

THREE DECADES OF NAXALBARI

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(This paper was presented at a seminar on the above topic held in Patna on 25 May 1996, Naxalbari Day. It was organized by various CPI(M-L) groups and mass organizations. A Hindi version of it has also been published in "Samkalin Bahas".)

25 May, 1967 was the day when the peasants of Naxalbari unfurled the banner of armed revolt against their age-old exploitation and oppression and a peal of 'spring thunder' was heard all over India. This small spark spread a prairie fire and there were a number of armed peasant revolts all over India. This set in motion the open revolt of the revolutionaries in the CPM as Naxalbari struck at the revisionist practice of the existing communist parties. The thunder of Naxalbari found its echo in the towns with thousands of students and youth rallying to the revolutionary cause. The ruling classes were frightened and let loose counter-revolutionary violence. Thousands were thrown into jails and tortured. The CPI(M-L) as part of the W. Bengal coalition government did not hesitate in being part of this reign of terror.

But the 'spark' was not to die. Its revolutionary message spread far and wide all over India. The question of armed revolution came to the fore with a bang. Naxalbari no longer remained an obscure place in West Bengal but became a slogan. Today, all over India, wherever one finds the downtrodden rebelling against hunger and inequality, for dignity and livelihood, for their rights and liberty, wherever there is a first rising in revolt, one finds the slogan of 'Naxalbari Lal Salam' (Red Salute to Naxalbari). Naxalbari is indeed a great milestone in the Indian communist movement, nevertheless, we yet have a long, tortuous path to traverse.

"Every step of real movement is more important than a dozen programmes", wrote Marx and indeed it was the peasant revolt in Naxalbari which again proved it to be so. This revolt came as a bolt of lightning to strike at the programme and practice of the two revisionist communist parties - CPI(M) and CPI. It was a living criticism of the practice of these parties - their support to the so-called progressive Nehruvian policies, their thesis of "peaceful transition" and parliamentarism.

The theoretical propositions and theses propounded in the wake of Naxalbari came as a natural reaction to the policies of parliamentary cretinism and opportunism of the revisionist parties. Left adventurism and anarchism became dominant in the days to come, though, of course, there were some shining examples of mass movements and a few exceptions. Lenin had rightly observed that anarchism often

visited the working class movement as a punishment for its opportunism. The line of individual annihilation, disregard of open and mass forms, later dependence on the petty-bourgeois intellectual, disregard for working class actions, defaced this movement that came to be named after Naxalbari - the Naxalite movement.

Whether it be in the formulations on guerilla-war, the war of liberation or in its international-aspects, like, the movement being part of the 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' of China or a part of a movement in the "era of final and total collapse of imperialism". etc., we find that there were grave deviations from Marxist-Leninist teachings. Though the step of real movement Naxalbari was of real significant programmatic moment, as we shall see, the ideological cloak that it wore had many a hole.

Here are some propositions and theses which had wide currency and commanded great influence in the days following Naxalbari --

In his political-organisational Report at the 1970 Party Congress of the CPI(M-L) Com. Charu Mazumdar (CM) called for individual annihilation and defended the dependence on the petty-bourgeois intellectual. He held that "the battle of annihilation is both a higher form of class struggle and the starting-point of guerrilla war". This report is permeated by the anarchist idea of the use of excitative terror to arouse the masses. The disregards for mass forms led to CM's assertions that 'mass organization and mass movement increase the tendency towards open and economist movement.' (**Liberation**, Dec 1996).

The dependence upon the petty-bourgeois intellectual along with disregard for mass forms led to the emphasis on individual terrorism - "The method of forming a guerrilla unit has to be wholly conspiratorial .. This conspiracy should be between intellectuals and on a person to person basis. The petty-bourgeois intellectual comrade must take the initiative in this respect as far as possible. He should approach the poor peasant who, in his opinion, has the most revolutionary potentiality, and whisper in his ears: "Don't you think it a good thing to finish off such and such a jotedar (Big Landowner)?" this is how the guerillas have to be selected and recruited singly and in secret, and organised into a unit. "(CM-**Liberation** 1970) At the international level, the movement was much influenced by the formulations of the Ninth Congress of the CPC. Lin Piao, who incidentally was later reviled, became a great authority - the Declaration of the revolutionaries of the CPI(M) talked of "Comrade Mao Tse Tung's great blueprint for world revolution" "presented in a concentrated form by Comrade Lin Piao". The Ninth Congress had decreed that it was the era of Mao Tse Tung thought, the era of rapid and total collapse of imperialism", the era of victory of socialism. Even the advent of Soviet Social imperialism was seen as an episode in the final downfall of imperialism! There were strange, impulsive extrapolations from all this and overestimation of

