

## Communism in India

INDIAN MAOISM, PEKING,  
AND BANGLA DESH

*Justus M. van der Kroef*

COMMUNISM IN INDIA: IDEOLOGICAL  
AND TACTICAL DIFFERENCES  
AMONG FOUR PARTIES

*Sally Ray*

DOCUMENTS: COMMUNISM IN INDIA

JUSTUS M. VAN DER KROEF

### Indian Maoism, Peking, and Bangla Desh \*

The Bangla Desh crisis and the eruption of a full-scale Indo-Pakistani military conflict in connection with it in early December 1971 have given a new complexity to India's Maoist insurgent movement, as well as to Peking's strategic interests in Southern Asia. The probability of an enduring future interaction of India's Maoists in West Bengal with developments in Bangla Desh (or East Pakistan)—an interaction already apparent during Bangla Desh's struggle for independence in 1971—can hardly be discounted. As one perceptive British sociologist, after a recent visit to Bengal, commented in a leading independent American Marxist journal: "From now on, a spectre will haunt Asia

\* Research for this article was performed while the author was a Research Associate of the Society for Research in Indian Communist Affairs, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, during the summer of 1971. The author is grateful to the Society's director, Professor J. G. Tiwari, for research assistance made available in the preparation of the article. Responsibility for all views expressed is, of course, the author's alone.

and the big powers, from the Pentagon to the Kremlin—the spectre of a united communist Bengal.”<sup>1</sup> Viewing the Bangla Desh fighting from a long-term perspective, the *New York Times*' bureau chief in Delhi, a few weeks before the outbreak of the Indo-Pakistani war, remarked that “the longer the conflict drags on, the greater the likelihood that the Bengali independence movement—a nationalist upsurge rather than an ideological one—could alter in character and fall under the leadership of Maoists or other extremists. Some pro-China freedom fighters are already active in East Pakistan.”<sup>2</sup>

Such observations could be made even as Peking was formally supporting Islamabad's position in the international arena, whatever misgivings she might have had about finding herself this time on the wrong side of the kind of typical, ethnically secessionist, “national liberation” movement which the People's Republic of China has so often endorsed elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> Whatever its ultimate outcome, the Bangla Desh crisis has quickened the process of intersection of two lines of Maoist political development in Southern Asia—that in West Bengal and that in East Pakistan or Bangla Desh (or East Bengal),<sup>4</sup> respec-

1. Ruth Glass, “Bengal Notes,” *Monthly Review* (October 1971), p. 18. On a united Bengal state (i.e., West Bengal and Bangla Desh), “leftist” in character and supported by the Chinese, see also Marcus F. Franda, “Communism and Regional Politics in East Pakistan,” *Asian Survey* (July 1970), p. 604.

2. Sydney H. Schanberg, “Pakistan Divided,” *Foreign Affairs* (October 1971), p. 130.

3. Before full-scale fighting between India and Pakistan flared up in early December 1971, there were speculations in the Indian press that Peking was changing its policy in the Bangla Desh crisis and was cooling its formal support for Pakistan, because China could no longer “as a self-proclaimed leader of the world revolutionary movement” afford to be an ally of a regime engaged in suppressing “a national liberation struggle.” *The Times of India* (Bombay edition), November 6, 1971. But cf. also *Ananda Bazar Patrika* (Calcutta), October 5, 1971. Peking had earlier made known to the Yahya Khan Government that it opposed military repression of the Bangla Desh insurgency—indeed, that it supported the Bangla Desh freedom movement. It particularly did not want a victory of the Awami League “bourgeois leadership” in Bangla Desh. See T. J. S. George, “Peking's Pre-War Message to Pakistan,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 5, 1972, p. 8. The degree of China's commitment to Bangla Desh—considering Peking's support in April 1971 for the Bandaranaike Government in Ceylon engaged in quelling a “Guevarist” liberation movement—is difficult to gauge. As will be suggested below, there is no consistency of policy in China's support for “national liberation” struggles in Asia (cf. my “Peking, Hanoi, and Guerrilla Insurgency in Southeast Asia,” *Southeast Asian Perspectives* (September 1971), pp. 1–67), and Peking's policy in the Ceylon insurgency is not necessarily typical.

