

# THE MAIN DANGERS AND THE MAIN ERRORS

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Any revolutionary criticism of the CPI(ML) has to have to its credit a close study of the tactics of the ruling classes in India—its evolution and present phase—vis-a-vis the exploited workers, peasantry, the lowest section of the middle class etc.

in order to have a positive idea of what can be and should be done for mobilising people for revolutionary armed struggle. On the basis of such a positive formulation of revolutionary tactics, one should examine whether mass movements of the trade union type can deliver the goods or whether the line of annihilation as an instrument of class struggle can achieve any revolutionary purpose or whether, broadly, one can explore the reasons for the setback the CPI(ML) suffered.

During the colonial period, the Indian ruling classes—the landed interests and the bourgeoisie of a comprador nature—had a common front with British imperialism against the working class and peasantry. But the Indian ruling classes sought to cover up this main contradiction by demonstrating—through its political wing, the Indian National Congress—their concern for freedom. Demand for freedom was hence the result of two tactics adopted by the Indian ruling classes—one being to pose themselves as liberator of the exploited Indian people and thereby corner those who aspired, at least theoretically, to rally the exploited working class and peasantry against the common front consisting of imperialists and their Indian henchmen ; and the other being to snatch some concessions from their imperialist master in the form of greater elbow room for exploiting the Indian people. The Indian ruling classes' demand for freedom was destined to reduce itself to the demand for a greater freedom of exploitation of the Indian people, not to assert its independence from the clutches of British monopoly capital for independent economic development.

Gandhi entered Indian villages earlier than the communists did and his entry was backed by the feudal interests and by a peculiar blending between religious obscurantism and peoples' immediate aspirations for economic relief. Again among the industrial workers the communists engaged in trade union movement could hardly initiate any revolutionary programme and as a result, with the help of the British colonial power, the Indian ruling classes could contain the working

class movement within the periphery of economism and isolate the communists from the exploited people by opening their own trade union front.

It is true that the amount of involvement with mass movement that the Indian ruling classes had allowed themselves, contained little economic programme and whatever programme they had was never operated. The Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee made heroic recommendations, but in practice these were set aside while framing the programme of land reform in various States after getting power in 1947. The Bombay plan of 1944-45 or the recommendations of the National Planning Committee did contain many revolutionary policy implications for independent industrial development in India, but since 1947, the big bourgeoisie have started changing their tune and during the Five Year Plans, the collaboration between Indian comprador capital and British/American monopoly capital became the mainstream of industrial development. Before transfer of power, ruling classes used to talk many progressive things just to win the confidence and loyalty of the people to their fake concern for the immiserised working class and peasantry ; but after the transfer, they took off their masks and every economic effort initiated and sponsored by the State power sought to stabilise the rural feudal interests or the interest of big business-cum-foreign monopoly capital. The land reform measures hit the middle peasantry, swelled the ranks of the poor peasantry and landless labour, enriched the big peasantry-cum-jotedars. The pattern of industrial development enhanced threefold the prosperity of big business and made the small manufacturers more and more dependent on the big business houses who were for all practical purpose the indigenous importers of foreign monopoly capital, its know-how and products.

In a sense, this period—the period between the late forties and the late sixties—was a period when the dominant section of the ruling classes was not involved in any mass movement of any significance. As a result, this was again the period when

various sections of the ruling classes who were not properly rewarded by the dominant section as represented in the Indian National Congress resorted to occasional mass movements with a view to securing a higher number of seats in the Assemblies or Parliament. This explains how the one National Congress broke into so many opposition parties like Swatantra, PSP, Jana Sangh, Kranti Dal etc. During the same period, the communists also flourished as a parliamentary party—a party respectable to the establishment of the ruling classes.

But the situation gradually worsened when the economic crisis started engulfing the entire sphere of economic life of the country. The ruling classes—their dominant sections—as represented by the leadership of the Congress—became more and more isolated and a series of storms in the form of mass movements swept the entire length and breadth of the country. It is certainly during this period that the Indian ruling class confronted disunity among themselves in the severest form. There was further rift among the ruling classes, the dominant section as presented by the Naba (Indira) Congress started paying attention to mass movement with slogans of nationalisation, 'Garibi Hatao' and socialism. The Indian ruling classes re-framed their two tactics—the tactic of having socialist precepts along with adopting the severest repressive measures against revolutionaries in particular and militant sections of the people in general.

What lessons do we derive from our experiences of open mass movements in India ?