one's forces, the hallmark of Left adventurism, ruled the day. It was held that "in this era (of MTT) it is impossible to repeat the performances of Hitler and Mussolini, it is impossible to launch a savage attack on the revolutionaries" (CM). No wonder then that 1975 was set as the time by which India would be liberated. We, of course, do not appraise this estimation of liberation by 1975 just by its episodic failure. Had this estimation been founded on a proper appraisal of the disposition of class forces, nationally and internationally, then it would have been justified or at worst a small mistake even if it met with failure.

Revolutionary enthusiasm does not snivel at episodic failures, nor does it begin with the prospect of certain success. But, the whole affair was based on an overestimation of forces, nationally and internationally. Further, this estimate was based on a simple calculation and a gradualist, linear view of the development of the revolutionary process. (Incidentally, even today M-L groups take such a view, the only difference being that they think that liberation would be achieved in the distant future). This is how Com. Charu Mazumdar put it - "The idea of today's armed struggle was first born in the mind of one man. That idea has now filled the minds of ten million people. If the new revolutionary consciousness, born only in 1967, can permeate the minds of ten million people in 1970, why is it impossible then for those ten millions to rouse and mobilize the 500 million people of India in a surging people's war by 1975." No wonder then that with an incident of rifle-snatching at Magurjan in W. Bengal, it was announced that the People's Liberation Army had started marching.

These are but some snippets which give a rough idea of the dominant practice of those days, such were the ideas which followed in the wake of Naxalbari many of which have been jettisoned in theory and the movement has made some self-criticism in practice. We must take note of the grave deviations from M-L theory when we examine any idea which claims to be the heritage of Naxalbari, draws upon the aura of Naxalbari.

We said that Naxalbari was a living criticism of the practice and programme of the revisionist parties. This criticism stood out glaringly in the case of the agrarian programme of these parties. After 1947 the Indian state embarked upon a policy of agrarian reforms and enacted a number of laws like the Zamindari Abolition Act (ZAA) etc. The CPI found these policies progressive and extended support to them at best railing and ranting at their non-implementation or other "ill-effects". Let us examine one of the key measures, the Zamindari Abolition Act. In 1946, the Congress had proclaimed in its election manifesto that it will definitely abolish the intermediaries. Between the direct producer and the state there were a number of intermediaries who lived upon the land, ostensibly to help collect revenue for the state. They sponged upon the actual cultivator who was thus subjected to rack-renting. Abolition of intermediaries had become necessary and the pressure of mass

movements from 'below' was there too. This was to be done in favour of the landlords as the Indian state by its very nature could only do this. Through the ZAA the state exerted pressure on the landlords to take up farming on a capitalist basis. In this process the zamindars were given huge amounts as compensation and through various subterfuges they were allowed to resume their land for self-cultivation. They were encouraged to dispossess their raiyats. That is why we find large scale eviction of the raiyats following Zamindari abolition. Of course, these reforms did not per se lead to capitalist farming, but the pressure was there and given other factors could and did lead to this. At the same time the ZAA by abolishing intermediaries brought the raiyats into direct relations with the state, in the process encouraging a numerous sub-stratum of rich peasants who were freed from the burden of overlordship.

Similarly, the Ceiling Acts were again a measure intended to act at a spur to changeover to capitalist cultivation. These reform laws also carried a proviso which excluded capitalist-type farms and plantations from the purview of reform. We can also see that between every announcement and legislation and every legislation and implementation, there was a big time gap so that the big landowners could rearrange their landholdings and operations, and evict their raiyats, bataidars etc. This way they were pressurized to take up self-cultivation instead of living upon old-type or pre-capitalist type rent (Just an announcement by Laloo Yadav of a new Bataidari Law in favour of share-croppers led to the eviction of a large number of bataidars). Thus the state pressurized the landlords to take-up modern cultivation. This was done in favour of the landlords and the emerging rich peasantry and by bringing untold suffering and misery for the rest of the peasantry.