4. It is noteworthy that long before the December 1971 hostilities the Indian press and officialdom demonstrated a frequent aversion to the term “East

tively—with China holding significant policy options to influence the process in the months ahead. For an understanding of the latter, the dual Maoist development pattern needs to be considered first.

## I

The roots of Maoism, certainly in the sense of tactical reliance on a revolutionary peasantry led by the Communist Party, and committed to guerrilla insurgency, go deep in India. Indeed, in so far as Maoist thought also embraces the Marxist-Leninist concept of the role of the bourgeoisie, and of the “national democratic” revolution as a stage in the development toward socialism and Communism, these roots reach to the historic differences between M. N. Roy and Lenin at the Second Comintern Congress, in Moscow in 1920, and to Roy’s subsequent career in relation to the Indian nationalist movement.<sup>5</sup> However, the first highwater mark of Maoist action in India, according to Peking’s own media today, came shortly after World War II in Telengana, i.e., the Telegu linguistic parts in the former state of Hyderabad, bordering on the Telegu linguistic section of the former state of Madras, usually referred to as the Andhra area (today Telengana is part of Andhra State). Between 1946 and 1951 a Communist Party of India (CPI) peasant front in this region, called Andhra Mahasabha, spearheaded a peasant revolt, including seizures of landlords’ holdings and weapons. “Guided by the light of Mao Tse-tung’s thought . . . the storm of revolution [in Telengana] spread rapidly and village people’s committees and people’s volunteers were established throughout the area.”<sup>6</sup>

By the middle of 1948 the Telengana peasant insurgents controlled about 2,500 villages, including functioning commune governments.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, the Andhra CPI leaders, who had had little actual

Pakistan,” in general use throughout the world, instead referring to the region as “East Bengal” (raising shades of traditional Bengali nationalism) and later as Bangla Desh. In this article the three terms are used interchangeably, unless use of one term seems specifically warranted.

5. John Patrick Haithcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India: M. N. Roy and Comintern Policy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971), esp. pp. 18–19. Haithcox subsequently notes (p. 262) that Roy’s agrarian program approximated the ideas of Lenin rather than those of Mao, which suggests an unwarranted difference between the latter two.

6. “Armed Struggle in Telengana,” *Peking Review*, August 11, 1967, pp. 23–24.

7. Victor Fic, *Peaceful Transition to Communism in India* (Bombay, Nachiketa Publications, 1969), p. 20.

support in their uprising from the CPI Politburo, then led by B. T. Ranadive, formally called for the application of Mao's *On New Democracy* to the Indian condition. Stressing that "our revolution" was to a great extent similar to that of the Chinese Revolution, the so-called *Andhra Letter* proposed a Mao-style united front of four classes, including sections of the bourgeoisie and the wealthier peasantry, as well as workers and poor peasants, under proletarian leadership and utilizing guerrilla warfare against imperialism and feudalism, which were described as the principal targets of revolutionary action.<sup>8</sup> The subsequent course of the Telengana uprising need not detain us here, except to note the rejection by the CPI Politburo of the Andhra thesis and (by the end of 1951) the eventual crushing of the insurgency, despite the outbreak of smaller-scale peasant rebellions in West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and Tiripura. Indian Maoists today agree with official Chinese Communist analysis and tend to see the end of the Telengana uprising in terms of a "shameful betrayal" by CPI "revisionist" leaders who "vilified the Chinese people's revolutionary war led by Chairman Mao Tse-tung" and allegedly urged the rebels to capitulate to the authorities.<sup>9</sup>

In subsequent years the ideological fissures and personality clashes within the CPI to a degree reflected the seemingly undying controversy over this failure of the insurrection in Telengana, "India's first Yenan," as well as, later on, the deepening Sino-Soviet rupture. The emergence of the rival Communist Party of India (Marxist), or CPM, in 1964 seemed at first to provide Indian Maoists with a new organizational weapon; but within a year the party began to drift into the same kind of "parliamentarianism" that characterized the CPI, joining united front governments in West Bengal and Kerala and, according to its critics, dropping much of its militancy and revolutionary zeal.<sup>10</sup> By the early weeks of 1965, CPM militants had begun organizing a peasant guerrilla movement in the rural subdivisions of Naxalbari, Kharibari, Phansidewa, and Siliguri in the Darjeeling

8. Mohan Ram, *Indian Communism: Split Within a Split* (Delhi: Vikas Publications, 1969), pp. 24-26. For background on the Telengana rising, see also the standard histories of Indian Communism, such as M. R. Masani, *The Communist Party of India—A Short History* (London: Derek Verschoyle, 1954), and Gene D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959).

