

## India's Naxalite Movement Reviews Its Strategy

By Sharad Jhaveri

JAMNAGAR—Eight different groupings are reported to have existed in the Communist party of India (Marxist-Leninist), often known as the Naxalite movement. But at present, only three tendencies in this Maoist party are significant.

The diehard faction following the late Charu Mazumdar<sup>1</sup> ignores Peking's criticism of Naxalite strategy and believes the "annihilation tactic" is correct. That is, it continues to call for the "annihilation" of class enemies such as individual landlords, moneylenders, and capitalists. It rejects mass participation in revolutionary activity and the building of mass organizations.

The second faction is the Satyanarayan Singh group. It functions as the breakaway CPI(ML) and refuses to accept its share of responsibility for the left adventurism and left opportunism of the CPI(ML). The Singh group claims to lead the entire Maoist movement in India.

The third faction consists of supporters of six members of the Central Committee of the original CPI(ML) who have refused to identify with either of the present-day CPI(ML)s. This group is trying to reunite the party on a new basis.

The six leaders—Kolla Venkaiah, Chowdhary Tejeswara Rao (Andhra Pradesh); Kanu Sanyal, Souren Bose (West Bengal); and Bhuvan Mohan Patnaik and Nagabhushanam Patnaik (Orissa)—issued a statement accusing Charu Mazumdar of suppressing the Chinese CP's criticism of the CPI(ML)'s tactical line.<sup>2</sup> These leaders, followed later by Asim Chatterji, have accepted Peking's criticism.

According to their statement, the Chinese Communist party criticized the "secret assassination" line of the CPI(ML), stating that it needed "rethinking." Peking was also reported to have criticized the CPI(ML) "formulation that if a revolutionary does not make his hand red with the blood of class enemies, then he is not a Communist."

The Chinese leadership thinks that the CPI(ML)'s idea of a "united front" (that it

can be formed only after base areas are created) is based on a "mechanical understanding" of the Maoist strategy. Peking's "suggestion," according to the six Naxalite leaders, was that "the main understanding behind the United Front is the unity between the exploiter and the exploited (those exploiters who are not the main target of the revolution)."

In addition, the letter stated, the Chinese CP criticized the Naxalite "formulation that the open trade unions, open mass organizations and mass movements are out of date" and that "secret assassinations" are the best forms of struggle. "Without mass struggle, and mass organisation, the peasants' armed struggle cannot be sustained."

Moreover, the Chinese CP was said to have regarded the CPI(ML)'s application of Lin Piao's theory of "people's war" as "mechanical."

The letter also said, "No stress has been given on agrarian revolution and the slogan for the seizure of the state power is counterposed to the land problem. There is no agrarian programme."

In fact, however, the first theoretical denunciation of the CPI(ML)'s "annihilation" tactic was voiced as early as 1970 by the Andhra Pradesh Revolutionary Communist Committee (the Nagi Reddy group), which had not joined the CPI(ML).<sup>3</sup>

The Nagi Reddy group was critical of the CPI(ML) from the beginning. While Kanu Sanyal, a main leader of the CPI(ML), characterized the 1967 Naxalbari uprising as a struggle for state power, the Nagi Reddy leadership in Andhra Pradesh viewed it as a struggle for land and not for state power in the immediate sense.

The Nagi Reddy group also opposed the attempt to impose the All-India Co-ordinating Committee of Communist Revolutionaries from above. It did not approve of converting the AICCCR into a party—the CPI(ML)—overnight without such minimal requirements as a programme and a constitution.<sup>4</sup>

3. The Nagi Reddy group, originally known as the Andhra State Co-ordination Committee, was affiliated with the All-India Co-ordinating Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (AICCCR). When the AICCCR formed the CPI(ML) on April 22, 1969, the Nagi Reddy group disaffiliated itself from the main Naxalite movement and changed its name to the Andhra Pradesh Revolutionary Communist Committee.—IP

4. According to a report in the March 8, 1975,

The Satyanarayan Singh group of the CPI(ML) and the Chandra Pulla Reddy group of the Andhra Pradesh Revolutionary Communist Committee are reported to have discussed the problems of unity among Communist revolutionists in India. Their joint statement called for an end to antagonistic relations at once, for an exchange of documents and other publications, and for an earnest effort to form a new AICCCR.<sup>5</sup> The Nagi Reddy group was not involved in these unity talks.