In order to dispel all sorts of wrong notions regarding land reforms we must have an understanding of the way capitalist development takes place in agriculture. As Lenin has pointed out capitalist development in agriculture can take place through either of the two paths - 1) the bourgeois-landlord path, and 2) the path of peasant reforms, i.e., by breaking-up the pre-capitalist relations in a revolutionary manner by undertaking confiscation of the land of the landlords and general redistribution of land. Lenin called the former path, the Prussian path. He observed, "The former implies the utmost preservation of bondage and serfdom (remodeled on bourgeois lines), the least rapid development of the productive forces, and the retarded development of capitalism; it implies infinitely greater misery and suffering, exploitation and oppression for the broad mass of the peasantry and consequently, also for the proletariat." (Agrarian Programme of the RSDLP, CW - 13) Lenin held that the Russian Octobrist Programme after the 1905 revolution, the programme of the reactionary landlords, definitely took the stand of capitalist development, it was economically progressive. It was reactionary not because it sought to perpetuate any pre-capitalist relations but because it stood for the 'Prussian path' the path of

slow, painful capitalist evolution (one which was detrimental to the interests of the peasantry and also to the proletariat). This path means the slow, gradual severing of pre-capitalist relations and their remodeling on bourgeois lines. But it is also a path of capitalist evolution in agriculture, one which brings untold miseries for the peasant masses. It is clear from above that capitalist evolution in Indian agriculture has taken place through the Prussian path. It is important to note that it also ushers in capitalist relations. The CPI and CPI(M), found the state fostering capitalism and hence called these policies progressive. They followed in the wake of the ruling classes and supported the Nehruvian policies. The significance of Naxalbari precisely lay in stressing the second path, the path away from reformism, the path of realising the agrarian demands in a revolutionary way. It squarely put forth the question of land with state power, Com. Charu Mazumdar dubbed the overemphasis on land seizure as 'economism' - it was a radical break with the past, away from the path of rallying around bourgeois-landlord reforms. The land question was made a part of revolutionary politics. If we view this question only from the point of view of development of productive forces then we can never make a revolutionary presentation of the question. As we said that the CPI and CPI(M) found that the landlord-bourgeois reforms of the state fostered development of the productive forces, lent this process their support and jettisoning revolutionary politics got incorporated into the state. CPI(M-L) 'Liberation' is also following in the footsteps of the CPI & CPM. In its programme passed at its 5th. Congress it says - ".the principal contradiction (is) between feudal remnants and the board Indian masses, for the feudal remnants remain the biggest stumbling block on the road of free and rapid development of productive forces in the country". Since the Indian state fosters the development of productive forces, it has taken steps to gradually sever the pre-capitalist or feudal relations through its various programmes.., 'Liberation' will help hasten this process, will take forward this 'progressive' programme. CPI(M-L) 'Liberation' itself confesses that it has taken up the positions of the CPI(M) and it proposes to form governments as "instruments of struggle". And all this after the lessons of Naxalbari, after Naxalbari has shown that a revolutionary posing of the agrarian question must abjure the path of supporting bourgeois-landlord reforms.

Hitherto in the above passages we had been dealing mainly with the predominant trend of the Naxalite movement. There was the UCCRI(M-L) trend, the Dakshin Desh (the present MCC), the Andhra group, and all of them criticized one or the other aspect of the left-adventurist movement. On the whole these groups made a one-sided appraisal of phenomena and their criticism was not comprehensive. For all the talk of 'authority' by the then united CPI(M-L), the movement badly lacked a center commanding ideological influence, which, in the days to come showed up in the fragmentation of the movement.