9. "Armed Struggle in Telengana," p. 24.

10. On the origins of the CPM, see John Wood, "Observations on the Indian Communist Party Split," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 38 (1965), pp. 47-63, and Ralph H. Retzlaff, "Revisionism and Dogmatism in the Communist Party of India," in Robert A. Scalapino (ed.), *The Communist Revolution in Asia: Tactics, Goals and Achievements* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), pp. 309-342.

district in the northern landstrip of West Bengal state. There is no unanimity among observers as to why this so-called "Naxalbari strip" was selected for a new Indian "Yenan." Explanations range from the simple fact that some of the CPM activists involved, among them Charu Mazumdar, originally hailed from or had lived in this area (home-ground familiarity was an obvious tactical asset in their struggle), to the self-evident strategic significance of the Naxalbari strip. The strip is a border promontory near the People's Republic of China and closely surrounded by Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, and East Pakistan, all regions potentially affording easy sanctuary (there is evidence that principal Naxalite insurgents did, in fact, covertly cross back and forth into Nepal).<sup>11</sup> India's only rail connection with its Assam state, the restive Northeast Frontier territory, and Nagaland, where Peking was assisting local insurgents,<sup>12</sup> passes through the Naxalbari strip.

For the better part of two years, Maoist CPM dissidents in West Bengal developed their Naxalbari organizational infrastructure, particularly *Kisan Sabha*, or peasant committees, while tensions mounted within the CPM over participation in parliamentary politics and in possible coalition "united front" governments in West Bengal. The root causes of these tensions were a matter of both leadership age and ideology. Virtually all the principal CPM dissidents and certainly their following who supported the Naxalbari rising, most of whom would ultimately break away to form their own party, were at the time from ten to thirty years younger than the leaders of the CPM or its parent group the CPI.<sup>13</sup> Impatient with the inter- and intraparty

11. On Naxalite sanctuaries and support by Maoists in Nepal, see, e.g., "Naxalite General Staff and Its Modus Operandi—Nepal, the Rear Base of Indian Maoists," *Indian Communist* (Quarterly Journal of Research in Indian Communist Affairs, Aligarh), September 1969, pp. 34–40. Reportedly, such Naxalite leaders as Kanu Sanyal repeatedly eluded capture by being able to cross into Nepal and find safety among his supporters there. (See, e.g., *Indian Nation*, Patna, April 22, 1968.)

12. Sometime in 1967, Peking reportedly agreed to train and supply Naga insurgents battling New Delhi on behalf of their independence (*The Times of India*, February 9, 1969). On April 11, 1967, the Indian External Affairs Minister told the Indian parliament that two groups of armed Nagas had recently crossed into Burma on their way to China for military training (*Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, March 29–April 5, 1969, p. 23272). Subsequently, the Indian Government claimed to have captured Nagas freshly returned from military training in China, along with a large quantity of Chinese weapons (*The Overseas Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, March 22 and 29, 1969). See also *The Hindu* (Madras), May 13, 1968.

13. Marcus F. Franda, "India's Third Communist Party," *Asian Survey* (November 1969), pp. 798–800.

wrangling of their political elders, who seemed unable to come to grips with India's reform needs, younger Bengali radicals, many not formal adherents of the CPM, felt attracted to Maoism. The wave of terrorist violence which they provoked or unleashed, beginning in April 1967 in Calcutta and throughout West Bengal, not only was supportive of the simultaneous rising of the Naxalbari peasantry, but also presaged a new and decisive split in the Indian Communist movement. In March 1967, both the CPM and the CPI had joined in a fourteen-party united front coalition government in West Bengal; eventually, after considerable equivocation, both called for the suppression of the Naxalite rising.<sup>14</sup> This action, more than anything else, made for the final break between the radicals, who were acquiring an increasing following among Calcutta's unemployed and student youth and intellectualized lumpenproletariat, and the CPM and CPI "establishment." The Peking media hailed the Naxalites, declaring that their "torch of armed struggle . . . will not be put out. . . . 'A single spark can start a prairie fire.'" <sup>15</sup> Although, by August 1967, Indian security forces had quelled, though not wholly destroyed, the rebels, Naxalite publications declared that "revolutionary peasant uprisings are starting or are about to start in different parts of the country," that the revisionist leadership of the Indian Communist movement was being repudiated, and that the Naxalbari rising, which "was based on the thought of Comrade Mao Tse-tung . . . the only correct road for the Indian people's democratic revolution," had become a "turning point in the history of our country and our Party."<sup>16</sup>

