

II. QUESTION OF INTERPRETATION OF MAO'S THOUGHT AND THE SPLIT AMONG NAXALITES

The extremist opposition within the CPI (M), growing into a powerful breakaway group by 1967, did not remain united

long enough to develop a strong centralised organisation or a credible theoretical platform. The subgroups into which it broke up all swear by the Thought of Mao Tse-tung and fully subscribe to his cult. "The Chairman has taught us..." is a favourite prefatory remark one may come across before many pronouncements of the local—CPI (ML)—chairman. It is this party which claims the honour of official recognition by the Chinese communists, while all the other Naxalite groups are equally fanatical in their political allegiance. All are equally hostile to the Soviet Union as far as one can make out. If the CPI (ML) makes lavish use of every invective in the Chinese dictionary, the *Muktivyuddha* (Asit Sen) group, for example, indulges in flaring headlines against the "Kremlin Vampire". Their characterisation of the Indian government is similarly a reflex of the Chinese way of thinking.

Loyalty alone, however, can hardly make a genuine Maoist of a Naxalite. Though they repeat all the current jargon and ideas put out by the Chinese, including perhaps many ideas that come from the supreme leader himself, none of these extremist groups seems able to appreciate what may be called the moving spirit of classical Maoism, the adaptation of general Marxist principles to national conditions. The ability to work out a correct strategy for the revolution in one's own country while absorbing the experience of successful revolutionary movements elsewhere is no easy task. The Coordination Committee of the extremist communists decided in November 1967 to base its programme on Mao's thought as well as a realistic assessment of Indian conditions. In the event, there was little attempt to come to terms with the specifics of the Indian revolution, and the successive programmes of Naxalism turned out to be more or less a rehash of the Chinese communists' programme of revolution, with interesting variations, and brought up to date by including the USSR in the list of enemies.

Programmes are in any case abstractions; and it is difficult to see how the Naxalite movement can advance if the flexibility and sound grasp of political realities that characterised the Chinese communists in their era of revolution continue to

escape it. The non-dogmatic, Marxist approach is evident in Mao's major writings which are not "constantly read", least of all by the Naxalites, but would certainly help any reader. Yet the Naxalites are strangely indifferent to Mao's method of analysis. All that can be said is that some, like the Andhra group, are orthodox Maoists in the sense that they believe in a literal application of the Chinese line of the protracted war and guerilla struggle in India, while the improvisations of the CPI (ML) are fast increasing the distance between it and the model it professes to follow.

THE CHINESE EXPERIENCE

In his *Introductory Remarks to "The Communist"*, written in October 1939, Mao Tse-tung summed up the "two basic peculiarities of the course of the Chinese bourgeois-democratic revolution" as:

"(1) The proletariat either forms a revolutionary national united front with the bourgeoisie or is forced to split up the united front; and (2) armed struggle is the principal form of the revolution" (*SW*, Vol. 3, p. 55).

The Chinese Communist Party had to be built up under very special circumstances, as this passage indicates, and,

"Our eighteen years' experience has enabled us to understand that the united front, armed struggle and party building are the Chinese Communist Party's three magic wands, its three principal magic wands, for defeating the enemy in the Chinese Revolution" (p. 57).

Naxalites of all shades seem unable to take this picture as a whole, preferring to fasten on what pleases them most, the armed struggle. Since its foundation in 1921, the Communist Party of China was continuously under arms. It went through four great waves of struggle: the first revolutionary civil war, including the Kuomintang-led Northern Expedition against the feudal warlords; the war of the agrarian revolution or second civil war to fight back the "encirclement and annihilation" tactics of the Kuomintang after the split in 1927; the anti-Japanese war in which guerilla methods developed to the full-

est extent; and the third revolutionary civil war ending in the capture of power in 1949.

During the first of these stages, the communists were in alliance with the Kuomintang, serving in its leading bodies and high army posts. The alliance, made possible by the reconstitution of the KMT in 1924 under Dr Sun Yat-sen and the policy of friendship with the Soviet Union, reached its culmination in the entry of two communist ministers into the KMT cabinet, with the portfolios of labour and agriculture, in March 1927, less than a month before Chiang Kai-shek carried out his massacre of communists in Shanghai. The united front gave place to civil war about the middle of 1927, when cooperation with the left KMT faction ruling in Wuhan also broke down. With the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, the Chinese communists began to advocate national unity against Japanese imperialism while they were obliged to beat back Chiang's offensives. By 1936 a definite policy of "united front from above" or communist-KMT alliance was formulated by the Chinese party and towards the end of the year the celebrated Sian Incident pressured Chiang Kai-shek into acceptance. The anti-Japanese united front then came into being for the duration of the war.

The third "magic wand" of the party had two facets: an independent peasant base and an independent army. The armed expeditions of the KMT against the feudal warlords aroused the peasantry in provinces like Kwangtung and Hunan in 1926-27; and even while the communists were in alliance with the Kuomintang and aiming at a revolution in the cities, the agrarian storm continued to rise over Hunan. Meanwhile the nucleus of the Red Army was formed in the Nanchang Uprising of August 1927. Between 1927 and 1934 the Chinese Communist Party, from its first stronghold in the Chingking mountain, developed the agrarian revolution, repulsed five major military offensives by Chiang's forces and carved out its own power base in the Hunan-Kiangsi border area. A series of military and political blunders as well as abortive urban risings—the fruit of the Li Li-san line—led finally to the unparalleled 25,000-li Long March in 1934-35, at once an orderly retreat from

the south-east of China to the north-west, and the first step towards the formation of a new extensive red area or "Soviet Republic" with its headquarters in Yen-an.

This was the historic setting for the development of China's New Democratic Revolution. By 1940, Mao Tse-tung placed before the Chinese people and Communist Party his concept of a bourgeois-democratic revolution in a semi-colonial country, linked, in the era of socialism, with the worldwide struggle between socialism and capitalism, passing into a transitional, new democratic form with a new programme and leadership. The aim of this revolution was not the socialist state, but a joint dictatorship of all revolutionary classes. Its programme, again falling short of socialism, was to give a new dimension to the old Three People's Principles—nationalism, democracy, livelihood—by deepening these into the concepts of friendship with the Soviet Union, cooperation between nationalists and communists and assistance to workers and peasants. Such a revolution alone could overthrow China's semi-colonial semi-feudal set-up where the comprador bourgeoisie was in partnership with imperialist and feudal forces, and the national bourgeoisie, out of power, could play a revolutionary role though it was prone to compromise and too weak to control the revolutionary united front. This would be a four-class front, comprising the working class which would play a leading role, the peasantry, the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie.

This is the picture, embroidered by current Chinese pronouncements, which the Indian extremist communists see before their minds' eyes whenever they sit down to write a programme. That of the CPI (ML) is a simple reproduction of Chinese formulas. India is described as a semi-colonial, semi-feudal state where the people are crushed under the weight of the "four mountains" of landlordism, comprador-bureaucratic capital, US imperialism and Soviet social-imperialism (which was simply "revisionism" in the writings of 1968). The main content of the People's Democratic Revolution is the agrarian revolution (since the major contradiction is between feudalism and the peasantry) and guerilla warfare its basic tactical line.

"At least 95 per cent of our people...are impatient for a fundamental change", asserted *Liberation* (May 1969, p. 7).

The Andhra Pradesh Committee of Communist Revolutionaries considers India a neo-colony exploited by US-British imperialism and Soviet revisionist neo-colonialism. Feudalism is an important ally of the imperialists. The state is that of the big bourgeoisie, comprador-bureaucratic in nature, and of feudal landlords; and the first stage of revolution, new democracy, is on the agenda.

A great many arguments over these subtle distinctions have flown back and forth between these two groups. It is easy to see that the role, if any, of British imperialism in India's present set-up is a major issue in this controversy. A more real difference, with important tactical implications, lies in the CPI (ML) thesis that the agrarian revolution must await the smashing of state power. Though the party programme contains fairly orthodox views on the anti-feudal agrarian revolution, visualising even alliance with a section of the rich peasantry (against whom the tactics of *khatam* is to be applied at the same time), this pronouncement of Charu Majumdar's has the effect of downgrading the peasants' struggle for immediate economic demands. Nor does the Nagi Reddy group see eye to eye with Charu Majumdar on what constitutes guerilla warfare.