The statement poses rejection of the parliamentary path as the sole issue of the Indian revolution. It ignores the question of a programme for agrarian revolution.

### Roots of the Naxalite Movement

Taking its inspiration from the 1967 tribal peasant revolt in Naxalbari, a small enclave of West Bengal, the Naxalite movement marked the return of the Maoist perspective after the Telengana upsurge.<sup>6</sup> It has passed through several stages.

The first period covered the struggle in Naxalbari itself. This was suppressed by the United Front government of West Bengal, which was dominated by the CPI (Marxist).<sup>7</sup>

The second period, dating from the collapse of this struggle, lasted until the formation of the CPI(ML) in 1969. During this period the activities of various Naxalite groups were under the direction of the AICCCR.

The third period began in early April 1969. It saw the emergence of the CPI(ML) and the withdrawal of the Nagi Reddy group. This period lasted roughly up to early 1970. It was marked by the CPI(ML)'s attempts to form "red bases" in rural areas and by the adoption of "annihilation of the

issue of the *Bombay Economic and Political Weekly*, Kanu Sanyal also criticized the formation of the CPI(ML), calling it a "divisive act."—IP

5. The Satyanarayan Singh faction and the Chandra Pulla Reddy group have since merged.—IP

6. The peasant insurrection in the Telugu-speaking region of southeastern India lasted from 1946 to 1951, and was led by young members of the Communist party of India, despite the twists and turns in the CPI's political line in the rest of the country. According to Mohan Ram in his book *Maoism in India* (1971), the guerrilla actions in Telengana were called off in 1951 under pressure from Moscow.—IP

7. The first popular-front government came to power in West Bengal in 1967. It was formally led by the bourgeois Bangla Congress, although the CPI(M) was the largest component of the coalition. At the time of the Naxalbari uprising, CPI(M) leader Jyoti Basu was the minister of police.—IP

1. Charu Mazumdar was the main leader of the CPI(ML) until his arrest in Calcutta on July 16, 1972. He died in prison twelve days later.—IP

2. The letter by the six Naxalite leaders was written from prison and circulated among CPI(ML) members before Mazumdar's arrest and death. According to the six, the letter was based on criticisms the Chinese Communist party made of the CPI(ML) line in November 1970.—IP

class enemy" as the only tactical line for revolution.

This was perhaps the most important period in the history of the Naxalite movement in India. Armed struggles were launched in several places, including Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh, and Debra in West Bengal.<sup>8</sup> It was during this period that the Srikakulam Girijan armed struggle in Andhra Pradesh was taken over by Charu Mazumdar and eventually destroyed by his "annihilation" line.

It was also during this period that the CPI(ML) began to ignore all forms of economic struggle on the ground that "to attempt agrarian revolution without first smashing the state machinery is straight-forward revisionism."

Even the task of organizing political campaigns was given a low priority in this period. Their policy implied the rejection of the "mass line" and the building of mass organizations in favor of forming a secret, elitist organization.

During this period the Naxalites went to the villages and ignored the mass movements and proletarian struggles in the cities. In fact, they had no programme for the city proletariat as such.

The fourth period was marked by the return of the Naxalites to the cities, especially Calcutta and the adjacent towns. They carried out raids on educational institutions, disfigured the statues of national leaders, and boycotted examinations. "Annihilation" tactics were also applied in the cities.

The last period saw severe repression by the government. The Naxalites were isolated from the masses and infiltrated by agents provocateurs, informers, and spies. Many of their supporters were arrested and tortured.

Throughout these ups and downs, the political ideology and strategy of the Naxalites has not changed much, despite the differences between the various factions. In their view, India is a semicolonial, semifeudal state ruled by the comprador-bureaucratic bourgeoisie and the feudal landlords.

The principal contradiction, they believe, is between feudalism and the masses of peasants. They compare the situation in India with the prerevolutionary situation in China before 1949 and want to carry out an anti-imperialist, antifeudal, and anticom-

prador New Democratic Revolution against the proimperialist, antinational capitalist class—but not against the national bourgeoisie.

This view completely ignores the capitalist development—by no means modest—of agriculture and industry in India. It is based on a mistaken appreciation of the class character of the Indian state, which is a classical bourgeois state and not a feudal formation.