These affirmations sharply polarized the position of the Naxalite rebels. In early July the Indian Government protested to China that Chinese broadcasts about the rising in Naxalbari in effect were further instigating the armed struggle there.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, Chinese

14. On the background of the United Front and the Communist parties' participation in it, see S. Pal, "The Leftist Alliance in West Bengal," *Indian Political Science Review* (April-October 1967), pp. 169-190; Marcus Franda, "Electoral Politics in West Bengal: The Growth of the United Front," *Pacific Affairs* (Fall 1969), pp. 279-293; and K. K. Sinha, "Communist-led Ministries in West Bengal and Kerala," *Current History* (April 1968), pp. 225-231, 242.

15. Editorial, *Renmin Ribao*, July 5, 1967, and *Peking Review*, July 14, 1967, p. 23. See also "Let the Flag of Naxalbari Fly Still Higher," *Peking Review*, August 11, 1967, pp. 21-22.

16. *Deshabrat* (Calcutta), November 23, 1967, and *World Revolution* (Spring 1968), pp. 31-32. For a useful, succinct analysis of the origins and early tactics of the Naxalites, see C. R. Irani, *Bengal: The Communist Challenge* (Bombay: Lalvani Publishing House, 1968).

17. *Ceylon Daily News* (Colombo), July 8, 1967 (Press Trust of Ceylon—Reuter's dispatch, New Delhi, July 7, 1967).

diplomatic personnel in Calcutta, and even in the Naxalbari area itself, were reported to be attending meetings of what was described as "Left Communist Party workers"; other reports had it that the Chinese were smuggling arms and funds to the rebels.<sup>18</sup> Stories of brutal and bloody Naxalite justice for landlords and moneylenders meted out in rebel-led peasant courts, of extensive land expropriation by the insurgents, and of continuous attacks on police and political opponents all deepened public concern over what was said to be a widening reign of terror in West Bengal. Opposition parties like the right-wing Jana Sangh sent out their own investigating teams to West Bengal and then sharply criticized the police for "feeling elated" over having arrested only "third-rate rebels" while the Naxalite ring-leaders were alleged to have been successful in evading capture and in the interim to have continued to work their will upon the inhabitants of the Naxalite area: "On July 16 [1967] the blacksmiths of interior areas of Naxalbari were forced by the rebel leaders to manufacture large quantities of 'Khukris' [daggers], axes, bows and arrows and other weapons. They are still being made to manufacture the said weapons for the rebels under threat and coercion by them."<sup>19</sup> According to other Jana Sangh reports, Naxalbari coercion was not confined to the forced manufacture of weapons; the kidnapping of wives and children of villagers, in an effort to compel husbands to serve Naxalite interests, also occurred.<sup>20</sup>

It is doubtful whether such tactics enhanced the Naxalites' rural following, a circumstance to be appreciated in the context of the fact that in subsequent West Bengal elections the Communist following generally tended to be greater in the urban than in the rural areas.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, it was in terms of a Maoist "rural strategy"—i.e., a peasant guerrilla rising emanating from some safe, Yenan-like, secure base—that many Naxalite leaders, in the months following their dispersal from Darjeeling by Indian security forces, continued to conceive of their movement. Not only in scattered areas of West Bengal, but also in Bihar, Uttar, and Andhra Pradesh states, the movement was gaining a hold during 1968; by the end of that year the Naxalites

18. *Ceylon Daily News*, July 19, 1967.

19. *Naxalbari Agitation—Inside Story and Its Consequences* (Calcutta: Bharatiya Jana Sangh, 1967; mimeo), p. 28. I am grateful to Mr. Ram Swarup, publicist, New Delhi, for procuring this report and the report cited in note 20, *infra*.

