two – in rural areas. There was slogan of confiscating all medium-sized industries. As a result party in rural areas was divorced from the middle class – was isolated. Chairman-led agrarian line was against such line, winning over or at least neutralizing them. The Red areas would be antagonised against the white areas, i.e., merchandise will go on. These medium and small sections represented by small political parties, unity with them or neutralising them is

correct in the period of Agrarian Revolution. Against Japan United Front became even larger. But this nature remained unchanged. Foreign invasion made more allies and based on working class and peasant alliance, all democratic parties and groups. In the stages of People's Democratic Revolution it is divided into several stages. The UF not only includes certain exploiting classes but also revolutionary classes. Alliance between working class and peasantry is the sound basis. But the working class is divided into advanced, middle and backward sections. So the Trade Unions are the United Front of the backward section with the advanced section. Penetration into Yellow trade unions should be. Due to three opportunist lines we suffered great losses in the cities, were not able to win the masses and develop and got exposed, lost lives, had to flee to rural areas, became passive. Losses in white areas were 100 per cent. After victory, Chairman says not to forget the past. The party existed for 28 years before victory. By next year it will be half-century old. As we review the road of half a century I personally feel that whenever we followed Chairman we gained, otherwise we failed. These experience should be applied even after victory, otherwise it cannot be explained how a scab like Liu Shao-chi could possess certain sections of power.

These are the experiences as summed up by Chairman.

Comrade Kang Sheng

Relation between the Two Parties – We cannot agree that our party is leader. Also we do not agree about your calling our Chairman Mao as your Chairman. This is against principle and Mao Tse Tung Thought. Our relation is fraternal and equal.

Two Articles – We uphold Naxalbari as taught by Chairman and his thought, cannot publish the first article 'China's Chairman is our Chairman, China's path is our path' because of the title though it contained many correct things. To regard China's Chairman as your Chairman is opposed by Chairman.

We support you ever since the Naxalbari struggle. Chairman has said to you, 'By you India has hope.' This is our expression. You have spread, shown heroism, you are against imperialism and revisionism, you work in the rural areas among the peasant masses and carrying on armed struggle. We express deep gratitude for supporting the Cultural Revolution, for your respect to Mao Tse Tung Thought. Your small party has not much experience, so you cannot avoid shortcomings and mistakes in policy.

In the first article, about United Front you have said, 'United Front will be built only after nationwide victory', etc. This is improper to say. About the petty bourgeoisie you said, 'It is integrated with the reactionaries ideologically'. Specially in the cities intellectuals exist in large numbers, they have discontent against imperialism and Social-Imperialism.

2nd Article – 'Sum up the Experience of India's Revolutionary Peasant struggle and march onward'.

1. You have said, 'struggle not for land but for state power'. We think this is not very accurate.

2. Guerrilla Warfare Without Mass Organisation: It says, 'Mass movement and mass organisation develop open tendency and economism and these are obstacles'. Our experience is that these are the basis of Guerrilla warfare, the absence of which are an obstacle. We are not familiar with your situation. But you linked it with the principles of people's War and Lin Piao's thesis 'Guerrilla warfare is the only way', etc. Lin Piao's thesis, background was the initial stage of anti-Japanese struggle and he was dealing with what kind of warfare should be taken up and how People's Army would develop – this was struggle on matter of principles in war against the traitors and it was discussed when two armies were in a quite different situation. About your 'annihilation of class enemy' we could not understand before. Only after receiving the July 70 issue of *Liberation* we understood that it is a secret assassination by small groups in villages. It is different from what Lin Piao meant. From the report in the July issue of *Liberation* we find that the method is same as used in China after the defeat of 1927. Guerrilla organisation secret from the masses, from those whose vigilance are not yet proper, secret from Party Committees change the nature of organisation. This is related to matter of principles of guerrilla warfare. This is divorced from the masses and party organisation, is dangerous. 'Comrades whose hands have not been reddened with blood of the class enemy, etc.' This norm is not proper; it changes the nature of organisation. We did not reprint the article for all these.

Your general orientation is correct, only certain policies do not correspond to Marxism-Leninism and Mao Tse Tung Thought. In 1968 we told you about mass bases, from lower to higher, through vital economic interest.

In your report there is nothing about anti-imperialist activities and work in the cities. Mass Organisations of the Cultural Revolution should not be transplanted. Your attitude towards trade unions is not proper or active; attitude on 'Party not to work in the trade unions' involves principle and requires review. (Comrade Chou En-lai: regarding small group activities as offensive and mass activities as defensive requires restudy.)

Attitude towards middle peasant, i.e., not to take part in guerrilla activities is wrong. In your criticism against Nagi Reddy you have said that he wants to distribute lands, distribute crops, etc. We do not know what Nagi has actually said but understand that you found no solution to this. Our experience in this situation is 'organised armed struggle, organised guerrilla warfare, called the peasants to defend land and house and we were successful.'

First, we have an agrarian policy on which to mobilise the masses, then we struggle for the seizure of power.

You have less experience, so gradually you will be able to solve problems. As long as you persist in the general orientation you will find solution to specific policies. In 1967 Chairman said to you 'it is hardly possible to avoid mistakes; we suffered setbacks'.

In the Indian newspaper of October 8 we read that Comrade Charu Majumdar has said, 'Wrong ideas, wrong policy, wrong methods of work are enemies of revolution'. This view is entirely correct. But correction should only be step by step. Feelings of the masses, enthusiasm must not be hurt, should not take hasty measures, should do meticulous work. In correcting mistakes, should use constructive policies to replace wrong policy. It is necessary to have a clear-cut Agrarian policy at present. Consult the masses, sum up their experience, actively step by step establish armed force to replace secret squads.

We believe under the leadership of Comrade Charu Majumdar you have bright future.

Comrade Chou En-lai

Offensive Against Enemy. 'Neither hardship nor death' to be taken dialectically. Share hardship with the masses, not isolated from them; sacrifice not for adventurism; fight the enemy; secret assassination of police is anarchist, is isolated from the masses, is shortlived.

October 29, 1970