

Report on the Peasant Movement in the Terai Region

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After about 18 months, we, the Communist revolutionaries of the Siliguri sub-division [1], met at a convention on September 15, 1968 under quite unfavourable conditions.

Why am I speaking of unfavourable conditions? This is because during these 18 months attempts have been made to crush the revolutionary peasant movement of the Siliguri sub-division and to annihilate the Communist revolutionaries there through 'encirclement and suppression' campaigns. Who started the campaigns of 'encirclement and suppression?' On May 22, 1967, the leaders of the 14-party United Front government led by Ajoy-Jyoti-Harekrishna-Biswanath [2] threw hundreds of peasants and workers into jail and inflicted physical torture on them, had their homes looted by the police and shot, bayoneted and killed 18 peasants including men, women and children with a view to crushing the revolutionary peasant movement.

The leaders of the 14-party United Front were unable to prevent their fall even though they had submitted slavishly to Indira Gandhi, the political boss of the comprador-bureaucrat bourgeoisie and the feudal landlords and jotedars. This is because the Congress Party, the political organization of the comprador-bureaucrat bourgeoisie and landlords, toppled the 14-party UF government after having made that government do what it (the Congress Party) needed. It dismissed the U. F. Government [3] in order that it might use the UF again whenever necessary to serve its purpose. The 'encirclement and suppression' campaign that the reactionary UF leaders had started on May 25, 1967 [4] against the revolutionary peasant struggle is being followed up by the regime, of Dharam Vira, the governor, as clearly shown by the murder of Comrade Babulal Biswakarmakar, who was shot dead on September 7 this year.

We met at a convention under unfavourable conditions like these with a view to assessing the experience of the revolutionary peasant struggle of the last 18 months and carrying this struggle forward firmly along the path illumined by the thought of our beloved leader and great teacher, Chairman Mao.

Naturally, we shall place our views before the comrades on the basis of the lessons that we have drawn from the heroic struggle of the Terai peasants.

We have not yet been able to learn well the thought of Chairman Mao. So there will be shortcomings in our views. We shall learn anew from the discussions of the comrades.

The Importance Of The Peasant Question

The greatest Marxist-Leninist of our present era, Chairman Mao, has taught us: **"The present upsurge of the peasant movement is a colossal event. In a very short time, in China's central, southern and northern provinces, several hundred million peasants will rise like a mighty storm, like a hurricane, a form so swift and violent that no power, however great, will be able to hold it back."**

Chairman Mao further teaches: **"Every revolutionary Party, every revolutionary comrade, will be put to the test, to be accepted or rejected as they decide. There are three alternatives. To march at their head and lead them? To trail behind them, gesticulating and criticizing? Or to stand in their way and oppose them? Every Chinese is free to choose, but events will force you to make the choice quickly."**

The truth of these words of Chairman Mao, of every single word of it, has been fully borne out once more in the struggle carried on in our area. Why has the peasant movement in the Terai region proved to be an event having more far-reaching consequences than even an earthquake?

Ours is a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country, 80 per cent of whose population live in the villages. The contradiction between the people of our country and feudalism is the principal contradiction. The comprador-bureaucrat bourgeoisie, the landlords and the jotedars have been carrying on their rule and exploitation through their political organization, the Congress Party, by protecting fully and developing imperialist interests and by covering up the basis of feudalism with legal coatings. So the peasants are the basis and main force of the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggle. Unless the peasants are liberated it is impossible to achieve the liberation of all other oppressed classes. The Terai peasants are a part of the peasantry of our country. 70 per cent of the Terai peasants are poor and landless, 20 per cent are middle peasants and 10 per cent are rich peasants. These heroic peasants dealt merciless blows to the obsolete and rotten feudal elements - the jotedars, landlords and usurers. The State apparatus of the comprador-bureaucrat bourgeoisie, landlords and jotedars is preserving the feudal system by force and carrying on an armed rule. Inspired by Chairman Mao's teaching, **"Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun,"** the heroic peasants opposed this armed rule with armed revolt.

The peasants of Terai not only dealt a fierce blow at feudalism, they also expressed their intense hatred for the imperialist exploitation of India, specially the exploitation by U.S. imperialism, swept into the dust the political, economic and social authority, dignity and prestige built up in the villages by the landlords and jotedars, who represent feudalism, and established the rule of the Peasant Committee in the villages through their armed revolt. That is why the Naxalbari struggle has shown the path for the liberation of India's oppressed classes.

We have seen how the criterion for judging political events changed as soon as the struggle of the heroic peasants started and thus proved how true are the teachings of Chairman Mao. The struggle made it clear as daylight who in a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country like ours is a revolutionary and who is a counter-revolutionary, who is progressive and who is reactionary, who is a Marxist and who is a revisionist, and which political party wants to advance the cause

of democratic revolution, that is, the agrarian revolution, and which party wants to cover up the semi-colonial and semi-feudal system in order to preserve it.