20. Cf. "Report Submitted by Shri Ram Prosad Das, BJS. W. Bengal Secretary, to BJS High Command," *The Organiser* (Delhi), July 16, 1967. Confirmed to the author by other oral sources.

21. Cf. Jaigopal, "Acceptability of Communists in West Bengal Towns," *The Indian Communist* (March 1968), pp. 14–15.

seemed to have established a new Yanan in the Srikakulam District of Andhra Pradesh, to be described presently.

Meanwhile, despite their failure in Naxalbari, CPM and other radicals had met in Calcutta in November 1967 in an "All India Coordination Committee of Revolutionaries in the CPM" to proceed with the formation of a new Communist Party to be avowedly Maoist in character. This development was undoubtedly spurred on by the implicit demands in China's media in August 1967 that a "genuinely revolutionary party of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tse-tung's thought" be established in India in view of the allegedly ripening revolutionary conditions. The CPM Central Committee sought to defend itself against such demands in two resolutions, widely circulated throughout India, which termed the Chinese Communist assessment of the Indian situation "highly exaggerated and subjective."<sup>22</sup> But the CPM was badly divided. One estimate made in June 1968 in a prominent CPI-oriented journal declared that the Maoist faction within the CPM organization ran as high as one-third of the total membership, with concentrations of 9,000 and 7,000 avowed adherents in the states of West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh alone.<sup>23</sup> An analysis of book advertisements appearing in the CPM's principal English language weekly between December 1967 and August 1968 showed an "unprecedented increase" in advertisements of Mao's and Maoist publications.<sup>24</sup> Yet the radicals within the CPM were by no means united either. Some dissidents and their sections stayed out of the All India Coordination Committee; personality conflicts and hair-fine ideological differences were seriously to plague the Maoist faction from the start.

Still, there was no denying the Maoist momentum. Though scattered and resigned or eventually expelled from the CPM, the Naxalites succeeded in maintaining organizational liaison among themselves. The All India Coordination Committee of Revolutionaries, with a steadily broadening base, changed its name by May 1968 to the "All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries" (AICCCR) and called for a formal repudiation of all parliamentary participation in favour of an avowedly Mao-inspired, genuinely revolutionary struggle based on the Naxal-

22. *Peking Review*, August 11, 1967, as cited in Mohan Ram, *Maoism in India* (Delhi: Vikas Publications, 1971), pp. 65, 72-77.

23. *Link*, June 23, 1968; also cited in Mohan Ram, *Indian Communism: Split Within a Split*, p. 253.

24. Society for Study of Communist Affairs in India, "Salesmanship of Maoist Literature and Communist Party of India (Marxist)," *Indian Communist* (September 1968), pp. 11-15.



bari experience. By this time, too, a 56,000 word document in Hindi had been circulating among the Naxalite sections for "internal debate."<sup>25</sup> The document claimed that some fifty revolutionary "bases" had already been established in eight Indian states for the purpose of training peasant guerrillas. It called for a popular rising and a strategy of encirclement of "the enemy" in standard Maoist terms (retreat when the enemy advances, harass him when he camps, attack him when he is tired, and drive him away when he retreats).

Naxalites—their exploits noted and praised in the Peking media—continued to stir up the peasantry. In the northwest of Bihar State, in January and February, Naxalite-led, landless laborers and poor peasants attacked landlords and seized sections of the government's Mandanpur forest reserve; both the Indian and Chinese press reported on peasant confiscations of the land and the grain hoards of wealthier landlords, and the punishment of "recalcitrant landlords and evil gentry" by Naxalite-style "people's courts."<sup>26</sup> Naxalite media, meanwhile, stressed that "the message of Naxalbari" was "spreading and dispelling from the minds of our peasantry and working class the gloom of despair" and smashing the "barrier erected by revisionist politics," and that the united front, coalition government participation in Kerala and West Bengal "have only held back the revolutionary movement and served as tools to protect the interest of the exploiters. The betrayal of the Naxalbari peasant revolt is the outstanding example."<sup>27</sup>

But the revolutionary road was to be a good deal more difficult than such self-congratulatory remarks and exhortations suggested. Within months, the Yanan way was to bring renewed discord and disrepute to the Naxalites. The reason was the failure of the rising in the Srikakulam area in the northeastern part of Andhra Pradesh state. By the late 1950s the underdeveloped Girijan tribal community in Srikakulam had been stirred by CPI cadres into resistance to the alienation of their tribal lands to non-tribals, and to highly exploitative laboring conditions. By 1967 there were repeated clashes between the organized Girijan, led by radicals in the Andhra Pradesh CPM and later by Naxalites, on the one hand, and the wealthier landowners

25. J. C. Johari, "Political Ideas of Marxist-Leninist Communists in India," *The Indian Journal of Political Science* (April-June 1971), p. 184.