What they seem to have in common is the lack of coherence that is bound to arise when a group of sincere and militant fighters fails to analyse the specific conditions and features of the revolution in its own country, and seeks a short-cut to power on the basis of false analogies. In their anxiety to make the Indian social picture conform to the Chinese, the Naxalites neglect not only India's national peculiarities, but those of China as well. Yet any study of the Chinese revolution and Mao's writings during the entire period will show that far from ignoring them Mao always emphasised the importance of the local factors in the making of a revolution.

IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL CONDITIONS

"Know the conditions and grasp the policy", said Mao Tse-tung in *Reform Our Study* (SW, Vol. 4, p. 19). The Naxalite

tendency to superimpose the Chinese revolutionary experience on the Indian situation would not have won the approval of China's Chairman at the time he wrote his major works, however much it may be to his interest now to present this experience as a universal model of revolution for the Third World.

The past emphasis on peculiar, local if not unique conditions is explained historically by the fact that the Chinese communists had to work out their own line when the revolution failed to make headway in the cities, and the initial experiment of alliance with the Kuomintang broke down. Unable to depend exclusively on the Soviet experience, or on international guidance, they had to establish the new line through a process of ideological struggle, much as the Bolshevik Party had to work out its own revolutionary strategy of bringing socialism to backward Russia.

The need to study the specific features of the Chinese situation was accordingly underlined by Mao. "If the Chinese communists... talk about Marxism apart from China's characteristics, that will be only Marxism in the abstract, Marxism in the void" ("Role of the Chinese Communist Party," *SW*, Vol. 2, p. 260). Chinese communists must "fully and properly unite the universal truth of Marxism with the specific practice of the Chinese revolution" as "formula-Marxists are only fooling with Marxism and the Chinese revolution" ("On New Democracy", *SW*, Vol. 3, p. 154).

Now that the same leaders are busy setting a feast of "formulas" before their followers in other lands, the time has come perhaps to acquaint the latter with "China's characteristics" as clarified by Mao himself in a number of important articles written between 1928 and 1938. The opening paragraph of *Problems of War and Strategy* deserves to be quoted in full:

"The characteristic of China is that she is not an independent democratic state but a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country, internally under feudal oppression for want of democracy, and externally under imperialist oppression for want of independence. Thus people have no legislative body to make use of, nor the legal right to organise the workers to strike. Basically the task of the Communist Party here is not to go

through a long period of legal struggles before launching an insurrectionary war, nor to seize the big cities first and then occupy the countryside, but to take the other way around" (*SW*, Vol. 2, p. 267).

Since the Naxalites have decided that India in 1970 is, like China in 1930, politically unfree, without democratic institutions or civil rights of any kind, they can happily go on to construct their revolutionary plans on the Chinese model. Paragraph 36 of the CPI (ML) Programme outlines a strategy of developing small bases of armed struggle all over the country, and fighting a guerilla war until a people's army grows and the countryside can surround the cities. This recalls the resolution on party history drafted by Mao and adopted by the Seventh Plenum of the Central Committee in April 1945. It stated that "the indispensable and vital positions" of the revolution were in the rural peasant bases, so that "the revolutionary countryside can surround the cities, while the revolutionary cities cannot detach themselves from the countryside" (*SW*, Vol. 4, p. 193).

This is the point at which Naxalites should remember that it is necessary to "cast our eyes down and not hold our heads high and gaze skywards" ("Preface to 'Rural Survey'", *SW*, Vol. 4, p. 7), and "to know the changing conditions—something for which no Communist Party in any country can rely on others" (p. 9). What were the actual conditions in which a liberated area developed in China? The Naxalite leaders are very fond of Mao's famous article, *A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire*, but they do not point out to their ranks the analysis of China's specific conditions made by Mao in this article, or in another short classic, *Why Can China's Red Political Power Exist?*

In these two articles, written respectively in 1930 and 1928, Mao emphasised the following facts. First, China was not politically unified under a single centralised government, but dependent on several imperialist powers (with their geographical spheres of interest) and exclusively controlled by none; it was directly ruled by warlords whose private armies fought each other and the central Kuomintang government. Secondly, there

was a relative growth of the democratic revolution and mass struggles; in the localised agricultural economy, peasant uprisings had a peculiar importance. Thirdly, the Communist Party had its independent armed forces, the guerilla units, and then a regular Red Army rather than "red guards of a local character" (*SW*, Vol. 1, p. 66); and finally the "small red areas that have grown amid the encirclement of the white political power (no such unusual thing is found anywhere except in China)" (*SW*, Vol. 1, p. 117).

These were the circumstances, very different from those prevailing in India today, in which China's People's Democratic Revolution developed. Imperialism, feudalism and the collaborationist bourgeoisie were the enemies against whom a direct revolutionary war had to be fought; the army became the lifeline of revolutionary politics; and the peasantry, in an industrially undeveloped country where the working class movement was weak and without legal opportunities in the restricted political life of the cities, was the most powerful force in the revolution. Mistakes and miscalculations were made, and setbacks were not uncommon. In the end, however, the Chinese Communist Party was able to prove the correctness of its independent line, which did not conform to any cut-and-dried scheme, and was worked out through the experience of the long struggle imposed on the Chinese people by history.

Summing up the experience of the civil war in *Strategic Problems of China's Revolutionary War* (1936), Mao again stressed that "each state or nation, especially a big state or a big nation, has its peculiarities" (*SW*, Vol. 1, p. 178). It was not enough to study the general laws of war copied from abroad, or the Russian experience, or even that of China's own Northern Expedition in a different period. "We should work out our own measures according to our present circumstances" (p. 177).

To the extremists here, India, whether semi-colony or neo-colony, appears ready for a blind application of the Chinese line, regardless of concrete conditions. What surprises one, under the circumstances, is how easily they can throw away the substance of Mao's teaching while clinging dogmatically to words

and phrases. If the original Maoist spirit of the adaptation of Marxism to national conditions has given place in China to the worship of Maoism as such, the Thought of Mao Tse-tung has actually been replaced, in the CPI (ML), by the wildly deviationist thought of Charu Majumdar.

ARMED AND UNARMED STRUGGLE

That this departure from Mao's thought is significant enough can be seen as soon as one examines the CPI (ML) position on the question of forms of struggle and related problems. It recognises armed struggle as the only permissible form, and rejects all others. Two years ago Charu Majumdar explained the "international significance" of the boycott of elections: in the era of the onward march of the world revolution and the victory of the cultural revolution "...one single task is now the chief task for Marxists-Leninists the world over, and that is to establish rural bases and build up the unity of workers, peasants and all toilers on a firm basis along the path of armed struggle" (*Desabрати*, 21 November 1968). The revolutionaries must, accordingly, repay their "blood debt" by raising the slogan of election boycott and armed struggle in the countryside.

The Chinese Communist Party, when it worked out its military strategy, did not simply invoke the world revolution but proceeded from an examination of actual conditions. We have already noted Mao's analysis of the peculiar circumstances in which the "workers' and peasants' armed independent regime" could develop in the Hunan-Kiangsi border region. Even then, inner-party dissensions and mistakes made the line of revolutionary action take a zigzag course illustrated by the "August fiasco" (1927) of an adventurist sally into Southern Hunan and the consequent struggle to defend the stronghold of the Ching-kangshan. It was here that the strategy of the protracted guerilla war and fighting from bases deep in the countryside to repulse Chiang's "encirclement and annihilation campaigns" took concrete shape, while the rival "left-adventurist" line of urban insurrection collapsed. Wrong tactics, however, led to the loss of the central Kiangsi base in 1934 and forced the Long March

to Yen-an on the Chinese communists. Meanwhile the anti-Japanese war had begun and guerilla methods developed further through this searing experience, a formal return to the principles of guerilla warfare being marked by the Tsunyi Conference of 1935 which also established Mao as the unchallenged leader of the party.

It is against this historical backdrop that one must understand Mao's statement: "Experience tells us that China's problems cannot be settled without armed forces" ("Problems of War and Strategy", *SW*, Vol. 2, p. 270).

Equally important is the actual context from which this celebrated remark is so often torn—"Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." The young people chalking it up on walls seem to have no knowledge of the preceding paragraph:

"In foreign countries, no bourgeois party needs armed forces under its direct command. But China presents a different case; owing to the feudal divisions in the country, whichever of the landlord or bourgeois blocs has the gun has power, and whichever has more guns has greater power. The party of the proletariat that finds itself in these circumstances should see clearly to the heart of the matter" (p. 272).