Starting from foreign radio broadcasts and newspapers which uphold the interests of the bourgeoisie and the imperialists to the man-in-the-street in the cities and the villages - everyone chose sides on the issue of the peasant struggle in Terai. Not even one of the political parties, which never tire of talking about workers, peasants and Marxism could maintain its previous position. The struggle of the Terai peasants tore open their masks and forced them to take sides. The struggle of the heroic peasants showed that all the leaders of the 14 'Left' parties including the so-called Marxist party, who had managed to secure ministerial *guddis* for themselves, were serving the state of the comprador-bureaucrat bourgeoisie and landlords, like the Congress Party. The struggle made it clear that, like the Congress Party, the leaders of the 14 'Left' parties including the Dangeite clique and Sundarayya & Co. are enemies of India's democratic revolution, that is, agrarian revolution. The struggle of the Terai peasants proved that the agrarian revolution can be led to success only by waging a relentless and uncompromising struggle against them.

The struggle of the Terai peasants acted as a midwife in the revolutionary situation prevailing in India. That is why a single spark of the Naxalbari struggle is kindling widespread forest-fire everywhere. In a word, the struggle of the heroic peasants has brought to the forefront quite forcefully the role of the peasants in India's democratic revolution overcoming the fierce and active opposition put up by all the reactionaries and revisionists.

Establish The Peasant Committees And Get Organized

The Siliguri sub-division peasant convention gave out the call to (i) establish the authority of the peasant committees in all matters of the village, (ii) get organized and be armed in order to crush the resistance of jotedars and rural reactionaries and (iii) smash the jotedars' monopoly of ownership of the land and redistribute the land anew through the peasant committees.

The convention further declared that the peasants' struggle against feudalism would have to face the repression of all reactionaries, be it Indira Gandhi's government in New Delhi or the UF government in West Bengal. So, all their repression must be resisted by force of arms and by carrying on a protracted struggle.

The call of the sub-divisional peasant conference instantly created a stir among the revolutionary peasant masses.

How did the revolutionary peasants of Terai translate this call into action? To put this call of the conference into effect the revolutionary peasants first of all laid stress upon the task of creating armed groups of peasants in the villages. In every village we heard the words: "**Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.**" This is because every single struggle, however small, whether for stopping usury or on any other issue, has been invariably met with lathis and guns. That is why this call worked like magic in organizing the peasants.

Almost all the villages got organized during the period from the end of March to the end of April 1967. Whereas, previously, the membership strength of the Kisan Sabha could not be increased beyond 5,000, the membership now jumped to nearly 40,000. About 15 to 20 thousand peasants began to do whole-time work and built up peasant committees in villages. The young men of the villages who had never before been seen in the front ranks of the Kisan Sabha now occupied the place of veteran peasant cadres. With the speed of a storm the revolutionary peasants, in the course of about one and a half months, formed peasant committees through hundreds of group meetings and turned these committees into armed village defence groups. In a word, they organized about 90 per cent of the village population. This action of the peasants completely changed all our old ideas about organization. Chairman Mao teaches us: "**The masses have boundless creative power. They can organize themselves and concentrate on places and branches of work where they can give full play to their energy.**"

We came to realize more profoundly the significance of this teaching of our great teacher Chairman Mao from this action of the Terai peasants.

The great Lenin said: "**Revolution is a festival of the masses.**" What it means in reality was witnessed by us during the struggle of the Terai peasants. While the so-called Marxist pundits, Indira Gandhi and all and sundry were rending the skies with loud talks of national integration, we found how the revolutionary activities of the peasants united all the peasants irrespective of their nationality, religion, language and caste.

The revolutionary peasants, through their actions, made their decrees the law in the villages:

1. A blow was dealt at the political, economic and social structure in the villages based on monopoly of land-ownership, which dragged the peasants more and more into the depths of pauperization. 'No, not the deeds and documents - what is required is the order of the peasant committee,' declared the peasants. They marked out all the land in Terai with their ploughshares and made it their own. They declared that all land which was not owned and tilled by the peasants themselves was to be re-distributed by the peasant committees. By carrying this out in practice, they struck a blow at the main political and economic basis of the jotedars. The old feudal structure that had existed for centuries was thus smashed through this action of the peasants.
2. All the legal deeds and documents relating to the land had been used to cheat them. They held meetings and burned all the receipts, acknowledgments, plans, deeds and documents.
3. The jotedars and money-lenders, taking advantage of the poverty of the rural folk, got them committed to unequal agreements relating to the mortgage of land and bullocks. The peasants declared all such agreements as well as the huge burden of interest imposed on them null and void.
4. The hoarded rice which is used as capital for carrying on usurious and feudal exploitation was confiscated by the peasants and distributed among themselves. Apart from this hoarded rice, other things like oil, atta [coarse flour], bullocks, cows, a huge number of domesticated animals owned by the jotedars, agricultural implements, even articles meant for their personal use were confiscated and distributed.