26. *Hindustan Times*, February 5, 1968; *Peking Review*, February 16, 1968, p. 39, and March 1, 1968, p. 25.

27. "Rebellion Is Right," *Liberation* (Calcutta), April 1968, p. 102; and "India: First Editorial from 'Liberation,'" *World Revolution* (Spring 1968), p. 33.

and their gangs of armed retainers, on the other. Despite internal fissures within the Andhra CPM leadership, and between Andhra Communist leaders and the Naxalites, the Srikakulam resistance steadily escalated, until by the middle of 1968 it had become another Naxalbari-style, small-scale, sustained peasant guerrilla insurgency. The AICCCR claimed that, inspired by Mao's thought, the Girijans were learning "warfare through warfare," and there is no doubt that bloody Girijan guerrilla raids into the plains and attacks on landlords and police were beginning to take place regularly.<sup>28</sup> The nature of the Srikakulam insurgency can perhaps be gleaned from the following two quotations, one an excerpt from a Naxalite report, the other by a foreign journalist:

The heroic armed struggle of the revolutionary peasants led by the Communist revolutionaries has continued its advance in Srikakulam in Andhra.

. . . On February 13 [1969] the peasant revolutionaries carried out an attack on Gangannadoravalasa. Four policemen were killed in the action.

Comrade Rengim died in the course of the encounter . . .

In early March two hundred Girijan revolutionaries carried out an attack on Bottili near Elvinpeta, and seized foodgrains. Similar action took place in Gotivada in which one hundred Girijan revolutionaries participated.

On March 6, in another action, the peasant revolutionaries annihilated a notorious landlord, Gumpaswamy, and confiscated his stock of foodgrains. In a guerrilla action on March 12, at Champaraiguda, two policemen were killed and one was seriously injured.

. . . The armed peasant struggle in Srikakulam has extended from the hilly regions to the plains. On March 10 more than one hundred revolutionary peasants armed with guns, spears and hand bombs went to the village Bondevalasa in Bobbili taluk and explained to the villagers the need of seizing forcibly the property of feudal exploiters and propagated the politics of revolutionary armed struggle. The poor peasants of the village were roused by this and enthusiastically participated in raiding and seizing the property of a notorious landlord and money-lender, Laxmi Naidu. Among the things seized were promissory notes worth Rs. 60,000. They also raided the house of another landlord, Appala Naidu.<sup>29</sup>

28. Ram, *Maoism in India*, pp. 98-99. See also "Peasant Revolutionaries Write a Glorious Chapter with Their Blood," *Liberation* (January 1970), pp. 64-68.

29. "Srikakulam Marches On," *Liberation* (April 1969), pp. 76-77.

It was in November 1969 that Andhra Pradesh first made headlines. On the important Indian festival day of Diwali, 500 members of the Girijan tribe moved down from the mountains into the plain, armed with spears, axes, knives and a few rifles. Shortly before midnight they surrounded the small village with the unpronounceable name of Banjarayuvapuram on the border between Andhra Pradesh and the neighboring state of Orissa. A vanguard of the marauders crept to the house of the richest peasant, blew open the door and stabbed him. Then the Girijan, largely half-wild nomads and descendants of India's original inhabitants, decapitated their victim and hung the head up on the veranda. A female member of the band, whose husband had been shot by the police shortly before, dipped her finger in the peasant's blood and wrote "Long live Mao" on the wall of the house.<sup>30</sup>

Toward the end of 1969, as determined police action began to have its effect and communications in the Girijan tribal region improved, it began to seem that the raids soon would end altogether. The local populace of Srikakulam, at first cowed, became gradually infuriated by the terrorists' tactic of cutting off a victim's head and stringing it up on a pole for all to see. More information became available to the security forces from informants about the guerrillas' movements and hideouts. Nevertheless, sporadic raids continued throughout 1970-1971, even though they enhanced popular aversion to the guerrillas, while appeals to join in a total "annihilation" of "feudal landlord enemies of the people" had demonstrably less and less effect. One press report ascribed the continuation of the raids to the fact that "the leadership cannot conceivably abandon its extremist stance because then it would lose face."<sup>31</sup> The leadership referred to was that of the Naxalite leader Mazumdar and not that of the Srikakulam district of the Andhra Pradesh state CPM or CPI parties, whose organizations had long since fallen out with the Naxalites, nor that of the many Maoist-oriented Andhra dissidents who questioned the wisdom of the Girijan rebellion and who appeared to be directing their badly divided members on their own.