The sense is quite clear, even though in the actual passage the idea is loosely expressed and carried too far when Mao says that everything in Yen-an, including cadres, schools and mass movement, has been reared with the gun, so that "anything can grow out of the barrel of a gun", and "the whole world can be remoulded only with the gun" (pp. 272-73). This has been criticised as a lapse into the theory, repudiated by Engels, that power originates in force. Yet this passage written in 1938, with the Chinese nation at death-grips with Japanese imperialism, points quite clearly to the exceptional circumstances in which war became the principal form of the revolutionary struggle in China.

The CPI (ML), on the other hand, treats the gun, or chopper, or whatever "traditional weapon" comes to hand as an absolute, a fixed point around which it has built up its vision of a revolutionary party. Such a party can have nothing to do with open or legal forms of action, and—in spite of the present urban

orientation representing a retreat—it should not work in cities. In the words of Charu Majumdar:

"Just as this revolutionary party cannot be a party for elections, so it cannot grow in the cities. A revolutionary party can never be an open party, and bringing out papers cannot be its main task, nor can it make itself dependent on revolutionary intellectuals" (*Comrader Prati*, p. 17).

His attitude to the trade union movement we have noted before. Other extremist groups refute these views of Charu Majumdar. The Immediate Programme of the Andhra group contains a section on work in towns and says, "the help of the working class in towns is needed for the armed struggle we lead" (*Proletarian Path*, No. 1, p. 17). In his detailed rejoinder to the CPI (ML), *Biplab kon Pathe?* (Which Road to Revolution), Promode Sengupta, a leader of the *Muktivyuddha* group in West Bengal, analyses the theoretical unsoundness of Charu Majumdar's views on the working class movement and open work in the cities.

On the question of participation in elections Promode Sengupta is more cautious, pointing out that the extremist camp is divided on this issue, and criticising the CPI (ML) for its dishonesty in ignoring Lenin's writings against boycott. The fact of division is evident. According to the CPI (ML) leaders "Nagi Reddy and others do not believe in armed struggle but in parliamentary path" (*Proletarian Path*, No. 1, p. 62), though representatives of the Andhra Committee of Communist Revolutionaries who met some of the all-India leaders in October 1968 declared that there was no difference on the question of "rejection of parliamentary path and recognition of armed struggle as the immediate form of struggle" (p. 43). Probably the debate goes on; the Communist Revolutionaries of the K. P. R. Gopalan group meanwhile contested the mid-term elections in Kerala.

The controversy is important, for participation in elections would remove one major factor setting the Naxalites apart from other leftist parties in India. Groups other than the CPI (ML) should proceed to this by the logic of their acceptance of the

fact that armed struggle is not the only possible form of struggle, and mass platforms are not to be neglected. However, they have still not given up their doctrinaire approach, and the old inhibitions persist, the more so as this was never an important question in China.

There is no need to go into the well-known Marxist-Leninist position on the importance of the struggle for democratic reforms, making use of the parliamentary forum wherever possible. Anyone going through Lenin's works would appreciate his flexible handling of the problem. The Bolsheviks boycotted the Russian Duma as long as the "upswing of the revolution" during and after 1905 kept the fight against constitutionalist illusions as the main item on the revolutionary agenda. Once the period of decline set in, with the constitutional-monarchist phase definitely established in Russian politics, the party changed its tactics. Opposing the Socialist-Revolutionaries' boycott slogan on the eve of elections to the Third Duma, Lenin wrote in June 1907 that the ultra-reactionary nature of the Duma did not by itself make a boycott necessary or legitimate. Boycott is "something that finds expression not only in cries or the slogans of organisations, but in a definite movement of the mass of the people. . . . The connection between boycott and the broad revolutionary upswing is thus obvious. . . ." ("Against Boycott", Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 13, p. 25). The correctness of the boycott slogan depends essentially on the concrete political situation and cannot be considered in the abstract. In 1907, Lenin tellingly added, signs of a certain upswing of the revolution did exist, but this was not enough to justify the slogan because the general mood was not one of "belief in the Duma, but *unbelief in an upswing*" (p. 48).

It is Mao's thoughts on these questions that should be referred to, since the Naxalites might consider any others to be obsolete. Though the problem of election boycott did not come up directly in Chinese conditions, it will be wrong to think that Mao and the Chinese party had no use for democratic and constitutional movements. The passage where Mao drew attention to the absence of a democratic legislature and legal rights in China has been mentioned. The same point was made in *The Chinese*

Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party, where Mao explained why

"The Chinese revolution must, so far as its principal means or the principal form is concerned, be an armed rather than a peaceful one. This is because our enemy makes it impossible for the Chinese people, deprived of all political freedoms and rights, to take any peaceful political action" (*SW*, Vol. 3, p. 84).

Obviously, "peaceful" action becomes unimportant only when the enemy is able to deny all legal expressions to the revolutionary movement, and impose war conditions on the people. Only a blind doctrinaire can fail to see the difference between China, or even Russia, where democratic institutions of the western type did not exist, and India after independence. Though limited in many ways, the bourgeois-democratic constitutional framework of the Indian polity gives the revolutionary movement in India certain valuable opportunities. The possibility of combining parliamentary and extra-parliamentary forms of struggle assumes a singular importance, such as it could never have in Chiang's China.

Even so, Mao went on:

"However, to emphasise armed struggle does not mean giving up other forms of struggle; on the contrary, armed struggle will not succeed unless coordinated with other forms of struggle. And to emphasise the work in rural base areas does not mean giving up our work in the cities. . . .

"In leading the people's struggle against the enemy we must adopt the tactics of advancing slowly but surely, by making the fullest possible use of all forms of open and legal activities permitted by laws and decrees and social customs and basing ourselves on the principles of justifiability, expediency and restraint; vociferous cries and rash actions can never lead to success" (p. 86).

The importance of work in the cities was underlined by Mao's resolution on questions of party history (1945) which endorsed the policy "advocated by Comrade Liu Shao-chi, exponent of the correct line in our work in the white areas", of developing party activities in the cities "by exploiting all possible legal opportunities (not by rejecting them) in order to make the

party organisation burrow deep among the masses..." (*SW*, Vol. 4, p. 195).

The Indian Maoists, launched on an eccentric course that is forcing them to move away from the masses, their demands and their problems, have no idea of utilising legal forms and existing civil liberties, and would probably welcome their absence. Such people are always inclined to confuse the march of reaction with that of the revolution, and measure the success of a movement by the amount of blood spilled.

They would probably not appreciate the Chinese communists' call for a "new constitutionalism" as the party began to advocate a broad-based national united front against Japan, and an end to the reactionary dictatorship of the Kuomintang. Demanding a democratic coalition government, Mao called on the people to "discard their old indifference towards the National Assembly and the constitution" and organise mass pressure on the KMT leadership ("Tasks of the Chinese Communist Party", *SW*, Vol. 1, p. 263). The importance of winning civil liberties—freedom of speech, assembly and association—was stressed. The popular struggle to avert a renewal of the civil war was on.

This report was presented to a party conference in Yenan on 3 May 1937. Four days later, in a short article, *Strive to Win Over Millions*, Mao made a striking statement on the prospects of the revolution:

"A transition involving no shedding of blood is what we hope for and what we must fight strenuously for; the result will depend on the strength of the masses" (*SW*, Vol. 1, p. 279).

This revolutionary concept of two alternative lines of development of the revolution, peaceful and non-peaceful, remained through the period of the anti-Japanese war and the united front. In 1945, with the war drawing to its close, Mao told the Seventh Congress of the party that "two prospects, good as well as bad" faced the Chinese people. One was the prospect of a united national movement to end the KMT right-wing dictatorship and establish a democratic coalition which would ease the country through its revolutionary transition to a new order. The alternative was "the cannonade of civil war" ("On Coalition Government," *SW*, Vol. 4, pp. 267-68).

Such a situation, with two alternatives, could be visualised by the Chinese communists because they believed that, given the right conditions, a strong popular movement would be able to impose the desired peaceful settlement on the reactionary dictatorship of the KMT ruling clique. As always in Marxist theory, the peaceful transition is something to fight for, and is only relatively peaceful. Fundamentally it is a question of the balance of forces in a country: if the revolutionary classes are strong and organised enough to contain and weaken the violence of the enemy classes, the long-drawn process of a civil war can be shortened or avoided altogether.

The key to building up the revolutionary forces to the required extent is found in the Marxist concept of the united front, which was developed successfully in backward Russia by Lenin, and then in the framework of a semi-colonial society by Mao and the Chinese party. The Thought of Mao Tse-tung makes no sense if his very important personal contribution to this strategy of the united front is left out of account, as the Naxalites persistently do.