5. All jotedars in the villages who were known for a long time as oppressors and those who tried to oppose the peasant struggle were all subjected to open trial and sentenced to death.
6. The wicked, ruffian elements and flunkeys who are used to preserve the political, economic and social authority of the jotedars in the villages and those who co-operated with the police were all brought to open trial. In some cases, death sentence was given; in others, the fellows were paraded through the village streets with shoes strung around their necks and with fools' caps on their heads, so that they would not dare commit crimes in future.
7. Realizing that their struggle against the jotedars, the landlords and the money-lenders would be subjected to armed repression by the state apparatus, they armed themselves with their traditional weapons like bows and arrows and spears as well as with guns forcibly taken away from the jotedars, and organized their own armed groups.
8. Lest the general administration of the villages should suffer, they arranged for night watch and shouldered the responsibility of running the schools in a smooth way. The peasant committees announced that severe punishments would be awarded in cases of theft and dacoity, and took measures to inflict such punishments in some cases.
9. In every area they created regional and central revolutionary committees and established the peasants' political power.
10. They declared the existing bourgeois law and law courts null and void in the villages. The decisions of the regional and central revolutionary committees were declared to be the law.

In addition to these ten great tasks the peasants also did many other things which wiped out of the villages the old feudal system that had existed for centuries. How intense was the class hatred of the peasants can be seen from the fact that during a raid on the houses of two jotedars, which lasted for two days, they not only ate up the cooked food of the jotedars but also helped themselves to the meals prepared with all other foodstuff left there. In this struggle we witnessed the festival of the revolutionary peasants overthrowing feudalism.

Whenever the peasants became conscious of any shortcomings during these revolutionary actions, they at once came to the peasant committee for their rectification. This means that the peasant committees were not something imposed on them. On the contrary, these committees were wholly their own. That is why the struggle of the heroic peasants of Terai was able to hit the jotedars and the vested interests.

The leadership of this struggle was, naturally, in the hands of the landless peasants, who are the most militant section of the peasantry. The reason why these revolutionary actions could become so far-reaching and so vast in their sweep is that the leadership of the struggle was in the hands of the poor and landless peasants, who constitute 70 per cent of the peasantry. After the conference, it was the poor, landless peasants who realized before all others that the resolutions of the conference were beneficial to their own interests more than to anyone else. It is only because of this that the work of organizing the movement assumed such a broad and militant form. From the experience of their own lives the poor peasants realized that any compromise with feudalism would make their future even more miserable than before. That is why, in their fight against the jotedars, the money-lenders, the ruffians and the police it is the poor peasants

who have not shrunk from making sacrifices ever since May 24 and 25, 1967. The truth of this is being proved even today through struggles.

Just after the conference, the middle peasants, who constitute 20 per cent of the peasantry, looked with suspicion at the call given by the conference. So, they were not active in the first phase of the struggle. It was only when they came to realize that their interests would be served by the struggle and that the main target and enemy of the struggle was the jotedars, landlords and money-lenders, that they came forward. With the participation of the middle peasants the sweep of the struggle increased manifold and it grew even more intense.

The rich peasants, who constitute only 10 per cent of the village population, at no time thought the declaration of the conference and this struggle to be beneficial to their own interests. Rather, they, particularly those rich peasants who carry on feudal exploitation in considerable portions of their land, apprehended that it meant danger for them. So, after the conference they took the role of critics and opposed the struggle in the first phase and sometimes even acted as spies for the jotedars. But as soon as the middle peasants joined the poor peasants, their movements underwent a change. After the jotedars and the wicked people had been punished and they had fled to the towns and business centres, the rich peasants gave up the path of opposition and criticism and began to demand justice from the peasant committees. And the peasant committees considered every case on its merit and did justice to them. As a result, the rich peasants generally became neutral and even took an active part in the struggle in quite a few instances.

The small jotedars split into two sections in the course of the struggle. One section comprising those jotedars who were able neither to develop themselves as they desired owing to the oppression by the government of the comprador-bureaucrat bourgeoisie and the landlords nor to maintain their existing standard of living, took part in the struggle. Another section, comprising those who realized that it was not possible for them to resist, turned inactive hoping to take revenge in future.