But if this multiple leadership division debilitated not only the Srikakulam rising but, indeed, the Indian Maoist movement generally,

30. Erhard Haubold, "Srikakulam—Model of a Guerrilla Uprising," *Swiss Review of World Affairs* (March 1971), pp. 11-13.

31. "Naxalite Terror in Srikakulam," *The Citizen* (New Delhi), April 25, 1970, p. 28. On the collapse of the Srikakulam rising, see also Bhabani Sen Gupta, "Indian Communism and the Peasantry," *Problems of Communism* (January-February, 1972), pp. 9-11.

one would not know it from the Peking media. Uncompromising and unrelenting in its attacks on the "revisionist" CPM, China seemed by the beginning of 1968 to have become persuaded that an Indian revolution had become an important factor for the triumph of Maoism in Asia, and that the emergence of Naxalbari-style peasant insurrections, such as the one in Srikakulam, had intensified the struggle of India revolutionaries against "revisionism."<sup>32</sup> Throughout 1969 the Chinese Communist press appeared to perceive a rural tide of revolutionary militancy sweeping the Indian countryside, while the "parliamentary road"—represented by the Indian "revisionist" participation in state governments in West Bengal and Kerala—was being repudiated. The deepening peasant consciousness of Mao's thought, the Chinese media suggested, accompanied "heroic" peasant resistance to "armed suppression by the landlords and reactionary troops and police" in widening areas of India, including Orissa and Bihar state. In Uttar Pradesh in early August 1969, it was claimed in the Peking press, peasant guerrillas had repeatedly ambushed the police, and overall guerrilla strength had doubled in recent months. The Girijan guerrillas' main force (*Ryotanga Sangrama Samithi* or "Peasant Revolutionary Organization") in Srikakulam came in for particular praise in the Chinese media. These Chinese reports appeared to rely heavily on, and sometimes reprinted extensive excerpts from, Naxalite publications, especially the Naxalites' English-language monthly *Liberation* and their Bengali language weekly *Deshabrati*.<sup>33</sup>

An overview of these and similar Chinese Communist encomiums discloses standard, but occasionally also controversial, themes. Apart from enumerating specific instances of successful Indian peasant guerrilla actions, suggesting an ever-widening, nationwide insurgency process, the Chinese accounts emphasize the usual tactical concerns. These include the necessity on the part of Indian cadres to bring Mao's teachings to the Indian masses ("Many *adivasi* [native] peasants living in Chota Nagpur area, Bihar State can now recite quotations from Chairman Mao, the Indian press has revealed") and to carry out "pilot investigation and class analysis" in the village society so as to determine who are the people's friends and who their enemies. The accounts also emphasize that the peasant struggle

32. Bhabani Sen Gupta, "Moscow, Peking and the Indian Political Scene After Nehru," *Orbis* (Summer 1968), p. 552. See also Gargi Dutt, "Peking, the Indian Communist Movement and International Communism, 1962-1970," *Asian Survey* (October 1971), pp. 984-991.

33. See, e.g. *Peking Review*, January 31, 1969, pp. 25-28, 31; May 16, 1969, pp. 18-21; August 6, 1969, pp. 29-30; September 19, 1969, pp. 25-26; September 25, 1969, pp. 26, 29; and October 31, 1969, pp. 23-27.

against "feudalism" is not limited to the redistribution of land (the alleged fallacy of the "revisionists") but principally involves the seizure of power through armed force. The latter theme is clearly predominant, and the primacy of guerrilla tactics is stressed again and again in the Chinese reports. In this respect one encounters not only the standard tactical directive of close guerrilla identification with the peasant masses as a prerequisite of success, but more importantly the immediate possibility of the guerrilla experience itself.