This one-sidedness and lack of a center equipped with Marxist-Leninist theory was further confounded by the difficult process of cognition of the Indian reality. The slow, gradual changes brought through the 'Prussian Path', the remodeling of some pre-capitalist relations along bourgeois lines has indeed made the cognition of this reality difficult. This process of cognition shows interesting turns on the question of the principal contradiction. From "the contradiction between feudalism and the broad Indian masses" as the principal contradiction at the beginning of the movement to the formulation of the "contradiction between imperialism and the oppressed peoples" as the principal contradiction, the various naxalite groups have at one time or the other reached this or that conclusion. Today some groups hold that feudalism is a spent force and identify imperialism as the main enemy. They make light of the 1970 programme which holds that the contradiction between feudalism and the broad Indian masses to be the principal contradiction. It takes the view that an attack on feudalism also weakens imperialism. This rested on the premise that feudalism was the main prop of imperialism in our country. Imperialism at first allies with the feudal ruling classes and they serve as its main social prop. Though this holds good for the past it need not hold good for all time. It is only one manifestation of imperialism's characteristic of political reaction and domination and is undoubtedly true in some given historical condition, but we cannot absolutise and universalize it. That is why Lenin in his polemics with Kautsky pointed out - "The characteristic feature of imperialism is precisely that it strives to annex not only agrarian territories but even the most highly industrialized regions." (Imperialism ; CW-22, pp. 268-69) Those groups which could sense the changes, took note of the imperialist fostered capitalist growth, marked out imperialism as the main enemy.

This process of cognition in the movement is more the result of learning from one's own experience rather than any scientific analysis based on Marxism-Leninism. Take the principal contradiction affair - it was only when it was realised that attacks on feudalism were not weakening imperialism, that new formulations started emerging.

This "learning from one's own experience" by the leaders is a peculiar inversion of the Leninist tactics of letting the masses learn from their own experience. No wonder then that one finds the worst 'bowing to spontaneity'. The whole movement is thus unable to carry forward working-class politics, is unable to provide leadership through foresight, but can only follow in the wake of events. If the '70s bowed to the passionate indignation of the petty-bourgeois intellectual, which found its reflection in the terroristic line of individual annihilation, the '90s bow to the mass economic struggles. The 'annihilation line' was jettisoned by the various groups one by one in accordance with their own level of cognition. It is interesting to note that while Com. C.P. Reddy at the very beginning subjectively divided the

revolutionary process in India into stages and held that it was presently the stage of the 'Resistance Struggle', it is only recently that some M-L groups have arrived at this formulation.

This worship of spontaneity leads to indifference towards political tasks. Take the proponents of 'Resistance Struggle'. They impose upon the masses stages of struggle in a subjective manner and their theses are based on some belief in a gradualist, additive approach (remember, a complete 'stage' and not only just one aspect - the practical-economic of the movement). This stage is supposed to be limited to economic issues and we have been told that this stage doesn't directly involve the question of state power. But then it is held that this does not mean that the issues raised at this stage do not involve the question of state power. It has been argued that since in the course of their practical-economic fight the masses come up against state power it becomes related to the question of state power i.e. their economic struggle (for land, wages etc.) leads them to politics. This is exactly as the Russian economists of yore argued. While criticizing Economism, Lenin wrote of the communist party that it represents "the working class not in the latter's relations to only a given group of employers, but in its relation to all classes of modern society, to the state as an organised political force". (What is to be done?) But with the theory of stages - at present that of the resistance struggle - some contingents of the communist movement reduce themselves to the status of economic organizations, to militant trade-unionism. The given economic formulation of tasks decreed by the theses of 'resistance struggle' negates the Leninist view and does not promote such methods of struggle and forms of organization that can enable the masses to have their own political experience through which they can be brought to the revolutionary front. This certainly cannot be done if we reduce our whole movement to the practical-economic. And for this, as Lenin observed, propaganda and agitation are not enough. It is believed that the political education of the working class and the toilers can be fulfilled by raising their consciousness through propaganda only. But there can be no political education of the masses apart from drawing them into the political struggle. As Lenin observed ". There can be no political education except through political struggle and political action. Surely it cannot be imagined that any sort of study circles or books etc., can politically educate the masses of workers if they are kept away from political activity and political struggle. (CW 4/P228). But our proponents of resistance struggle want to keep the fight within the boundary of economism - land, wages, developmental work etc. and talk of raising political consciousness in the abstract. The lack of political struggle and education shows up most pathetically during elections when the masses in their areas of struggle turn a deaf ear to calls for boycott and instead support one or the other ruling-class party.