History clearly demonstrates that during the colonial period or its aftermath every mass organisation (including the party organisation of the communists) becomes in essence a petty-bourgeois vote catching organisation or an organisation of appeals, petitions, memoranda or protests and every open mass movement has to move within the confines of partial reliefs—economic, political or social. It is true that during colonial days, communists held themselves to be a different species simply because they held Marx in high esteem and

talked a lot about class violence for overthrowing the British Raj and its Indian clients, while Gandhi and Nehru had been promising miracle through 'non-violence'. The communists were repeatedly outmanoeuvred by the faithful and cunning agents of the colonial power. The great Tebhaga movements in Bengal or elsewhere in India under the stewardship of the communists usually started with a bang, contained many sporadic revolutionary upsurges of the peasantry, but ended after repression with a whimper—whimper for the end of repression, for the release of prisoners. Within a few years the retired veterans of the CPI may celebrate the 50th anniversary of the heroic Tebhaga movements with *Tamrapatras* in hand notwithstanding the fact that in 90 per cent of Indian villages, the real sharecroppers are not entitled today even to the one-third share (two-thirds being the objective of the movement) of their cultivated produce.

After the British colonial power handed over its machinery of exploitation to the Indian ruling classes, the mass movements did not change their form or content. With a steady worsening of the economic situation, the mass movements, however, continued to gain momentum and the momentum reached its climax in the sixties. During this period, the ruling classes in India were off their feet and tremendous repressive measures were required to quell the spontaneous upsurge of the masses for immediate economic relief. It is true that the repressive measures adopted by the ruling class did not always pay the expected dividend, their isolation from the masses was indeed accelerated, their political power base developed many crack within itself, their tactic of cheating the exploited masses with the help of trumpeted welfare measures in the form of planning, nationalisation etc. got a big jolt, their tactic of ruthless exploitation had indeed to reckon with open opposition from the masses. All the social democratic parties including the CPI (M) and the CPI were rewarded during this period of crisis of the ruling classes.

On the one hand, the mass movements conducted by the

opposition parties had a tendency to assert themselves in spontaneous violence and they suggested in no uncertain terms that in India the objective situation for a revolutionary armed struggle existed ; on the other hand, such open mass movements were proved to be a channel through which people's wrath against the ruling classes could be driven into a blind alley. Indeed, when the open mass movements led to armed uprisings of the peasants and workers (as in Hajang, Telengana, Kakdwip, Nadia or Narayangunge, Jamshedpur, Howrah, Kulti, Calcutta etc.) both the repressive machinery of the State power as well as the social democratic leadership of the movement sought to attack them from without or within. The handy excuse of the social democratic leadership has always been that the time for total uprising is not yet mature ; or that the violence of the masses is the handiwork of anti-socials let loose by the ruling classes with a view to disrupting the peaceful democratic character of the movement ; or the people's outburst against the misrule of the ruling classes was used to justify electoral candidature of social democrats for State power. We all know how hundreds and thousands of militant peasants or workers had to shed their blood in order to yield a magnificent electoral victory for the communists or other social democrats.

The revolutionaries in India cannot escape the conclusion that open mass movement now has become, in fact, the tactics of the ruling classes to deceive people burdened with a growing economic crisis, because without this the ruling classes have no other path of political survival.

This is obvious after the Naxalbari movement when for the first time in Indian history, the exploited masses thundered their determination for the seizure of State power. The ruling classes, though caught somewhat unawares by this development at the initial stage, replied effectively by changing the tactics they had followed between 1947 and 1967. They revived their two tactics—the tactic of annihilating with meticulous ruthlessness the Indian revolutionaries, and the other tactic of

making their political forum—Congress or Naba Congress—the nucleus through which all mass movements should be canalised. The Congress had to be the platform for the exploited masses in order to prevent them from the path of armed revolution.

The tremendous accentuation of the economic crisis compelled the ruling classes to experiment with the revisionist model of counter-revolution in the country. Such compulsion united the Indian comprador bourgeoisie with Soviet social-imperialism without sacrificing an iota of unity between Indian monopoly capital and U.S. monopoly giants\*.

In such a situation, the Indian revolutionaries cannot depend on the tactic of open mass movement while the same tactic is used by the ruling classes to maintain illusions about the system, to propagate lies and exercise deception on the masses. On the other hand such tactic is likely to expose the revolutionary nucleus of armed struggle, to confuse the masses when revolutionary actions are to be speeded up from underground. Above all, the tactic of the revolutionary forces cannot be similar to that used by the ruling classes, because the purports of the tactics are to be opposite in nature. This is more true particularly when armed gangsterism is the accepted policy of the ruling classes against mass movements—open or secret—and more slogans of socialism, anti-Americanism, anti-capitalism or anti-feudalism are raised from their political platform in order to cover up the machinery of exploitation promoted and encouraged by the ruling classes. Revisionism cannot be fought with revisionist weapons, for its death the revolutionaries require revolutionary weapons.