The struggle of the heroic peasants of Terai demonstrated through practice how to build peasant unity though, it must be admitted, the task was often found to be not at all easy. Real peasant unity can be built only by not making any compromise with feudalism, only by intensifying class struggle against it and by directing the spearhead of attack against it. The peasants proved this in practice. A look at the past and the present revisionist Kisan Sabha convinces one that intense class struggle against feudalism can never be developed by convening such conferences as the 'jute cultivators' conference' or by avoiding class struggle for the sake of unity. A vigorous class struggle against feudalism not only helps to build peasant unity but also guarantees the establishment of the peasants' political power through such peasant unity. This we have learnt from the peasants of Terai.

All the so-called Left parties joined the Congress Party in their mad crusade to vilify the struggle of the heroic peasants of Terai. But all their vilification can never hide the fact that the peasants of Terai have overthrown feudalism root and branch, a feat which could not be done through any legislation or any other thing during all these hundreds of years.

Our great teacher Chairman Mao teaches us: "I hold that it is bad as far as we are concerned if a person, a political party, an army or a school is not attacked by the enemy, for in that case it would definitely mean that we have sunk to the level of the enemy. It is good if we are attacked by the enemy, since it proves that we have drawn a clear line of demarcation between the enemy and ourselves. It is still better if the enemy attacks us wildly and paints us as utterly black and without a single virtue: it demonstrates that we have not only drawn a clear line of demarcation between the enemy and ourselves but achieved a great deal in our work." The truth of these words of Chairman Mao has been vindicated through practice during the struggle of the heroic peasants of Terai.

Armed Struggle - Not For Land But For State Power

The struggle of the Terai peasants is an armed struggle - not for land but for state power. This is a fundamental question, and the revisionist thinking, which has been prevailing in the peasant movement for the last few decades, can only be combated by solving this question.

From the bourgeois parties and newspapers to the leaders of the so-called Marxist party, all have been saying the same thing, that it is quite just for the peasants of Terai to struggle for land but that the acts like arming the peasants and the forcible taking away of guns are dragging the struggle into a wrong path. By making this one statement all the bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties, including the Congress and the so-called Marxist Party, have ranged themselves on the same side and made themselves agents of India's ruling classes.

We all know that every class struggle is a political struggle and that the aim of political struggles is to seize state power. Chairman Mao teaches us: "**The seizure of power by armed form, the settlement of the issue by war, is the central task and the highest form of revolution. This Marxist-Leninist principle of revolution holds good universally, for China and for all other countries.**"

In our country also, we can succeed in overthrowing the regime of the comprador-bureaucrat bourgeoisie and landlords only by arming the peasants and by building up guerrilla groups and a regular armed force.

The peasants of Terai have taken up exactly this work, and this is the reason why all the bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties including the Congress and the so-called Marxist Party have become so furious.

The so-called communists dressed up as Marxists have unmasked themselves by hitting away at this. They want to keep the anti-feudal struggle pegged to the question of mere distribution of land. Like all other bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties the so-called Marxist Party also looks at the question of land distribution from the standpoint of social injustice towards the peasants. This is what they have been doing in reality, whatever may be their subjective motivation. That is why they become panicky whenever they see armed peasants or hear the slogan 'Vietnam's path is our path'. And they stage like a true bourgeois the farce of setting up committees with pro-jotedar bureaucrats in order to distribute land.

It would be relevant to mention here what our respected leader, Comrade Charu Majumdar, had told us. He said: "Whatever little concessions the UF government may be able to give to other classes, it is not possible for them to give any concession whatsoever to the peasants." We set down this statement in our local election review but were not able to realize its significance at that time. But later the peasant movement in Terai has cleared up our thinking.

As in the other states of India, the peasants of Terai also are victims of oppression under the regime of the comprador-bureaucrat bourgeoisie and feudal jotedars. And this oppression is carried on in the villages by preserving the political, economic, social and cultural structure that serves the jotedars and through feudal exploitation. The heroic peasants are every day realizing this in their lives. That is why they accurately hit at the proper place.

The first thing the peasants of Terai did was to arm themselves and then carried out the ten great tasks and thus wiped out at a stroke the old feudal system that has continued for centuries. Furthermore, relying on the armed revolutionary strength they established a new political power, that is, the rule of the revolutionary peasant committees in their area.

By carrying out these ten great tasks the heroic peasants have taught us that the struggle of the peasants is not merely a struggle for land. On the contrary, in order to end the monopoly of land ownership and feudal exploitation by the landlords in the villages, which are being preserved by the Congress Party, the political party of the comprador-bureaucrat bourgeoisie and the landlords, with the help of the political, economic, social and cultural structure that serves the landlords, a new political, economic, social and cultural structure must be created by establishing a new political power. This political power can be established by arousing and arming the peasants, by organizing guerrilla groups, by creating liberated areas, by building a regular armed force, and by protecting and expanding this force. Such a political power, no matter in how small an area it is established, is the embryo of the future people's democratic state power in India.

