

Naxalites Turn to Urban Terrorism

India's Maoists have apparently withdrawn many of their followers from the countryside in West Bengal, where they were attempting to organize a peasant insurrection, and thrown them into a campaign of student terrorism in Calcutta, the state capital.

Known as "Naxalites" from their origin during a peasant uprising in the Naxalbari section of West Bengal's Darjeeling district in 1967, the main group of Maoists are currently organized in the Communist party of India (Marxist-Leninist) [CPI-(M-L)].

Previously disparaging students as "petty-bourgeois," the Naxalites have begun staging invasions of university libraries and bookstores where they have paid special attention to books of their political opponents. The April 11 Calcutta *Statesman* reported:

"A group of Naxalite students and some outsiders caused extensive damage to the Gandhi Study Centre and the Adult Education Centre of Jadavpur University, on Friday afternoon [April 10], when they burnt about 500 books on Gandhism and wrecked furniture in the two centres. A portrait of Gandhiji, valued at about Rs2,000 [US\$266], was also burnt to ashes."

The Adult Education Centre was set up with the help of the World University Service [WUS], which has been accused of having CIA connections. Not all radical students agreed with the tactics of the Naxalites, however. The *Statesman* reported:

"The general secretary of the Jadavpur University Engineering College Students' Union said that though they considered the WUS a 'CIA organization,' they did not believe in such isolated violent activities. He felt such 'CIA activities' could be fought only by mass movements."

A similar incident took place at Calcutta University on April 16. The Calcutta *Statesman* reported the next day:

"For 15 minutes on Thursday afternoon, some Naxalite students, and their supporters went on the rampage in Calcutta University. . . .

"The Vice-Chancellor's room was ransacked and the Syndicate's meeting room, which was locked at the time, suffered damage in a bomb explosion. Even the library in the Centenary Building did not escape. A bonfire of some American journals collected from the Periodical Department of the library was made outside the Centenary Building.

"Bombs were thrown both inside and outside the university campus, causing panic among the students who ran for safety to the Ashutosh and Darbhanga Buildings. . . .

"The Naxalite students also raided a bookshop on Shyamacharan De Street. They smashed showcases, took out books on Gandhiji and burnt them on the street."

The burning of books was not limited to those dealing with American and Indian bourgeois thought. On April 17 Soviet government publications were put to the torch as well. The April 18 *Statesman* reported:

"Naxalite youths raided the library and ransacked the Principal's room of the Jnan Chandra Ghosh Polytechnic in Ekbalpore, South Calcutta, on Friday and made a bonfire of some Soviet Government journals, magazines and some Communist party literature which bore portraits of Lenin and Marx and contained quotations from their works."

The raid was carried out in commando fashion by a small number of youths and was not part of any broader demonstration. The *Statesman* gave this account:

"According to the polytechnic authorities, a group of about 15 Naxalites, comprising both students of the institute as well as outsiders, entered the main polytechnic building at 12-15 p.m. shouting pro-Mao slogans. The youths split into two groups, one heading for the library, the other going straight to the Principal's chamber. The Caretaker of the institute, who was attending to the work of the Principal in his absence, was abused. They picked up bottles of ink from the table and splattered the walls with ink. . . .

"Some of the youths drew portraits of Mao on the wall and scribbled slogans hailing the Naxalbari movement and denouncing the 'revisionist activities' of the CPI(M) [Communist party of India (Marxist)—the formerly pro-Peking CP that has developed differences with Mao]. . . .

"During the scuffle they squirted ink on the Caretaker's face and on his clothes. Throughout the operation, which lasted barely five minutes, one of the youths stood on a chair and read out quotations from Mao."

On April 18 a group of young men boarded a streetcar at the crossing of Mahatma Gandhi Road and Mirzapur Street in Calcutta. The passengers were forced to disembark at knife point, and the car was burned, while the youths shouted "Long live Mao Tsetung, Red Salute to You!"

The police have begun a manhunt for CPI(M-L) leaders, and members of the Maoist organization have reportedly gone underground to avoid arrests. The state government has proposed reviving the discredited Preventive Detention Act, abolished a few years ago on the national level after an intensive campaign against its provisions for detaining political dissidents without trial for long periods.

Various explanations have been advanced for the turn toward indiscriminate violence by the Naxalite leaders.

The police claim that it is an attempt to attract recruits for the CPI(M-L)'s efforts to mount peasant guerrilla warfare in the countryside. Left-wing political groups do not agree, but see the turn as an attempt to outflank dissident Maoist tendencies that have remained outside the CPI(M-L). The April 19 *Hindusthan Standard* reported:

"It appears that the present spell of activities in Calcutta has been organised on the basis of latest instructions given to the party cadre by the CPI(M-L) leader, Mr. Charu Mazumdar. These have made it clear that the party will have to extend its area of operation, and achieve what Mr. Mazumdar calls 'greater victories' than those achieved through peasant revolution in Debra, Gopiballavpur and other States.