"Who are our enemies and who are our friends? This question is one of primary importance in the revolution. All past revolutionary struggles in China achieved very little, basically because the revolutionaries were unable to unite their real friends to attack their real enemies" ("Analysis of Classes in Chinese Society", *SW*, Vol. 1, p. 13).

Mao's model of a four-class front gave leadership to the working class (though recent research has shown that this idea was something of an afterthought, and partly a matter of lip-service to international communism; in fact the original article written in 1926 was corrected at many points when Mao's works were presented to the world). The poor and middle peasantry was the most reliable ally of the working class in the revolution. The rich peasants, inclined to gravitate towards the feudal landlord class—a main enemy of the revolution—could not be written off altogether and might play a limited revolutionary role. The petty bourgeoisie, with its different professional

groups and strata, could be won over to the revolution but would continue to vacillate. The bourgeoisie was divided into two sections. The comprador bourgeoisie served imperialism but also reflected inter-imperialist contradictions of which the revolution could take advantage at times. The national bourgeoisie with its dual character fought imperialism and feudalism as a partner in the united front, but also compromised with them.

Formal acceptance of the Chinese scheme has landed the Indian Maoists into difficulties, precisely because they refuse to analyse class forces and the actual political situation in India with a view to working out a strategy for a revolutionary united front. Charu Majumdar said in his 1967 article (reprinted in *Liberation* in November 1969) that in Russia the revolution succeeded because of a united front, but he carefully refrained from mentioning any such thing in connection with China. The Indian united front, according to this article, will include the working class, the petty bourgeois leadership of the Nagas, Mizos and Kashmiris fighting for freedom, and other militant sections now under bourgeois and petty bourgeois influence.

Swearing by the Chinese experience, the extremist leadership thus reduced the united front to an underground liaison with militant hill tribes and unspecified fighters under "bourgeois influence". Not content with this, Charu Majumdar had further thoughts about the united front about a year later:

"The united front slogan is meaningless for a party unless it is conducting an armed struggle...the united front can be a success only when the armed struggle is being successfully conducted...this can be done only by a revolutionary party for which the only criterion in this epoch is whether the party is leading an armed struggle or not..." (*Desabрати*, 30 May 1968).

Since the CPI (ML) is conducting an "armed struggle" of its own, it might be presumed to be interested in building the united front, unless indeed it requires a foreign imperialist invasion (as in China) as a condition for such a front. Actually, such passages illustrate nothing but the deep-rooted sectarianism and inability to understand the strategy of the united

front, that has led the CPI (ML) to its terrorist climax. Nor is this trait confined to this group alone. Significantly, not even Promode Sengupta's *Biplab kon Pathe?*, a detailed critique of Charu Majumdar's thesis mentions this question.

The Naxalite confusion over this whole question comes out in their programmes. Paragraphs 29-31 of the CPI (ML) Programme, adopted by its congress in the summer of 1970, give a scheme of class alignments in the revolution. The major contradiction being between feudalism and the people, the revolution will be led by the working class which must rely completely on the landless and poor peasants, ally itself firmly with the middle peasants, win over a section of the rich peasants and neutralise the rest. In the cities, the petty bourgeoisie and revolutionary intelligentsia are reliable allies but the small and middle bourgeoisie, businessmen and bourgeois intellectuals are only vacillating allies.

The Immediate Programme of the Nagi Reddy group also speaks of a united front "against imperialism, feudalism and their collaborators, the big bourgeoisie. Under the leadership of the working class this front constitutes workers, peasants, middle class and the national bourgeoisie" (*Proletarian Path*, No. 1, p. 3).

All the extremist groups look on the Indian state as the rule of a bourgeois-landlord combination dependent on imperialism; the Indian revolution being in the people's democratic stage. It is all very like China, and not essentially different from the CPI (M) approach. Unlike the CPI, neither the CPI (ML) nor the other Naxalites consider India to be the state of the bourgeoisie as a whole, under imperialist pressure but not a colony, compromising with the feudal forces which however do not share state power. Unlike in China, the national bourgeoisie here does share power with the monopolistic sections. The stage of the revolution is that of national democracy, with the bourgeois-democratic revolution still to be completed in a politically independent but weak and economically backward society before socialism can be built. The four-class front in such a country cannot be under the exclusive leadership of the working class which will have to share leadership with others

including the national bourgeoisie already in possession of state power but driven more and more to conflict with monopoly capital with its collaborationist role in relation to imperialism.

This is the analysis of the CPI, taking account of an extremely complex situation which does not conform to the Chinese model in certain important respects. Both the bourgeoisie and the working class are more developed than in pre-revolutionary China, and the position of the national bourgeoisie very different, giving it a key role which opens up many possibilities, bright and dark, in the national democratic stage. It is for the working class and the revolutionary masses generally to develop the revolutionary possibilities quickly through their independent action and correct treatment of contradictions.

It is this question of the national bourgeoisie that the CPI (M) seems unable to handle, and the extremist groups which sprang from it share the same myopic vision. If the set-up is so like China's one would expect the national bourgeoisie to play a similar role in the Naxalite scheme—as a force interested in the revolution, though weak and vacillating. Most of them, however, seem to be unduly shy of the national bourgeoisie. Though the CPI (ML) Programme speaks of a broad front stretching from the workers to the jotdars who are to be won over or neutralised (in spite of *khatam*), and this front will include also the small and middle bourgeoisie, we find the party chairman getting rid of the national bourgeoisie soon after the party congress:

“At this stage of the struggle, no section of the bourgeoisie will come with us. Once the worker-peasant unity is established through civil war, we may expect a section of the bourgeoisie to cooperate with us. These we may call the national bourgeoisie. Now, in this civil war, we will not get any help, only opposition, from the bourgeois nationalists” (*Desabrati*, 15 August 1970).

This is one more proof of the highly subjective and irrational approach common to all Charu Majumdar's statements. He does not even bother to relate the classes in Indian society to his pet scheme of the people's democratic revolution, and con-

figures up a cloud of rhetoric about the civil war which is to be fought by the students, workers and peasants while the bourgeoisie waits in the wings until one section of it, coming forward after the victory of the revolution, is designated as the national bourgeoisie by the CPI (ML)!

Similarly, the Asit Sen-Promode Sengupta group, characterising the present stage as people's democratic, quotes in its organ the entire last paragraph of Mao's *Analysis of Classes*, except the last sentence which runs:

“As to the vacillating middle class, its right-wing may become our enemy and its left-wing may become our friend, but we must be constantly on our guard towards the latter and not allow it to create confusion in our front” (see *Muktiyuddha*, 17 June 1970).

The reason for these interesting variations can only be that the Naxalites are embarrassed by this aspect of the Chinese Revolution and would much prefer not to think about the national bourgeoisie, not to speak of its right and left wings, or about a united front with it. Even the CPI(M) finds it difficult to acknowledge in theory what it usually does in practice, having fed its ranks for a long time with a negative hatred of the ruling party in which it refuses to note any inner conflict or contradiction.

Yet the Chinese party never shrank from the logic of a “united front from above”, the position it reached by 1935, when it coincided also with the Comintern line after the Seventh Congress. It is true that the line of joining forces with Chiang, and the active campaign to bring it about, took shape in the framework of an anti-imperialist war; also that the Chinese communists had their independent power base. But the mere fact of foreign invasion does not automatically lead to a united front with the bourgeoisie. Apart from the fact that it was a “just war” demanding unity against reaction, the real point in China was the character of the bourgeois leadership and its command of a popular following. Mao never made the immature mistake of ignoring the inner contradictions within the Kuomintang or its mass base. When the Sian Incident (1936), the kidnapping of Chiang by one of his own officers, placed him virtually in

the power of the communists, they made their peace with this butcher of revolutionaries, and pursued correct tactics of unity and struggle throughout the period. It is this kernel of the Chinese united front strategy and Mao's method of analysis that is valuable for us.

"The Kuomintang is a party", Mao wrote in 1940, "composed of miscellaneous elements, including the die-hards and the middle-of-the-roaders, as well as the progressives; the Kuomintang as a whole is not to be equated with the die-hards... the great majority of the Kuomintang members* (many of them are members only in name) are not necessarily die-hards. We must understand this point clearly, so that we can utilise the contradictions within the Kuomintang, adopt a policy of assuming different attitudes towards different sections of them and make great efforts to unite with the middle-of-the-roaders and the progressives within the Kuomintang" ("Questions of Tactics in the Present Anti-Japanese United Front", *SW*, Vol. 3, p. 200).