This lack of politics shows up at its worst in the dealing of the peasant question. Naxalbari had tried to pose this question in a revolutionary manner but today this has been forgotten. This question is understood by the working class party, i.e., the communist party, as part of its policy to win state power. But today this question is brushed aside, the question of achieving and consolidating the dictatorship of the proletariat is disregarded and implementation of 'land to the tiller' per se is declared to be the touchstone of revolutionary activity. We find that party literature in India is replete with accounts of land seizures - mostly 'ceiling surplus' land vested with the government or in the possession of individual landowners. As a measure of reform, as something which brings immediate relief to the toiling masses, it is all very fine, but it is described as the class struggle. Everywhere this fight for land is described as an anti-feudal fight. We may ask, where is the politics of the affair? Where is the politics of Naxalbari - the formulation of land with state power as opposed to the agrarian reforms of the ruling classes and the support extended to them by the revisionist communist parties? A passionate preoccupation with land seizures does not make for communist politics. (The revisionist communist parties also seize land and even the state distributes land). For where are the policies which would ensure the hegemony of the proletariat? All political questions - question of liberty (curtailment of rights), question of attitude towards various ruling class policies, various movements of different sections of the proletariat and toilers, anti-imperialist fights, are relegated to the background for 'land to the tiller' is the basic slogan and even that perhaps means distributing ceiling surplus land! ('Land to the tiller' is not interpreted as meaning general redistribution). In the event of absence of proletarian politics and Bolshevik preparation for state power, the net effect would be that the M-L parties would start behaving like militant NGOs (voluntary agencies) fighting for the implementation of government programmes of ceiling surplus land, minimum wages, developmental work etc. or else get bogged down in parliamentarism (some M-L groups in their propositions hold that implementation of government programmes and developmental work is an important component of their programme during the stage of the 'resistance struggle').

This militant NGOish behaviour as a result of lack of politics shows up in the talk and practice of village level democracy or 'jan panchayats'. Lenin dubbed such democracy without conquest of state power as 'wash basin' democracy which rests content with minor, local and unimportant issues amounting to a lack of action affecting the economic system as a whole, the state structure as a whole. It diverts attention from the central task of overthrow of bourgeois rule. Today when the 'policies' framed by the state affects all aspects of our life which has been drawn closely together by the rule of capital, when economic life is 'manipulated' at metropolitan centers of world imperialism and directly affects the people, resting content with village level democracy, its glorification, means discounting the

political struggle, the struggle against class rule. It is argued that all this breaks the semi-feudal production relations - it might be so, you are aiding and accelerating an ongoing process - but, as for communist politics, all this is far from it. At different places and in different ways there has been an expansion of the movement but what about proletarian politics as opposed to bourgeois politics? It has been relegated to the background. An approach which gives pride of place to local issues and isolated work inevitably leads to the neglect of class politics as a whole. Lenin held that - "The predominance of isolated work is naturally connected with the predominance of the economic struggle" (CW 4/p.367) (It is interesting to note that many comrades in the movement opine that we have fought "feudalism but not imperialism").

One-sided appraisal of phenomena and narrow empiricism are among the other 'outstanding' features that have characterized our movement. It is interesting to note that many of our leaders come to realise that India had a parliamentary system which accorded democratic rights, however restricted, during the emergency. Truly for them "negation was determination". They argued thus : surely there must have been some democratic rights which have been curbed now. So it took the emergency to realise this! What can one say about such "leaders"?

This one-sided appraisal of phenomena shows up glaringly in the different approaches to parliament. From the correct appraisal that parliament is a pig-sty, a talking-shop and historically obsolete, some contingents raise the slogan of election-boycott and what is worse, have turned this slogan into a shibboleth to demarcate themselves from other groups. Here is Lenin's appraisal - "revolutionary tactics cannot be built on a revolutionary mood alone. It is very easy to show one's "revolutionary" temper merely by hurling abuse at parliamentary opportunism or merely by repudiating participation in parliaments, its very ease, however, cannot turn this into a solution of a difficult, a very difficult problem." Again, "even if only a fairly large minority of the industrial workers, and not 'millions' and 'legions', follow the lead of the catholic clergy and a similar minority of rural workers follow the landowners and kulaks - it undoubtedly signifies that parliamentarianism in Germany has not yet politically outlived itself, that participation in parliamentary elections and in the struggle on the parliamentary rostrum is obligatory on the party of the revolutionary proletariat specifically for the purpose of educating the backward strata of its own class, and for the purpose of awakening and enlightening the undeveloped, downtrodden and ignorant rural masses. Whilst you lack the strength to do away with bourgeois parliaments and every other type of reactionary institution (we have forgotten all about fraction work, of working within reactionary organisations -- "wherever the masses are found" -- but seek only to perpetuate our sects.), you must work within them because it is there that you will still find workers who are duped by priests and stultified by the conditions of rural