Hence the question arises : how to organise revolutionary counter-offensive against the revisionist model of counter-revolution as practised by the ruling classes in India ?

The CPI (ML) under the leadership of Charu Majumdar held that because the pivotal reasons for mass movement are the unlocking of mass initiatives for revolutionary activities and opening of enemy-free areas for consolidation of revolutionary

forces, annihilation of class enemies with the help of the poorest sections of exploited people can break the inertia of the people, accelerate their revolutionary enthusiasm, initiatives and struggle-oriented organisations. People's armed struggle against the State power being the fundamental postulate of people's war and the organisation of people's armed forces being the dialectical necessity of the forces of revolution (confronting the armed forces of the ruling classes) the policy of class annihilation is supposed to be the crucial instrument of class-struggle, of huge mass mobilisation against the armed terror of the ruling classes and of setting up of enemy-free mobile areas where revolutionaries could consolidate their guerilla preparations for the higher stage of class struggle i.e. armed seizure of power. As a tactical measure, the line of annihilation explodes the myths around the omnipotence of State power, terrorises those revisionists who as a matter of virtual performance resort to open mass movements in order to prevent people from the path of revolutionary armed struggle and earn something in return from the ruling classes.

Because the line of annihilation of class enemies has two ends in view—arousing mass initiative towards a revolutionary end and exploding the almighty image of the State power—not all members belonging to the class enemies but only those picked up by the revolutionary peasant committees in villages and the revolutionary committees in towns should be dealt with by armed guerilla squads of three or four members through planned but secret ambushes. Such acts are to have no veil of secrecy, in fact they should be intensely propagated but what is sought to be kept secret is the identification of particular guerilla members who conduct those acts. This requirement of secrecy is presumably sought for two reasons : (a) to avoid the identification of the annihilators by black sheep even within the ranks of the poor and exploited people and (b) the realisation that to the exploited masses only the facts of annihilation are necessary to rouse their initiatives, to achieve their mobilization, to spontaneously decide their friends and foes, but not

the identification of members who perform the acts (particularly at a stage when the organised guerilla forces are constituted by a small number of people and the stage of People's Liberation Army has not yet been reached).

In practice, what results have the CPI(ML) movements achieved? One must admit that a tremendous revolutionary enthusiasm was created at the initial stage of class annihilation. The entire administrative structure proved a flop, the poor and exploited people particularly in the villages had a taste of their hegemony, may be for a brief period. The movement challenged many of the value-axioms of the intellectual establishment of the ruling classes. The movement of the CPI(ML) demonstrated that the communist revolutionaries, though handful in number, constituted a force to reckon with and that without preparedness to dedicate their own lives, no amount of knowledge of Marxist classics can prepare a true communist. And above all, without revolutionary practice, no programme for armed struggle can be framed if revolutionaries remain confined within the cobweb of revisionist-type open mass movements.

These are the positive lessons of the movement. The failure of the movement can be accounted for by its harmful deviations and lack of foresight.

Annihilations became the be-all and end-all of revolutionary activities, later dubbed by Charu Majumdar himself as a 'new kind of revisionism', and the entire line of annihilation got a petty-bourgeois twist, particularly in the towns and cities, by being reduced to a narrow partisan violence of the revisionist type. In the absence of a concrete programme for revolutionary class struggle to be raised to a higher level step by step in the industrial and urban middle-class areas and the line of annihilation being implemented in a narrow partisan manner (which in fact helped lumpens, professional anti-socials to enter the ranks)—a manner usually practised by all the parties of the Establishment, the revolutionaries lost the sympathy of the lower middle-class, faced a gap between them and the industrial

workers, the poor people of urban areas who otherwise could be their warmest friends. Even those among the leaders of the CPI(ML) who did not like such petty bourgeois adventurism in towns and cities were advocating the absurd line of sending revolutionary youths to the villages and could not suggest any programme for towns and cities. The line of sending urban youth to the villages became absurd because it prescribed no revolutionary activities in the towns. Exchange of cadres between towns and villages was required to be accomplished only at a maturer stage of people's war, when the leadership of the working class over the peasantry was to be harnessed, at least, at the level of revolutionary cadres. The line however was not accepted. Charu Majumdar opposed this premature line but stopped short of giving any revolutionary programme for towns and cities. In this way, the movement was destined to be heading towards a collapse and the leadership, by supporting all actions of petty-bourgeois adventurism in the name of arousing the spontaneous class-hatred of youths had in fact been tailing behind the events.