It is never possible to overthrow the rule of the comprador-bureaucrat bourgeoisie and the landlords, who have come to terms with imperialism, without arming the peasants in the anti-feudal struggle, without leading their struggle courageously, without building their guerrilla and regular armed forces. This is so because in our country, the feudal landlord class is the main social base of the imperialist and comprador-bureaucrat bourgeois exploitation, and the peasants are the main force and the basis of this struggle. Herein lies the distinctive feature of the Naxalbari path, that is, the Naxalbari struggle. It is precisely because the Naxalbari struggle is not merely a struggle for land that it could not be stamped out.

Without this consciousness, any struggle for land, no matter how militant it may be, is militant economism. Such militant struggle for land generates opportunism in the peasant movement and demoralizes the majority of the fighting section as happened during the struggle for seizing the benami lands. Such militant economic movement leads one into the blind alley of revisionism. This means, in other words, becoming, consciously or unconsciously, a bourgeois reformist. The bourgeoisie tries to gain this object of theirs, sometimes through their laws and sometimes through a Vinoba Bhawe. When they fail in this, they depend on the present-day social-democrats who disguise themselves as Marxists. Marxism has nothing in common with this. In short, the

question of making the agrarian revolution victorious in our country is not the same as the question of ensuring social justice to the peasants.

United Front And Its Leadership In The Anti-Feudal Struggle

An important aspect of the struggle of the heroic peasants of Terai is its success in gaining the support of the tea-garden workers and other toiling people and, thus, intensifying the struggle still further by building a united front in the anti-feudal struggle. This is the most important task. The struggle of the heroic peasants of Terai has solved this problem.

The Terai peasants began their struggle against the comprador-bureaucrat bourgeoisie and the landlords, who have come to terms with imperialism, have prettified feudalism and are carrying on their rule and exploitation through the Congress Party, which is their political organization. The fact that the reactionary leaders of the so-called United Front were able to install themselves on the ministerial *guddis* did not change the class character of the state.

While the heroic peasants of Terai were smashing the foundations of feudalism in the villages by performing the ten great tasks, the tea garden workers realized from their innate class consciousness that this class struggle was a struggle to overthrow the rule of the Congress Party, which represents the comprador-bureaucrat bourgeoisie and the landlords. That is why the tea garden workers could not be kept away from the struggle of the peasants in spite of the fact that the unions of tea-garden workers were mainly controlled by the so-called communists.

From their own experience of class struggle the tea-garden workers of Terai realized that the peasants were their most faithful friend and ally. That is why they not only participated in the struggle of the peasants but were in the forefront of that struggle. They went on strike and arming themselves they have taken part in every struggle since May 24, 1967. The struggle of the Terai peasants helped the tea-garden workers to come out of the mire of trade unionism and economism. This happened in spite of the fact that the so-called communist trade union leaders were opposing the struggle. And from this anti-feudal struggle there grew up a genuine worker-peasant alliance under the leadership of the tea-garden workers.

At the present time every anti-feudal armed struggle is certain to be opposed by imperialism. There are many instances today to bear this out. In the propaganda being carried on by the bourgeois papers representing different imperialist interests, by the Voice of America and by BBC, we are witnessing this opposition in an embryonic form. The object of their propaganda is to crush the struggle without delay, and the reactionary UF leaders are diligently working to this end under the leadership of the Congress. As soon as the anti-feudal struggle of the workers and peasants of Terai grows more intense, it will have to face direct opposition from imperialism. All the anti-imperialist strata and classes will then naturally join the alliance of workers and peasants.

The struggle of the heroic peasants of Terai has taught us the lesson that a united front of all anti-imperialist, anti-feudal elements that can be united can be built only on the basis of the worker-

peasant alliance carrying on armed struggle. This united front of workers and peasants can never be built through any so-called 'turn to the villages' or by taking a few demonstrations towards the villages.

Any other front that can be built is the United Front of Ajoy-Jyoti-Harekrishna-Jatin [5], which can function as ministers or bureaucrats within the existing bourgeois structure but which is unable to give leadership to the People's Democratic Revolution.

The question of leadership of this front has also been solved. No so-called Marxist can lead this struggle or this front. This front will be led by the political party of the proletariat - a party which is armed with the theory of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tse-tung's thought, the highest development of Marxism-Leninism in the present era - a party having its own army and able to build a united front of workers, peasants and petty bourgeoisie and of all those who can be united. Only such a party can successfully lead the anti-imperialist anti-feudal struggle.