life, otherwise you risk turning into nothing but wind bags." (Leftwing Communism) (It is interesting to note that even this essentially political slogan is being sought to be reduced to the economic level - boycott for dams, for roads etc. this is because these groups from their long years of experience have come to realise that the boycott does not work). On the other hand, those who found that parliament had political relevance gave one-sided emphasis on it. So much so that they took it to be their duty to take part in every parliamentary exercise and fell prey to parliamentary cretinism. They started appraising politics through parliamentary spectacles and not in terms of the class struggle. No wonder they tagged themselves on to this or that progressive, backward-caste, anti-authoritarian party, placing their politics at the service of these parties. Ironically, even the 'boycott' camp has fallen a prey to this parliamentary cretinism - look at the support the BSP garnered from the after its success at the 1993 U.P. elections. The Naxalbari movement was not only living criticism of the revisionist policies of peaceful transition and parliamentarism but also gave a shining example of the application of the Leninist principle of attack on compromising parties, i.e., parties which reconcile the working class and other toiling masses to bourgeois rule. This movement made a telling attack on the compromising parties, the CPI & CPI(M) and gave a revolutionary, leftward shift to politics. But today the various contingents of the M-L camp have jettisoned all this by their politics of tailism (behind Janata Dal. BSP etc.).

This one-sided appraisal of the parliamentary system has led to a rift in the movement, though, Marxism-Leninism holds that in this era of imperialism extra-parliamentary struggles are more important and decisive and the question of boycott does not warrant a split. From boycott to the bog of parliamentarism, the about-turn in the case of 'Liberation' has its own interesting tale.

The tendency of the leaders of the Naxalite movement to learn from their own experience and their worship of spontaneity shows a complete lack of theoretical concern. It leads to empiricism and pragmatism. The influence of pragmatism shows up glaringly in the case of the parliamentary practice of 'Liberation' which takes resort to any unprincipled election alliance (For instance, with the Samata Party in Bihar).

This worship of spontaneity is one of the important factors which reinforces the fragmentation in the revolutionary communist movement with various contingents at different levels of experience not comprehending and appreciating one another. This stems from a lack of theoretical concern which forces practice to grope in the dark. All the wrong ideas about parliament, individual annihilation etc. only show the bankruptcy on the theoretical front. Pragmatism and empiricism is manifested in the growing preoccupation with issues like women's oppression, environmentalism, national struggles, all sorts of fads trumped up by imperialism to

the exclusion of class politics, of a fight against class rule. All these issues are dealt in an abstract, one-sided manner without linking them up with the historic tasks of the working class, of the cause of socialism. An economic formulation of tasks, of concerns with issues local, not affecting the state structure as a whole, accords well with such a presentation of problems of various sections. More, it threatens to drag the movement into the mire of reformism.

There are certain groups which see things in a 'broader' perspective, want to intervene in the political process and struggle to influence state policies. But, in their case, lack of a Marxist-Leninist presentation of tasks inevitably means following in the wake of the evolutionary path of capitalism, the bourgeois - landlord or variant of Prussian path being followed in India. Thus PCC takes 'reservations' to be the touchstone of revolutionary politics in India. Reservations are nothing but state incorporation and part of the process of the slow evolution of a small strata of bourgeoisie and petty - bourgeoisie from among the downtrodden castes. The question is not posed in a revolutionary manner at all. The question is not how a microscopic minority becomes part of the mainstream of official society but how the vast majority of the downtrodden will constitute itself as a official society.

The agrarian movement made a shift to the left with Naxalbari. The Naxalite movement had for its social base the agricultural proletariat and the poor peasantry. In terms of caste the overwhelming majority of these sections belonged to the oppressed castes. Fight against social oppression, for dignity, fuelled this movement. With the penetration of commodity - money relations, the dissolution of 'jajmani' relations, this oppression does not appear as 'given' in their relations and social oppression becomes the target of struggles.

The slow, gradual evolutionary path of Indian capitalism carries with it the possibility of meeting such demands (what some groups describe as "breaking semi-feudal relations"). This process serves as a rationale for the local existence of M-L groups and provides them the social basis. The concern with growth of capitalism, of the growth of productive forces leads to a non-political economic formulation. In as much as old issues are dying away, one can find a growing preoccupation with developmental (!) work. This lends the whole movement an NGOish colour.