The Naxalites think that the immediate tasks of the Indian revolution in the present phase cannot be defined in terms of a socialist revolution, that is, the overthrow of capitalist rule and the creation of a workers state based on the alliance of the proletariat with the poor and landless peasantry. Hence, its overall programme does not basically go beyond the limitations of a bourgeois-democratic revolution.

### Two-Stage Theory

They hold a two-stage theory of revolution. They want to first complete the anti-imperialist and antifeudal tasks and then proceed to the "next stage" of anticapitalist, socialist revolution.

In their view, there can be no skipping over the first stage. Hence, their political strategy of forming a bloc of four classes in which the anti-imperialist bourgeoisie is to join hands with the antifeudal peasantry, the proletariat, and the landless peasantry.

The overall military strategy of Naxalism flows from and is subordinated to this political viewpoint. Since the thrust of the revolution is to be antifeudal, rich peasants opposed to feudalism are to be the allies of the landless peasantry.

The antifeudal character of the revolution also dictates, in their view, greater concentration on rural villages than on the cities. They believe that the villages of India will rise up and take advantage of the revolutionary situation and its potential for armed struggle. The villages will then engulf the towns and liberate them.

This conception patently ignores the ramifications of the massive development, both bureaucratic and military, of the centralised state apparatus since the period of British rule. This process has been stepped up considerably by the Indian bourgeoisie through panchayats,<sup>9</sup> Community Development Projects, the National Extension Services, and so forth.

In addition, this conception ignores the vital and potentially revolutionary role of the Indian proletariat that has emerged from the massive industrialization drive launched by the Indian capitalist state since 1951.

The Naxalites also overlook (and this

9. Panchayats are local administrative units on the village level.—IP

proved fatal in their isolation and virtual suppression) the Indian capitalist state's capacity to isolate and ultimately destroy sporadic regional armed struggles or attempts at armed struggle that do not have the backing of mass struggles developed on an all-India scale. Their conception of armed struggle does not take into account the state's capacity for armed intervention at a moment's notice wherever such struggles erupt and threaten the stability of the bourgeois regime.

Because of its adherence to Peking, the Naxalite movement could not adequately come to grips with the Bangladesh crisis and Peking's support to the Sri Lanka capitalist regime's drive to suppress the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (People's Liberation Front).<sup>10</sup> Both these events created considerable consternation among the Naxalites.

It is unfortunate that the Naxalite ferment has not yet called into question the basic political postulates of Maoism, both as an ideology and as a strategy applied to the case of India. The review of strategy now taking place is still being carried on within the overall political framework of Maoism. The Naxalites have retained Maoism's basic ideas of a two-stage revolution, a "bloc of four classes," and exclusive reliance on peasant armed struggle.

The historic contribution of Naxalism is that it voiced a powerful protest by sincere revolutionists—the flower of Indian youth—against the reformist abuse of youthful revolutionary idealism through the parliamentary aims of the Stalinist and left-centrist movements. In its original form, Naxalism represented a search for the correct road to building a nonparliamentary mass revolutionary party as the basis for a mass uprising against capitalist rule in India. □

10. Peking gave the Pakistani regime political support during the Bangladesh struggle for independence in 1971. The JVP was the main target of fierce repression launched by the Bandaranaike regime in March 1971.—IP

### Washington's Blockade of Cuba 'Backfired,' Senator Percy Says

The U.S. embargo against Cuba has "backfired" and should be ended, Republican Senator Charles Percy said in a speech from the Senate floor May 6.

"The economic and political isolation of Cuba, initiated unilaterally by the United States, was never successful," he said, "despite the fact that 14 OAS [Organization of American States] nations subsequently joined us and agreed formally to the isolation of the Castro government. In retrospect, the policy backfired; instead of bringing down the Castro regime, it helped to unify the Cuban people in support of their revolutionary leaders."

8. Agrarian struggles by the Girijan tribespeople in the Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh began in 1959, leading to mass actions by 1967. In 1969, the state government sent in troops and declared many parts of Srikakulam "disturbed areas." The repression in Srikakulam still continues. (See *Intercontinental Press*, July 8, 1974, p. 896.) Guerrilla actions in the Debra-Gopivallabpur area of West Bengal were launched in October 1969, largely by students from Calcutta.—IP