Our Deviations And The Lessons We Learnt

Taken as a whole, internationally and nationally, the revolutionary situation in our country is excellent. The armed struggle of the peasants of the Siliguri sub-division has begun after the fourth general elections at a time when Anglo-U.S. imperialism, specially U.S. imperialism, finds itself in an acute crisis and the quarrel between the imperialists has become bitter, when U.S. imperialist capital is unable to rely fully on the influence of the Congress Party in matters of investment, when all the hoax of economic planning of the Congress Party, the organization of the comprador-bureaucrat bourgeoisie and landlords, is falling into pieces, when the people are suffering from the effects of an acute economic crisis and when people's lack of confidence in the Congress has become even more pronounced, as reflected in the ending of the monopoly rule of Congress ministers in eight states.

We know that we must adopt an offensive tactic in our struggle when the enemy is beset with crisis and internal quarrels, and must adopt the tactic of advancing our struggle gradually when the enemy has gained some stability. Judged from this standpoint, the struggle of the peasants of Terai is just, timely and beyond reproach.

Why have we failed, though temporarily, to advance the struggle of the heroic peasants of Terai? The reasons are: lack of a strong party organization, failure to rely whole-heartedly on the masses and to build a powerful mass base, ignorance of military affairs, thinking on old lines and a formal attitude towards the establishment of political power and the work of revolutionary land reform. We must always bear in mind Chairman Mao's teachings in discussing these matters. He teaches us: **"New things always have to experience difficulties and set-backs as they grow. It is sheer fantasy to imagine that the cause of socialism is all plain sailing and easy success, without difficulties and set-backs or the exertion of tremendous efforts."**

By the lack of a strong party organization we mean absence of a party which is armed with the theory of Marxism-Leninism and its highest development in the present era, Mao Tse-tung's thought, which is closely linked with the masses, which does not fear self-criticism and which has mastered the Marxist-Leninist style of work. It is true that the revolutionary comrades of the

Siliguri sub-division led by our respected leader, Comrade Charu Majumdar, were the first to rise in revolt against the revisionists. But this does not mean that we fully assimilated the teachings of our great teacher Chairman Mao. That is, while we accepted the teachings of Chairman Mao in words, we persisted in revisionist methods in practice. Though it is true that the worker and peasant Party members of Terai were in a majority inside the Party and that there was Party organization in almost every area, yet in reality the worker and peasant comrades were led by the petty bourgeois comrades and the Party organization in every area actually remained inactive. The Party members were all active at the beginning of the struggle but they were swept away by the vast movement of the people. We did not also realize that the Party had a tremendously significant role to play in advancing firmly the struggle of the heroic peasants. As a result, whatever might be the role the Party members played spontaneously at the beginning of the struggle, it was afterwards reduced to nothing in the face of white terror. To belittle the role of the Party in the struggle is nothing but an expression of the old revisionist way of thinking. The Party played no role in matters like deciding what are the needs of the struggle at a given moment, giving political propaganda priority above everything else, advising the people about what they should do when the enemy attacks, preparing the people politically to meet the moves of the enemy, and developing the struggle step by step to a higher stage.

We did not even politically assess, nor did we propagate among the people, the significance of the ten great tasks performed by the heroic peasants. As a result, there developed among us opportunism and escapism; and even the fighting comrades began to show signs of a lack of firmness.

So, we are of the opinion that we must carry on a sharp struggle against the revisionist way of thinking and fulfil certain definite tasks. These tasks are: to form a Party unit in a given locality and elect its leader; to train these Party units, which must be armed ones, to observe secrecy. The tasks of the Party unit will be to propagate the thought of Chairman Mao in a given locality and to develop and intensify class struggle in that locality; to act as a guerrilla unit and attack and eliminate class enemies by relying wholly on the people; and, whenever possible, to take part along with the people in the work of production. We have now started implementing the above programme.

We were unable to raise the struggle firmly to a higher stage because we failed to rely wholly on the people and to build a powerful mass base. We now admit frankly that we had no faith in the heroic peasant masses who, swift as a storm, organized themselves, formed revolutionary peasant committees, completed the ten great tasks and advanced the class struggle at a swift pace during the period from April to September 1967. We did not realize that it is the people who make history, that they are the real heroes, that the people can organize themselves and can amaze all by their own completely new style of work. We failed to realize that comrades like Tribeni Kanu, Sobhan Ali, Barka Majhi, Babulal Biswakarmakar and the ten peasant women of Naxalbari are the real heroes and organizers, and so we failed to move forward.