The increasing recognition of the growth of capitalism in India comes in a variety of ways - the slow, evolutionary process which has brought untold miseries with capitalist growth is met by theses of distorted capitalism, neo-colonial capitalism and so on. Feudalism was the target and capitalism, the way out, the 'progressive' force in our theses. So, when it was observed that capitalist growth brought misery, destitution, ruin there was a cry of disbelief. It was thought that capitalism meant

growth, development. Marx had shown that capitalism inevitably meant prosperity and concentration of wealth at one pole and misery at the other. But our comrades had drawn a mental picture of a pretty capitalism - a capitalism without misery, oppression et al. For them capitalist growth meant prosperity for all. The infamies of capitalism were also dubbed as semi-feudalism. Let us suppose that we have distorted capitalist growth, neo-colonial capitalism and so on. Now this not only means the growth of productive forces in a certain manner but also the growth of certain classes - the bourgeoisie, the middle strata and the proletariat. Perhaps distorted capitalism has produced a distorted proletariat. Perhaps we cannot enter into a fight against the ruling class with this proletariat? Naxalities who are obsessed with the growth of productive forces can only see distortions in this capitalist growth but not the growth in the strength of our class - the proletariat. There is no talk of class-outlook and class analysis. The great Chinese revolution was led by the proletariat working under comprador-bureaucrat capital. But we in India will first ensure ourselves a pure proletariat, a pure capitalism and then go on to make a pure proletarian revolution!

Let us take Bihar, one of the most backward states of India. The Naxalite movement there is a practical reminder of a shift in class forces - the occupancy raiyats, who had a direct fight against the zamindars formed the social base of the All India Kisan Sabha or the old communist movement, while we have the increasingly assertive rural proletariat, semi-proletariat (poor peasantry) as the social base of Naxalism. The changed correlation of class forces, the ongoing class struggles, which show the breach of interests between the peasant bourgeoisie on the one hand and the rural proletariat and semi-proletariat (poor peasant) on the other, impel us to recognize the need for the socialist revolution. The fight today is mainly against capitalism, against imperialism. Imperialist capital today operates through Indian capital, its main prop (it goes without saying that all feudal remnants must be actively fought).

Much is made of the path illumined by Naxalbari. The path is supposed to be the Chinese path. From CM's formulations on base area, guerilla war to PLA formation at Magurjan with the snatching of a rifle, we have come a long, long way after three decades. Today even the most well-equipped struggling armed groups hesitate to call their areas of operation base areas and have to take resort to formulations like resistance struggle and there is no talk of a People's Liberation Army at present. We do not want to go into all this here, it is outside the scope of this paper, but one thing is certain, the last word on the question of the path has not been said yet. Another important thing to note is that the path of Chinese Revolution is not a synonym for armed revolution. It goes without saying that in as much as one wants to build a revolutionary party one must try to know and assimilate the 'last word' in the world communist movement as Lenin put it, we must learn from other

revolutionary movements. But we must not make caricatures. It may be noted here that questions over the Chinese path do not question the need for the armed squads operating today.

Today, when we are discussing Naxalbari after three decades, we must bring the question of state power on the agenda of the day. For this, we must establish proletarian politics. If we want to make revolution we must not get bogged down in economism and pragmatism, we must formulate our political tasks and this cannot be done by bowing to spontaneity. If we want to provide leadership we must equip ourselves with communist theory, groping in the dark is bowing to spontaneity. Only then can we be said to be following proletarian politics, only then can we stand at the head of events and make a revolutionary formulation of different questions (caste, nationality etc.) as Naxalbari had done in the case of the agrarian question. Today economism predominates the fragmented movement. To take up the political tasks we must try to build a united party of the proletariat. Only by ensuring the leadership of the proletariat, the most advanced class facing the bourgeoisie can we fight imperialism and capitalism. For this we must have a truly working class party which must fight all petty-bourgeois deviations which have hitherto defaced the movement. Today the increasing, assertion of the rural proletariat under the banner of the Naxalite movement shows the changed correlation of class forces. It shows that the demands of the proletariat must be met and only the Socialist Revolution, the revolution which brings forth this class as the ruling class, can do so by expropriating the expropriators and building socialism.