A similar assessment was made in the 1945 article *On Coalition Government*, where Mao said that "the large number of democratic people" in the KMT prevented its becoming "a homogeneous body of reactionaries" (*SW*, Vol. 4, p. 262). Because of this, "the so-called one-party dictatorship of the Kuomintang is in reality a dictatorship of its anti-popular clique which disrupts China's national unity... This anti-popular clique is also the root of civil war..." (p. 283).

What a contrast to the dogmatic leftists for whom a bourgeois ruling party is always a static undifferentiated mass, incapable of growth and of having contradictions that also grow! The Naxalites, and not they alone, could learn much from Mao's comments on "closed-door sectarianism", the opposite of the united front approach. This is the weapon of the "lonely overlord", the isolationist attitude of fighting a powerful enemy with the aid of a single horseman:

"The forces of revolution must be pure and absolutely pure, and the road of revolution must be straight and absolutely straight. Only what is recorded in the 'Bible' is correct... If we must shake hands with T'sai T'ing-kai, then while shaking his hand we ought to call him a 'counter-revolutionary'..."

"Comrades, which is right, the idea of a united front, or the idea of closed-door sectarianism? Of which does Marxism-Leninism approve? I shall definitely answer: it approves of a united front and not of closed-door sectarianism. Three-year-old tots may have many correct ideas, but cannot be entrusted with serious affairs of the state and the world because they do not yet understand them" ("Tactics of Fighting Japanese Imperialism", *SW*, Vol. 1, p. 166).

Some Naxalite youth are being taught by their leaders that the Chinese communists did not have to give any concessions for the united front; all the compromises were made by the bourgeoisie, unlike what the CPI or other parties are doing for the sake of the united front in India. In fact, the Chinese party made a number of "principled and conditional concessions" to the Kuomintang before the united front was achieved in 1937. While retaining its freedom of criticism and leadership of its base area and army units, the party gave up four things (making the offer in a telegram to the KMT leadership): the "soviet republic" in the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia base area was to be renamed as government of a "special region" and the Red Army units were to be integrated with the army under central KMT direction; the soviet system in the base area was to be replaced by a "thoroughly democratic system" with local assemblies convened on the three-thirds principle (an equal number of delegates of the Communist Party, the KMT and non-party people); the civil war would end; and land reforms be suspended in the red area.

Describing these concessions as "necessary as well as permissible" Mao told the national conference of the party:

"Concessions are to be made by both parties: the Kuomintang abandons the policy of civil war, dictatorship and non-resistance to the foreign foe; and the Communist Party abandons the policy of maintaining a rival regime. We exchange the latter for the former and resume our cooperation with the Kuomintang to fight for national salvation" ("Tasks of the Chinese Communist Party", *SW*, Vol. 1, p. 265).

This clarity and integrity made it possible for the Commu-

nist Party to make the united front a success without losing its political identity. Mao explained the task to the Sixth Plenum of the Central Committee in 1938: autonomy within the united front is only relative, but ideological, political and organisational independence must be retained by all the partners. In the same way, the united front does not mean the suspension of the class struggle but its "adjustment".

"The policy of mutual help and mutual concessions which we advocate is not only applicable to the relations between parties and groups, but also to class relations" ("Role of the Chinese Communist Party", *SW*, Vol. 2, p. 250).

If this sounds bolder than what most communists are prepared to say at any time, it is the outcome of a policy logically pursued and of a rich revolutionary experience. Another facet of the same policy was to root out the dogmatic narrowness that appears so often in communists' relations with those closest to them.

Against Sectarianism.

"Closed-door sectarianism" is a vice that haunts the steps of movements dedicated to a revolutionary programme. It obstructs not only the united front in general but also unity with other leftist forces. Inevitably, sectarianism takes its toll of comradesly relations within one's own movement.

In the case of the CPI (ML), the virulence of its attacks is already being felt and resented by the other Naxalite groups. True to the peculiar logic of sectarianism, rightwing groups and forces are hardly ever attacked with the intensity of hatred reserved for other leftists and communists. The CPI (M), which did more than anyone else to teach these habits to its extremist wing, now finds its leaders subjected to the kind of personal attack where even the pretence of political criticism is waived. Under a mask of militancy a kind of yellow journalism has been developed in the pages of the CPI (ML) organ by writers like Sasanka. Commenting that the reactionaries were busy suppressing the Andhra peasantry "with Nagi's help when the Nagas raised their heads", Sasanka gloated: "Nagi might

be useful in Andhra, but how to check the Nagas? There Nagi is no good" (*Desabrati*, 14 August 1969).

As Promode Sengupta points out in exasperation, Nagi has nothing to do with the Nagas beyond the similarity in names that inspired this abusive play on words. This is only one example, and a mild one, of the basically non-political and at times sick humour indulged in by the *Desabrati* staff. While the CPI (ML) is on the whole a movement of the youth, nothing could be less like the starry-eyed idealism of youth than the embittered outpourings of the middle-aged men who edit the party journals in West Bengal.

Fundamentally, this smallness of mind follows from the nature of the CPI (ML) organisation. Mao said,

"Since we are not members of a small sect thinking ourselves infallible, we must learn how to cooperate in a democratic spirit with non-party people and how to discuss matters with others" ("Speech to the Border Region Assembly", *SW*, Vol. 4, p. 27).

CPI (ML) leaders who believe, for no reason immediately discernible to others, that they are infallible are in the position of "comrades" who, "having read a few Marxist books... habitually dismiss others as no good without knowing that they themselves are mere tyros and smatterers" ("Rectify the Party's Style in Work", *SW*, Vol. 4, p. 42).

Mao never ceased to point out that even if the Communist Party membership were to increase phenomenally, it was bound to be a very small fraction of the total population. This fact dictated an attitude of respect and tolerance for others, behaving "as the friends of the masses and not as their bosses" ("Role of the Chinese Communist Party", *SW*, Vol. 2, p. 247). It is essential to win the good will of non-communist democrats.

"Wherever there are democratic parties or individual democrats willing to cooperate with us, the communists must adopt the attitude of discussing matters with them and working together with them. It is an entirely wrong attitude to brush aside the allies and make arbitrary decisions and take peremptory actions."

This is "taking the majority into account". It is impermissible for communists to turn their back on the majority, the masses and their wishes, in order to "lead a small number of progressives to attempt any venturesome advance" (p. 251).

The question of democracy within the Communist Party becomes naturally very important, a corollary of the relations with non-party democrats. So also the political education of party members, and habits of independent thinking. There is no question of learning by heart and repeating in toto the pearls of wisdom scattered by a leadership which dare not allow free discussion. Instead, Mao emphasised creative activity within the party, and "courage and ability to raise questions, voice opinions and criticise defects" because capable people can be heard only in a free and democratic party life (p. 254). The purpose of criticism of an erring comrade is to "treat the illness to save the man", not deal him body blows.

Nothing could be more unlike the murky atmosphere of a terroristic organisation, divorced from the masses, riddled with mutual suspicion and secret fears. But for the CPI (ML) leadership, more open and democratic ways would be an impossibility, not only because of persecution, but because of its very nature. This leadership, inherently incapable of greater political realism, dogmatic and intolerant, reflects essentially the spirit of "subjectivism" and "liberalism" Mao told his party men to combat.

It is this subjectivist standpoint that is fast driving the CPI (ML) to a more and more unreal, fanciful scheme complete with guerilla bands, liberated areas and heroic death. The reality is much more depressing, with physical violence against other leftists taking the place of class struggle, and armed gangs in cities that of the guerillas with whom all the Naxalites are obsessed.

GUERRILLA TECHNIQUES

Since guerilla warfare did play a key role in the Chinese revolution, it has become a major theoretical problem for the extremists here. Over this, too, differences have developed

between the CPI (ML) riding its fantasies, and the others—the Nagi Reddy group for instance—who are more concerned to carry out Mao's techniques in a literal manner, regardless of whether they suit Indian conditions at the moment.

In his *Strategic Problems in the Anti-Japanese Guerilla War* Mao laid down the conditions for the establishment of base areas: an army which may grow out of guerilla units; coordination between the army and the masses; rousing and arming the people and building their mass organisations to fight the enemy; proper geographical conditions; and a correct economic policy.

As the Andhra group states in one of its documents, "the CPI (ML) characteristically negates all this and advocates that with the beginning of guerilla actions annihilating the class enemies in any area they will be forced to flee from the countryside and villages will be liberated forming the liberated area. The kind of liberated area they are preaching so ardently must only exist in their imagination or the class enemy with its armed forces must be too obliging" (*Mainstream*, 2 May 1970, p. 29).