Though we repeatedly recognized this in words during the period from April to September 1967, in reality, however, we, the petty bourgeois leadership, imposed ourselves on the people. Whenever the heroic peasant masses took the initiative and wanted to do something, we of the petty bourgeois origin opposed them. The reason is, we did not understand, nor did we even try

to understand, the actions of the masses. On the contrary, under the influence of old revisionist habits we arbitrarily set limits as to how far they should go. This resulted in thwarting the initiative of the masses and blunting the edge of the class struggle. Having worked in a revisionist party, we were used to bourgeois laws and conventions and so, tried to convince the masses about what was right and what was wrong. So, when the people wanted to attack the police, we prevented them on the ground that our losses would be heavy. We looked at the people's attitude towards the jotedars and the police from the angle of bourgeois humanism. As a result, we failed to organize the large masses, who numbered more than 40 thousands, and were thus unable to build a powerful mass base during April and May 1967.

Therefore, during the second stage of our struggle, we have resolved that we must link ourselves with the needs and wishes of the people, go to the people with boundless love and respect in our hearts and integrate ourselves with the people. We must learn from them and take the lesson back to them again through practice. In other words, we must not impose anything from above. Mistakes may be made owing to this, but it is possible to correct such mistakes. The most important thing is - never to allow the initiative of the masses to be suppressed. Our duty is to develop their initiative.

Ignorance Of Military Affairs And Old Ways Of Thinking

The struggle of the heroic peasants of the Siliguri sub-division was not a movement to realize certain demands in the old sense. This was a struggle to establish a new political power, the peasants' power in the villages after abolishing feudalism there. So, we shall discuss the reasons for our failure in this struggle both from the political and the military viewpoint. Chairman Mao teaches us: **"All reactionaries are paper tigers. In appearance, the reactionaries are terrifying, but in reality they are not so powerful. From a long term point of view, it is not the reactionaries but the people who are really powerful."** If, in any struggle, we happen to over-estimate the enemy's strength politically, it will never be possible to gain victory in that struggle. In other words, if we do not have, from the strategic viewpoint, the courage and firmness required to defeat the enemy, we shall inevitably face defeat. If we fail to realize that in the final analysis it is the people who are powerful, we shall not be able to achieve victory in any struggle. It is this consciousness that lends firmness to the struggle, urges one to make supreme sacrifice without fear and teaches one to undergo all kinds of hardship in order to win victory. We believed that we had assimilated this teaching of Chairman Mao. But the course of the struggle made us realize how superficial was our understanding. Today, our continued participation in the struggle makes us feel with every passing day that this teaching of Chairman Mao has to be realized anew every day, every moment and this realization has to be tested through our own practice. The day when this realization is translated into reality, we shall be able to shatter the much boasted strength of the armed forces of India's reactionary government and march forward undeterred.

The encounters with the police on May 24 and 25, 1967 and the action of the people in coming forward undauntedly both during and after the shooting down of unarmed peasant women by the police, and the boundless heroism and self-sacrifice of Comrades Tribeni Kanu, Sobhan Ali and Barka Majhi - how can we explain all these things if not by the fact that they are the expressions

of that realization? And we of the petty-bourgeois origin failed to recognize this very thing and so, at times, either under-estimated or over-estimated the enemy's strength.

In the first stage of the struggle we under-estimated the enemy's strength and thought of everything in the old way, and being in a revisionist party we indulged in idle day-dreaming. Sometimes we imagined that 'the UF cannot go so far or that it will be difficult for it to go so far.' On the one hand, we viewed the revisionists from a purely petty-bourgeois standpoint while, on the other, we under-estimated the enemy's strength and kept the people unprepared in the face of the enemy, that is, we did not prepare the people regarding the measures that the enemy was likely to take. This is nothing but revisionist attitude.

Again, when the people were ready to launch attacks on the enemy, we over-estimated the enemy's strength and subjectively magnified the likely effects of such attacks. The people fought with determination and created model heroes whose heroism we belittled. As a result, the people found themselves in disarray in the face of widespread terror, the intensity of the struggle diminished and escapism increased. Comrade Babulal Biswakarmakar, by sacrificing his life on September 7 this year, has enjoined us to advance along the path pointed out by Chairman Mao.

This is a struggle to seize state power and, as such, it demands of us to prepare the party and the people militarily to the fullest extent. Chairman Mao teaches us: "**Without a people's army the people have nothing.**" We have come to realize the truth of this teaching of Chairman Mao deeply through the struggle in Terai. Though we had known that as soon as this struggle started it would be met with suppression by the Central government and the reactionary leaders of the West Bengal UF government, yet we failed to take the programme of action which should have been taken. We had a wrong understanding of Chairman Mao's teaching in that we turned strategic defence into passive defence.