The revolutionaries' movements in the villages were relatively more successful. One has to admit that in Debra-Gopiballavpur huge mass mobilisation took place under the leadership of the party. There was prima facie success in unlocking revolutionary enthusiasm and initiative among the poor and landless peasantry and in rallying a sizeable section of even the middle peasantry as supporters. The experiences of Srikakulam were initially the same, although the experiences in Mushahari and Monghyr were slightly different. The same was indeed the experience in Birbhum. That the line of annihilation could be used as an instrument of class struggle at the very start for mass mobilisation, for accelerating the initiatives of the exploited people was evident in most of the rural areas where the programme was sought to be implemented. But the political and economic programmes prior or subsequent to annihilation were not implemented everywhere. Only in some areas vesting of land with revolutionary peasant committees

took place, that too in a half-hearted fashion. The organization of production brigades and village resistance groups in the rural areas could not be built up because of excessive preoccupation with annihilation and its after-effects. Whatever economic programme the party had in the villages could not be implemented presumably because there existed still a lingering fear of economism in Charu Majumdar and the leadership of the CPI(ML).

In the rural areas the setback came mainly from the lack of a proper military line that should have been developed to protect the poor villagers against the programme of encirclement and annihilation launched by the State armed forces. Non-implementation of economic, political and organisational programmes of the party expedited the setback. For obvious reasons, the party, during that phase, faced a number of controversies within its leadership and ranks on the appropriate nature of base areas (whether they should be mobile or fixed in mountainous regions), on the nature and class composition of the PLA, on the question of adopting military tactics against the organised forces of the State power. Side by side, the party had to face sustained attacks by the State armed forces on the cadres. There were many petty-bourgeois errors as a result of decentralised action decisions by party units as the State armed forces unleashed terrible repression on the poor villagers and urban supporters. All this combined to precipitate setbacks in both towns and villages.

The setback should not be attributed to withdrawal from open mass movements and open mass organisations. It is fundamentally due not to the line of annihilation as such, but to its being petty-bourgeois in nature in the absence of a proper military-political line and appropriate economic programme.

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\*The compradorial nature of the bourgeoisie is not at stake under the Soviet model of non-capitalist path of economic development. Though nationalisation and State trading

are the main features of the Soviet model of socialist path, a Third World country is considered "liberated" from the strings of imperialism, if it is ready to fake a synthesis between the political and economic requirements of the Soviet revisionist clique and the activity of private or public monopoly capital. It is reduced to a three-way alliance : the alliance between State capitalism and private monopoly giants in an under-developed country—a result of feeble contradiction between comprador and his foreign masters ; the second alliance is between State capitalism of an under-developed country and the U.S. private monopoly or the Soviet State monopoly—a result of strong unity between the comprador and his foreign masters ; and the third alliance is struck between all the ruling classes of indigenous or foreign origin against the exploited masses of the under-developed country in the form of division of spheres of activity among the respective ruling classes. This three-way alliance itself suffers from a contradiction—apart from others—between U.S. monopoly capital and the Soviet State capital. This contradiction helps the comprador bourgeoisie in its manoeuvres against both, in order to satisfy its narrow class aspirations, and any dent etc. between the U.S. imperialism and Soviet social-imperialism alarms the comprador bourgeoisie of the Third World. In fact the contradiction between the two world monopoly giants, the USA and the USSR gave rise to the politics of 'non-alignment', a platform for having 'aid' from both the giants, its initial architects being Nehru, Nasser and Tito. But the recent Nixon-Brezhnev summit has given a big jolt to the comprador bourgeoisie of the Third World countries and that explains why the most important beneficiary of the U.S.-Soviet conflict i.e. the Indian ruling classes and their able spokesman Indira Gandhi could not conceal their concern at the success of the summit and had to warn so many times that no division of spheres among the giants should take for granted the Third World i.e. the comprador bourgeoisie of the Third World countries, if the scheme of share of the loot from exploitation of the masses o

those countries is framed without the concurrence of the comprador bourgeoisie of India or any other country. Such utterances, though they sound patriotic, reveal, in fact, the helplessness of the prostitute monopoly capital of the Third World countries.

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