The CPI (ML), for instance, believes that "guerilla war" can be started without a favourable terrain. Already it is visualising the march of an army in the plains of West Bengal. Mao, however, considered the nature of the terrain an important geographical factor. A certain amount of polemics has taken place between the West Bengal and Andhra extremists over this whole question of mountains, plains and river-lake-estuary regions. There is also the arms controversy: whether guns should be used or not.

The Andhra group is certainly more down-to-earth in its idea of limited guerilla resistance in the plains while sending cadres to the forest; and it has the more orthodox theoretical approach. But it is also a doctrinaire approach. One recalls Edgar Snow's account (in *Red Star Over China*) of the interview in which Peng Teh-huai, then commander of the First Front Red Army, pointed out certain specific reasons for the development of "partisan warfare" in China. These were: the breakdown of the rural economy; the undeveloped communi-

cations system (large areas being without railways, roads and bridges); the absence of any contiguous physical control by imperialists of China's territory; and the experience of the armed nationalist revolution of 1926-27.

It will be strange indeed if our revolutionaries, and specially those with experience of the Telengana struggle, fail entirely to reckon with the fact that in practically all these respects the Indian geopolitical realities have been different from China's, since the British days. Centralisation of power, though incomplete, is a fact; communications so much more developed that troop movement was always much easier; the possibility of aerial bombing exists; holding out in or even forming base areas would be very difficult in the absence of a strategic rear such as the Chinese north-western "soviet republic" had in the USSR; and the tradition of armed struggle in the anti-imperialist freedom movement is comparatively weak; besides the relatively greater economic growth and urbanisation.

The CPI (ML), or anyone else, might certainly argue, in the manner of certain Latin American revolutionaries, that the Chinese model is not suitable for guerilla action everywhere. Indeed, the term "guerilla" might be used much more broadly and flexibly to cover various forms of action, in villages or cities, with arms or without, than Mao and the Chinese (or Vietnamese) communists do. The point however is that the Naxalites would never give up their claims to the monopoly of Mao's thought, and, in fact, constantly accuse each other of deviating from it. And so the core of the problem lies in the fact that most of the Naxalite controversies about guerilla techniques are unreal. What Mao meant by guerilla warfare and what the CPI (ML) means have very little to do with each other, and most of Mao's detailed and valuable instructions are simply not relevant to the case.

The nearest approach to the CPI (ML) type of guerilla action—by which it means any kind of terrorist action by groups and individuals, from smashing up school libraries and laboratories to the famous *khatam* or political assassination—found in the Chinese experience is perhaps the phenomenon of "roving insurgency". This was an offshoot of the chronic vaga-

bondism and traditional banditry in the Chinese countryside. Mao was much kinder to the bandits, with their picturesque names and gangs, than the later official versions of his writings suggest, and used them to some extent to build up armed bands in the earlier period. Yet they could not be accepted (unless ideologically "remoulded") as a permanently reliable revolutionary force, because of their inherent instability; and Mao warned that the communists must be "against guerillism in the Red Army yet for its guerilla character" ("Problems of China's Revolutionary War", *SW*, Vol. 1, p. 197).

That the CPI (ML) was never quite free of such entanglements has been admitted by Kanu Sanyal in the Terai Report where he speaks of the vagabond elements being recruited as captains in the Naxalbari area. Similarly, the Mushahari Report (from Bihar) by Satyanarain Singh confessed to the excessive reliance placed not only on "modern weapons" but also on "experts" in fighting, including "pseudo-political criminals" (*Liberation*, October 1969, p. 28). Now that the whole movement has entered a new stage and has shifted to the cities, the criminal and adventurer elements are very much in evidence.

What it points to is the lack of one very important condition without which the Chinese communists' military strategy would have been placed in a vacuum and rendered useless. This is what Mao called "political mobilisation", something indispensable to the successful conduct of war: to explain the political objectives of the war to the people; to formulate a political programme; and to mobilise the people not once but regularly, through propaganda literature, plays, films, schools and mass organisations. To try to win a military struggle while neglecting political mobilisation is, according to Mao, "trying to drive one's chariot south by heading north" ("On the Protracted War", *SW*, Vol. 2, p. 204).

ROLE OF THE MASSES

This is precisely the position the CPI (ML) has reached, not only in practice but in its theoretical formulations. All the militant "action" it goes in for is essentially elitist, involving

a small group, where the masses not only play but are expected to play a passive role.

Corresponding to practice, the party's theory has gone through different stages, clearly discernible in its literature. It has evolved to a point where formal salutes are still sketched in the direction of the revolutionary masses, who are always supposed to be "on the move" somewhere, and fully approving the "action" unleashed by the heroes of the CPI (ML). Much more important however are the new formulations which might be used in defence of the real isolation from the masses: the theoretical negation of the mass movement and mass organisations.

Though the pro-Naxalbari movement was never meant to be terroristic in character, and extremist factions like that of Nagi Reddy explain their immediate programme as one of agrarian revolution which will eventually assume the character of an armed liberation movement of the peasantry, Charu Majumdar's position on this issue was always ambivalent. In the end, of course, the mainstream of Naxalism in West Bengal followed these ideas into the dubious channels now evident to all.

"An opportunity will always exist", Charu Majumdar wrote in 1967, "for peasant mass movements based on partial demands, and communists must make good use of this opportunity" (*Liberation*, November 1969, p. 83). But this is the same article where he says the agrarian revolution must await the political, because "at one stage of the struggle there remains only one task" (p. 84). In an article entitled "To The Comrades", written in August 1968, he spoke of arousing the masses to struggle, learning from them and fighting on economic issues in order to rally even the backward strata of the peasantry. Two months later came another article in which Charu Majumdar condemned open meetings, peasant squads and other traditional forms of the village movement as revisionist, and underlined the need to build up secret party units in the peasant areas. At the same time he admitted the necessity of "the anti-feudal economic struggle" including seizure of crops, and said: "Without developing the broad mass movement of the peasantry and bringing the broad masses into the movement, it will be a long time before the politics of seizure of power

becomes firmly rooted in the peasant consciousness" (*Desabrati*, 17 October 1968).

These are examples of the confusion of the CPI (ML) leadership which is far less logical and clear-headed than its admirers think, over some vital questions of the movement. Thus "Peasant Organiser" writing in *Liberation* as late as November 1969, asserts that guerilla war can be conducted "only by arousing the broad peasant masses" (p. 70) but "no open mass organisations of any kind can ever accomplish this" (p. 71). It is a mistake to build peasant organisations, hold meetings or make use of legal forms of movement like petitions, litigations, demonstrations, or of land occupation. All this is "peasant economism" which "obstructs the politics of seizure of power and defying the existing laws and the building of secret organisation" (p. 72). Only in liberated villages may revolutionary committees take up the distribution of land.

This article is important because it claims to reproduce the views of the leader himself. Some time before this, Charu Majumdar had arrived at the position that mass organisations of the peasantry lead inevitably to opportunist mistakes; and he counterpoised the party to the mass organisation.

In his article "Parimalbabu's Politics" written about the middle of 1969, he took Parimal Dasgupta (who led yet another Naxalite group) to task for his predilection for trade unions and other mass platforms:

"The question is, if everyone starts building mass organisations, who will build the underground party organisation?... If a mass organisation is built taking the peasantry to be one class, this will inevitably become a peasant committee under rich and middle peasant leadership. Besides, the peasants' tendency towards open movements through an open organisation will be strengthened and we will become the leaders of yet another revisionist mass organisation. Only by organising the underground party among the peasantry can the movement be brought under the leadership of the poor and landless peasants" (*Comrader Prati*, p. 36-37).

The unexpected antipathy of the CPI (ML) for the anti-feudal agrarian revolution, or rather, the belief that only the

political movement and "seizure of power" by the underground party can lead to an agrarian revolution ("will mass organisations bring about the agrarian revolution?"), is explained by the attitude of suspicion towards mass movements. All battles for economic demands, or any immediate improvement in living conditions amount to "economism". Peasant associations must inevitably become the tools of the kulaks. The poor peasant, when he gets land, will become rich and an enemy of the movement. In the name of fighting economism and opportunism Charu Majumdar is more than ready to throw the baby out with the bath water and get rid of all the tools with which to build up the peasants' unity and strength. Not that the problems he mentions are entirely unreal; what is harmful is the line that would lead inexorably to the disarming of the movement ideologically and organisationally, and submit it to wrong trends that will spontaneously arise when the revolutionary party turns its back on the masses, mistaking isolation for purity.