When all the population armed themselves, the jotedars, the vested interests and wicked persons fled from the villages, and so we concluded that we had already created a base area. We mistook the armed people for the armed force and adopted the tactic of resisting and attacking by means of broad mass mobilization as the main tactic of our struggle. The one or two small armed groups which were formed to take away forcibly guns from the jotedars were not recognized by us as the main instrument of struggle. On the contrary, we assumed that guerrilla groups would eventually arise on the basis of the spontaneous actions of the broad masses. In many cases, fooled by the display of revolutionary ardour in vagabonds, we made them leaders for organizing armed groups. Again, when we found armed rich peasants and a section of small jotedars by the side of armed poor peasants and middle peasants we concluded that together they constituted the united armed force of the entire peasantry. We totally forgot that the rich peasants and that section of the small jotedars could desert to the enemy at the first opportunity. We learnt in the course of the struggle that a few rich peasants and small landowners might take an active part in a big struggle that was raging. But as soon as counter-revolutionary terror started, these people would desert to the enemy camp spreading fear among the poor and middle peasants. In short, our total ignorance of military affairs is the root cause of the temporary set-back in our struggle.

What we have learnt from the struggle of the Terai peasants is that we must deeply study the political and military theories of Chairman Mao, apply them in practice and then study them

again. Our greatest responsibility is to make arrangements for our worker and peasant comrades to study the thought of Chairman Mao.

Furthermore, we have learnt from the experience of our struggle that the armed groups formed after arousing the people in the villages and arming them will become the village defence groups.

We must acquire knowledge of guerrilla warfare by arming the peasants with conventional weapons (bows and arrows, spears, etc.) and by organizing assaults on the class enemies.

We are to build up liberated zones gradually by forming peasant guerrilla groups and by carrying on their activities. It would not be possible either to form guerrilla groups or to carry on their activities for long, if we do not, at the same time, persevere in building liberated zones also. We must keep in mind the fact that only the liberated zones or those areas which can be transformed into liberated zones form the rear of the guerrillas. We must lay utmost stress on building a people's armed force. To build a people's armed force we must form centrally organized groups of armed guerrillas. These, we think, will be the embryo of the people's armed force.

In some other areas, again, we may try to organize armed peasant revolts and build the people's armed force comprising those armed peasants who have risen in revolt.

In forming the guerrilla groups or the central guerrilla group we must lay utmost stress on the class standpoint. We have come to realize that only the poor and middle peasants must be the basis for forming the guerrilla groups.

Our failure **in establishing the revolutionary political power and in carrying out revolutionary land reforms** blunted the edge of the class struggle both during and after the struggle. The revolutionary peasants accomplished two tasks through mass mobilization. They are: formation of central and zonal revolutionary peasant committees and distribution of land. And we turned exactly these two things into a most formal affair. Our petty bourgeois day-dreaming was at the root of it. We never seriously considered how deeply significant were these two tasks.

Had we treated these two tasks seriously and carried on political explanation campaign among the masses about their significance, had we been able to develop the initiative of the people to participate in carrying out these two tasks by educating them, they would have remembered for a long time the gains which they themselves had won through struggle, and would have fought unflinchingly in order to retain those gains.

As regards distribution of land, our policy was to confiscate the land fully and distribute the same entirely.

We did not give any importance to this work also. As a result, in many cases the rich peasants prevented this task being carried out under various pleas. In many other cases, the top section of the middle peasants, being in the leadership in some cases, managed to divert the emphasis from the confiscation of land to making raids on jotedars' houses, and thus deprived this work of its

importance. In some other cases again, there developed acute contradictions between the poor peasants and the middle peasants in matters of the distribution of land.

In spite of all these mistakes, the people have been defending heroically the fruits they won through their struggle.

Therefore, we have taken the decision that, of the ten great tasks of the peasants, we must attach the greatest importance to these two tasks and turn them into a weapon for our propaganda.

NOTES

1. In the Darjeeling district of West Bengal. Naxalbari lies in this sub-division.
2. Ajoy Mukherji, a veteran Gandhite, anti-communist reactionary and chief minister of the former UF govt.; Jyoti Basu and Harekrishna Konar, neo-revisionist chieftains, deputy chief minister and minister for land and land revenue respectively, and Biswanath Mukherji, a leader of the Dangeite clique and irrigation minister in the UF government.
3. The 9-month old reactionary UF govt. in West Bengal was dismissed by the Central government in November 1967.
4. On this day the reactionary police of the UF govt. shot down in cold blood 9 peasant women and children in the Prasadujote village near Naxalbari, at the instance of the reactionary and neo-revisionist leaders of the UF, who co-operated closed with one another in suppressing the peasant struggle of Naxalbari.
5. Jatin Chakravarty, a reactionary trade union bureaucrat belonging to the RSP, a petty bourgeois party within the UF.