"The new phase of operation has accordingly been planned in areas where students have easy access. Moreover, according to the CPI(M-L) leadership, educational institutions have become the main centre of bourgeois culture, and these should be smashed during the process of carrying out a revolutionary programme. Students have also been told that reading of books will make one a big fool. . . .

"This programme is being worked out at a time when Communist revolutionaries [Maoists], who have ceased to associate themselves with the CPI(M-L), have tentatively agreed to organise a united front to propagate what they call the correct teachings of Mao, and to highlight the gross deviations of the CPI(M-L) line from Maoism. According to the non-CPI(M-L) groups, the present activities, directed against educational institutions, were nothing but romanticisation of bourgeois revolution. Such terrorist activities, they point out, will not help the people march towards revolution. On the other hand, such a programme would isolate some revolutionaries from the general mass of the people."

Since the formation of the CPI(M-L) in April 1969 the Chinese press has given it wide coverage and has not reported the existence of other Maoist groups.

The Naxalite campaign has continued in face of mobilization of the police by the state government. On April 20 one person was seriously injured when police fired into a group of youths who were allegedly attempting to set fire to three buses outside the Medical College and Hospital in north Calcutta. Hospital offices were

ransacked by the youths before the clash with police.

Thus far the Naxalites have issued no public statement on their actions. The press has publicized excerpts from what is claimed to be an internal circular of the CPI(M-L) explaining the campaign to its members. According to this document, the attacks on universities are the first step in a "cultural revolution and a revolt against the bourgeois-oriented educational system."

Sections of this document, reprinted in the April 28 *Calcutta Statesman*, called for the establishing of "small red guard units." "If necessary," it said, "the students should discontinue their studies in schools and colleges for the time being as the students in China did to accomplish the cultural revolution."

The circular called attention to a "guideline" for students written by Charu Mazumdar. He holds that a "people's liberation army" formed from "red guard units at the appropriate time, will march through the plains of Bengal by the end of this year or early next year."

The "guideline" reportedly rejected all common action with other groups that call themselves Maoist: "There is no question of formation of a united front of the CPI(M-L) and other groups led by Ngi Reddy and others."

The Communist party of India (Marxist), which until recently headed the class-collaborationist "United Front" government in West Bengal, has sharply criticized the current course of the Naxalites. At an April 23 meeting with newsmen in New Delhi, CPI(M) leader Harekrishna Konar denounced the Maoists as "frustrated young men of petit bourgeois class." According to the April 24 *Hindusthan Standard*, "Mr. Konar's analysis is that these extremist elements, who hail mainly from Calcutta, had returned to the city after their failure in rural areas, and shifted their centre of work to Calcutta."

(S. B. Kolpe, writing from Calcutta in the May 11 issue of *Intercontinental Press*, reported: "Naxalites, the Maoist dissidents from the CPI(M), who once posed a serious threat to the CPI(M) leadership in the rural areas of West Bengal, have lost their base in the villages, including in Naxalbari, their birthplace, once considered to be their stronghold. The CPI(M-L) finds the situation in the West Bengal villages so embarrassing that it has decided

to withdraw its isolated cadres into the cities.")

A major attack on the Naxalites appeared in the May 3 issue of the CPI(M) newspaper *People's Democracy* under the title "Playing Into the Enemy's Hands."

"For years now," *People's Democracy* said, "because of the strength of student protests and the force of democratic opinion among teachers and the public, the police had been prevented from entering educational institutions and vitiating the atmosphere there. Congress rulers and the reactionaries in the academic world have now got the pretext to bring back the police to violate the sanctity of educational institutions and break the heads of young students. . . .

"When the Central Government was forced to give up the Preventive Detention Act by the determined stand of the Opposition, the United Front Government of West Bengal was one of the State Governments which refused to enact a similar law on its own. Now the Congress rulers have taken the opportunity to bring back the P. D. Act. . . .

"Even that is not all.

"The West Bengal Government has already asked 'the Centre to despatch more battalions of the Central Reserve Police in view of the growing activities of the Naxalites.'

"'Growing activities of the Naxalites' is the pretext. The truth came out when Governor's Adviser M. M. Basu told the Press that the CRP reinforcements might be needed during the coming sowing season as well as in the general drive for restoring law and order.

"Read along with this another report which says: 'The West Bengal Government today (April 25) tentatively decided to take steps for restoring lands forcibly occupied during the United Front regime, to their rightful owners "under certain conditions" . . . It was decided to prevent by all means any further forcible occupation of land.' . . .

"At this moment, to organise violent acts with no relation to the developing mass movement, is to play into the hands of the class enemy. And that precisely are what the Naxalite leaders are guilty of."

Atheists Don't Make Good Killers

Admiral Thomas Moorer of the U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff testified in the U. S. District Court in Washington April 28: "I don't think you will find an atheist who has reached the peak in the Armed Forces."