The whole line of argument makes it perfectly natural for Charu Majumdar to reach the conclusion we have noted before: the mass movement and mass organisations are not "indispensable" for guerilla war, but actually obstruct it.

Yet he repeatedly speaks of the party's "mass line", the need to "integrate" oneself with the peasants and to "serve" the people, of "class struggle" and of "standing by" the workers. All this is to be achieved through conspiratorial party units and red guard squads. The Marxist-Leninist analysis of the relationship between the party, the class and the masses does not exist for the CPI (ML) leadership; still, they hope to lead a mass revolution.

What these leaders imagine a mass line to be is not at all clear; and it is probably another instance of the fairy-tale treatment of Marxist terminology common to them.

To Mao the question was quite clear. "The masses in all cases are by and large composed of three groups of people: the active, the relatively passive and those who are betwixt and between." It is the duty of the leadership to forge links with the last two categories and draw them into activity

by training the active element in leadership. The role of the leading group is a key role, for without it mass energy will soon be frittered away into passivity. Equally important, however, is to prevent the vanguard, the leading group, going ahead without the masses:

"The activity of this leading group, unless combined with that of the masses, will dissipate itself in the fruitless efforts of a handful of people" ("On Methods of Leadership", *SW*, Vol. 4, p. 112).

From this followed Mao's famous exposition of the mass line: from the masses, to the masses. This means collecting the scattered and unsystematised views of the people, summing them up and taking them back to the people "until the masses embrace the ideas as their own, stand up for them and translate them into action by way of testing their correctness... And so on, over and over again, so that each time these ideas emerge with greater correctness and become more vital and meaningful" (p. 113).

This can hardly be done by refusing to concern oneself with the everyday demands of the common people or staying out of their organisations in highminded revolutionary fervour! Exactly the opposite is necessary—to fight at the side of the people to win immediate demands and solve immediate problems:

"Do we want to win the support of the masses? Do we want to devote all their efforts to the war front? If we do, we must go among the masses; arouse them to activity; concern ourselves with their weal and woe; and work earnestly and sincerely in their interests and solve their problems of production and of living conditions, their problems of salt, rice, shelter, clothing and child-birth, in short, all their problems. If we can do so, the broad masses will certainly give us support and regard the revolution as their very life and their most glorious banner" ("Take Care of the Living Conditions of the Masses", *SW*, Vol. 1, p. 150).

Though this statement refers to the liberated area that had its headquarters in Kiangsi, before the Long March, it does not mean that only "one task" is to be taken up at a time, and

there is no question of fighting for the people's immediate and partial demands before an area of red power is established. In fact, it is only people who fail to relate the smaller battles with the big one and see the daily struggle in a broader revolutionary perspective who can think in such terms.

The famous Hunan Report was written before there was any breach with the KMT or any liberated area. In fact, Mao is referring to the peasant association led by KMT cadres when he describes how the membership increased tremendously during a few months of open activity. Organising the association is held up as the first of the "fourteen great deeds" which gave both political and economic blows against feudalism. Thus the agrarian revolution was not made to wait upon the outbreak of a war for the seizure of power and the peasant organisation was built up without fear that it would immediately turn into a revisionist or reactionary platform!

Actually the rich peasants were never friendly towards the peasants' association and the middle peasants vacillated for some time. It was the poorest section which gave the agrarian revolution its backbone. Such a revolution could begin only because "the peasants with their extensive organisation went right into action" ("Investigation into the Peasant Movement in Hunan", *SW*, Vol. I, p. 28). Also, "wherever peasant associations existed political agitation was extensively carried out and the whole countryside was aroused; the effect was tremendous" (p. 50).

There is no hint here of isolated secret squads carrying out theatrical "action", or posing as neutral and whispering in the ears of villagers, inciting them to murder while the "intellectuals" quietly go into hiding. Mao warned the cadres in the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia border region in 1943 against the wrong policy which "consists in rejecting the standpoint of the masses and refusing to rely on them or to organise them..." ("Let Us Get Organised", *SW*, Vol. 4, p. 150).

This again may be taken as a general principle for the entire movement, rather than a particular maximum for a liberated zone, for the "lonely overlord" attitude is always wrong, and

"We communists ought to weather the storm and see the world, the storm being the big storm of mass struggle, and the world being the big world of mass struggle" (p. 153).

TERROR AS TACTICS

That communists should work in mass organisations, fight to win immediate demands and try to mobilise not only a small vanguard but also the as-yet passive and middle-of-the-road forces against those of reaction is a truism. There would be no need to quote at length from the classics on these and other issues if the CPI (ML) were more faithful to the "ABC of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought" in which they claim to hold a monopoly. Since they pose as the faithful followers of Mao, there is all the more reason to go into what Mao actually said and did.

Leaders like Charu Majumdar dream of replacing mass action with guerilla warfare, which to them means "annihilation of the class enemy" or individual assassination as a short-cut to power. In his comments on the party's Political-Organisational Report, Charu Majumdar practically enlists the forces of nature in the cause of revolution:

"Comrades, let a tremendous peasant struggle unleash itself all over India at the victorious conclusion of our congress. Then that guerilla struggle will bring about a spontaneous uprising of the masses, like a landslide, like a thunderclap" (*Desabрати*, 25 June-2 July, 1970).

The reliance on spontaneity, the landslide theory of revolution is an interesting indirect admission of the failure of organised efforts. It is this failure that creates a new theory, which is actually quite old, to cover the terrorist methods on which the whole party has to fall back. Does this correspond in any way to the experience of the Chinese communists?

Once more we turn to the Hunan Report which contains a passage (of which the Naxalites are very fond) to the effect that a revolution cannot be a refined act like asking guests to dinner or painting a picture, etc. (Lenin also said that revolution is not made in one's Sunday trousers.) Undoubtedly Mao here

asserts the inevitability, and indeed necessity, for a certain amount of revolutionary terror, even excesses:

"To put it bluntly, it was necessary to bring about a brief reign of terror in every rural area; otherwise one could never suppress the activities of the counter-revolutionaries in the countryside or overthrow the authority of the gentry" (*SW*, Vol. I, p. 27).

Commenting on the execution of some village tyrants "on the demand of the peasants together with the people generally", Mao states:

"Such being the atrocities of the local bullies and bad gentry as well as the white terror created by them in the rural areas, how can one say that the peasants should not now rise and shoot a handful of them and create a little terror in suppressing the counter-revolutionaries?" (pp. 38-39).

The point to note here is not simply the reference to a "brief" or "little" terror, and shooting only "a handful", in contrast to the horror stories splashed across the pages of *Desabрати*, and blood-thirsty editorial comments like the following:

"Oppressed, cheated and trampled underfoot for ages, the peasants armed with the thoughts of Chairman Mao Tse-tung have snatched away the class enemy's monopoly of the right to kill. They have tasted power, experienced the terrible joy of killing the class enemy, stamping on his severed head, writing slogans in his blood" (*Desabрати*, 15 January 1970).

Even more important is the point that the executions in the Chinese villages were carried out on the demand of the peasants, as a measure of counter-terror and a demonstration of the people's strength after victory, when their writ ran over a large area. It was not a question of the indiscriminate, hit-or-miss use of the knife in the dark, and creeping away afterwards to avoid the police. Individual murder as an operational method of the revolution when all else has failed, as a substitute for mass action, is a way out for anarchist revolutionaries, not Marxists, and it is such people usually whom the dubious delights of blood-letting thrill and inspire.

Certainly the Chinese Communist Party never credited *khatam* with the creation of a new set of human values, overcoming "localism, casteism and superstitions". The Hunan Report does contain many pages describing the change in the social atmosphere in the villages, the overthrow of the threefold authority of the clan (elders and ancestors), the theocracy (local gods) and the husband dominating the wife. The intensely feudal atmosphere of old China comes alive in these pages and in the description of the "peasants' prohibitions" putting an end to social evils like gambling, opium smoking, making rice wine, certain forms of entertainment.

In this connection Mao's story about the sedan chairs has a certain relevance to our conditions. In many places the peasants celebrated their new freedom by smashing up the sedan chairs in which rich people were carried by human bearers. Smashing up these peculiarly obnoxious symbols of social injustice was an elemental expression of the peasants' anger. But the leaders of the peasants' association, not being Naxalites, persuaded its members not to do this, as then "our own people" would lose their jobs; instead, they raised the carriers' charges. How different from the CPI (ML) leaders who welcome the destruction of symbols and confuse blind rage with revolutionary consciousness!

If the CPI (ML) volunteers cared to read the Hunan Report they would indeed catch sight of a revolution of the spirit which had nothing to do with the rolling of heads. The semi-mystical praise of *khatam* is alien to Marxism, and to Chinese practice as well. There is no substitute for the sound political sense and broad-based organisation of the common people. That alone could work a miracle in the rural backyard of old China, as it will eventually in our own land.

LENIN ON TERROR

Though the CPI (ML) leaders have a habit of sniping at the pedantry and quotation-mongering of those who try to disprove their arguments, they are not at all averse to quotations which suit them and, occasionally, long articles from which they

derive some sort of inspiration. One such article is Lenin's "Guerilla Warfare", written in September 1906. It contains a justification of the forms of armed struggle seen in some parts of Russia after the recession of the revolutionary wave in December 1905. As such, it has an obvious appeal for the Naxalites; and the CPI (ML) leadership has had it translated into Bengali.

The features of this guerilla warfare, as summed up by Lenin, do seem to have a bearing on the extremist struggle here. There was a social background of growing poverty and unemployment; anarchist and vagabond elements were attracted to this war; it called forth ferocious measures of repression; and its main forms were the murder of police and army personnel, and armed robbery.

This form of warfare, Lenin said, disorganised the fighting forces to some extent, but this only underlined the need to learn to fight in new and unfamiliar ways. He defended guerilla warfare in 1906, and it will do us no harm at all to remember his words: "A Marxist bases himself on the class struggle, and not social peace" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 11, p. 219); and "Marxism therefore positively does not reject any form of struggle" (p. 213).

Reproving party members for their "proud smugness and a self-exalted tendency to repeat phrases learnt by rote in early youth" (p. 221), Lenin insisted:

"We absolutely demand in the name of the principles of Marxism that an analysis of the conditions of civil war should not be evaded by hackneyed and stereotyped talks about anarchism, Blanquism and terrorism..." (p. 220).

But how did Lenin analyse these conditions?

First, these were "conditions of civil war". To Lenin, the abstract assessment of a form of struggle apart from its actual socio-political context was meaningless. He summed up the chronological development of various forms of struggle in the Russian revolution of 1905-6, ranging from armed insurrection to parliamentary action. Towards the end of 1906, when the article was written, guerilla warfare had developed unquestionably as part of the revolutionary civil war which was then in

temporary retreat. Very important in this connection is Lenin's generalisation:

"Guerilla warfare is an inevitable form of struggle at a time when the mass movement has actually reached the point of an uprising and when fairly large intervals occur between the 'big engagements' in the civil war" (p. 219).

Secondly, guerilla warfare must be taken "unquestionably as something partial, secondary and auxiliary" (p. 215); never as the only or even as the main form of struggle. The fact that it always attracted anti-social elements—"degraded, drunken riff-raff"—only proved that it must be subordinated to other methods and ennobled by the influence of socialism (without which, Lenin continued, every form of struggle is corrupted in bourgeois society).

Thirdly, the guerilla units must be organised "as belligerent side" (p. 223), instead of dissipating their energy in "unorganised, irregular, non-party guerilla acts" (p. 219). An example of the degree of organisation required could be seen in the Lettish territory where the local party committee conducted guerilla war practically as a parallel public authority, with its own law and order.

Finally, guerilla struggle or any other struggle must be acceptable to the masses. This was brought out clearly in the Bolsheviks' draft resolution about which an editorial footnote to Lenin's article says:

"Guerilla acts in the form of terrorism were to be recommended against brutal government officials and active members of the Black Hundreds, but on condition that (1) the sentiments of the masses be taken into account, (2) the conditions of the working class movement in the given locality be reckoned with, and (3) care to be taken that the forces of the proletariat should not be frittered away" (p. 222).

Naturally the CPI (ML) leadership, which relies on extreme voluntarism and rejects all talk of objective conditions and political preparation as an excuse to postpone the struggle, never stresses these passages in the article. Nor is it at all surprising that Lenin's writings in a different period, around 1902, do not appeal to them.

At that time, Lenin was engaged in polemics against the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, an offshoot of the old Narodnik movement, with a base among students and peasants, and faith in terror tactics, *khatam* included.

"The Socialist-Revolutionaries cannot find enough praise of the great 'agitational' effect of political assassination, about which there is so much whispering both in the drawing rooms of the liberals and in the taverns of the common people. It is nothing to them (since they are free of all narrow dogmas on anything even approximating a definite socialist theory!) to stage a political *sensation* as a substitute (or at least as a supplement) for the political education of the proletariat" ("New Events and Old Questions", *CW*, Vol. 6, p. 280).

In another article, "Revolutionary Adventurism", Lenin showed that the terrorism of the S-R group was causally linked with its aloofness from the struggle of the working class. The difference between terrorism and Marxism concerned not the use of violence, but the issue of mass participation:

"Without in the least denying violence and terrorism in principle, we demanded work for the preparation of such forms of violence as were calculated to bring about the direct participation of the masses and which guaranteed that participation" (p. 195).

And Lenin underlined this statement in criticism of a recently published S-R pamphlet:

"Without the working people all bombs are powerless, patently powerless" (p. 191).

The pamphlet in question seems to have been very like CPI (ML) literature. There was the same formal expression of faith in "the masses"; the same glorification of individual terrorism as "single combat" which will rouse the people to struggle and sacrifice; the same contempt for mass activities which were dismissed as "petty work". There is even the idea of taking away the class enemy's monopoly of murder: "...to remove every one of the autocracy's brutal oppressors by the only means that has been left [!] us by the autocracy—death!" (pp. 191-92).

This is almost the same as:

"...The only means known to us of avenging the killing of

revolutionaries is to kill counter-revolutionaries" (*Desabрати*, 25 June-2 July 1970).

Individual murder becomes "the only means" only to revolutionaries who belittle the role of proletarian consciousness and organisation, and fail to see how developed the forms of working class action already are, compared to the method of terrorist "single combat". In this sense, as Lenin pointed out, "the present-day terrorists are 'economists' turned inside out..." (p. 193).

The same point was made by Lenin in *What Is To Be Done?* where he showed that just when the Russian working class was maturing into a revolutionary force, economism and terrorism unconsciously combined to deprive it of much-needed political training. While the former represents one "pole of spontaneity", that of "pure" trade unionism, the latter expresses nothing so much as "the spontaneity of the passionate indignation of intellectuals who lack the ability or opportunity to connect the revolutionary struggle and the working class movement into an integral whole" (*CW*, Vol. 5, p. 418).

Lenin did not deny or minimise the worth of this "passionate indignation" and he paid the Socialist-Revolutionaries a rich tribute in freely admitting that the party's growth was due "...entirely to the fact that they attracted people doubtlessly revolutionary-minded and even quite prepared for heroic self-sacrifice, people in all sincerity willing to lay down their lives in the interests of freedom and in the interests of the people" ("The Basic Thesis against the Socialist-Revolutionaries", *CW*, Vol. 6, p. 273).

But he stated very clearly that the trend of revolutionary adventurism objectively reflected the instability of the petty bourgeoisie and amounted to a diversion of the revolution. Between this "old type" of terrorism and guerilla tactics he made a sharp distinction:

"Terrorism consisted in acts of vengeance against individuals. Terrorism was a conspiracy by groups of intellectuals. Terrorism in no way reflected the temper of the masses. Terrorism never served to train fighting leaders of the masses. Terrorism was the result—and also the symptom and concomitant—of lack

of faith in insurrection, of the absence of conditions for insurrection" ("Situation in Russia and Tactics of the Workers' Party", *CW*, Vol. 10, p. 117).

This sums up very well the essential nature of the CPI (ML).

The extremists draw hope and comfort from Mao's glowing image of the prairie fire lit from a single spark. Lenin, in a less known article, presents the other side of the medal: the difficulty of keeping the flame of revolution alive in a dark, damp forest where the basic fuel must be conserved. In a long passage, Lenin draws the imagery out to its vivid conclusion where the fire, nursed into life, at last burns brightly, but a host of flickering lights are also seen, to be immediately welcomed by people who lack the stamina "to keep on endlessly preparing, preparing and preparing the real general conflagration..." (*CW*, Vol. 6, p. 275).

Nothing in the short history of the CPI (ML) leads one to suppose that it can succeed where others have failed so far, and short-circuit the entire painstaking process of preparation.