The latter is a point worth stressing. For, as will be noted again shortly, the Naxalite leader Mazumdar was to be frequently attacked by fellow Indian Maoists in the 1969-1971 period for an allegedly undisciplined, "un-Maoist," Guevara-style devotion to guerrilla war, supposedly regardless of proper mass organizational support or training. In one Chinese account of Indian peasant guerrilla action, however, one reads that "Indian Communist revolutionaries" have been putting into practice Mao's doctrine of learning "warfare through warfare," and that they "repudiated the erroneous viewpoint that the guerrillas can start a struggle only after they have received 'special military training.'"<sup>34</sup> There is no qualification of this view in any of the Chinese discussions of the Naxalites. Even the relative primitivism of the Indian insurgents' weaponry, such as the Girijans' use of bows and arrows, spears, and hack knives during the Srikakulam rising, is approvingly cited in just this connection in order to stress, as it were, that a guerrilla war can be launched without modern arms—that the human will is the vital factor. Mazumdar's endorsement (or distortion, according to his enemies) of the Maoist concept "to learn warfare through warfare" was to become a principal source of tactical contention among Indian Maoists; but, perhaps not surprisingly, the Peking media have thus far not referred to it.

## II

Despite the dissension among the CPM radicals and secessionists, especially in Andhra Pradesh, and the persisting squabbles within the original Naxalite leadership, the AICCCR proceeded to form a new, formal Communist Party, India's third. The party was established on April 22, 1969, Lenin's one-hundredth birthday anniversary, though its founding was not publicly announced until May 1, 1969, at a mass rally in Calcutta in which thousands waved Mao's little red book.<sup>35</sup> The program of the new "Communist Party of India (Marxist-

34. *Peking Review*, August 6, 1969, p. 30.

35. *The Overseas Hindustan Times*, May 10, 1969.

Leninist),” or CPML, was contained in a Political Resolution drafted by a plenary meeting of the AICCCR held April 19–22, 1969. According to the Resolution, India is a “semi-colonial” and “semi-feudal” country, confronted with a “people’s democratic revolution” directed against the “big landlords and comprador-bureaucrat capitalists” and against an India Government which is “a lackey of U.S. imperialism and Soviet social-imperialism.”<sup>36</sup> Castigating what it termed the “increasing concentration of land in the hands of a few landlords” and “the landlessness of about 40 percent of the rural population” of India, as well as the “brutal social oppression” of the poor, the “main content” of the Indian revolution was described in the CPML Resolution as being “the agrarian revolution,” specifically the abolition of “feudalism” in the Indian countryside. Noting that “Socialist China” was performing “miracles” of socialist reconstruction, the Resolution also declared that “a very excellent revolutionary situation” was prevailing in the world today, not least because of a new upsurge of struggle “in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America for national liberation.”

A substantial part of the Resolution dealt with the vicissitudes of the Indian Communist movement and its alleged ideological and tactical errors in the previous two decades. By 1969, however, according to the Resolution, the most important task had become the construction of a “revolutionary Communist Party armed with Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tse-tung thought.” Over and over the Resolution stressed the critical role of the peasantry and the agrarian revolution; but it also stressed the responsibility of the working class to unite with the peasantry and lead the revolution. As the party of the working class, the Communist Party must organize the peasantry and lead it in armed struggle.

Various observers have noted the problems and seeming anomalies in the timing and circumstances of the CMPL’s birth.<sup>37</sup> For one thing, while Naxalbari and Srikakulam, like Telengana before them, had demonstrated the tactical possibility of Communist-led peasant insurgencies, they had in no wise proved that any local or state government—let alone the federal government—in India was in any serious danger from them. What was the point, it was asked in various circles, of so dogmatizing the Yen-an way and launching peasant insurrections without a clear indication of the tactical feasibility of capturing towns or other government centers? Then, too,

36. *Communist Party (Marxvadi-Leninvadi) Ka Rajnaitik Prastav* (Deshvratī, Calcutta, 1969). For an English version, cf. “Political Resolution of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist),” *Liberation* (May 1969), pp. 4–16.

37. Ram, *Maosism in India*, pp. 106–107.

although the CPML was supposedly to lead the revolutionary peasantry and be a force in the Indian countryside, it was formed in a large city and most of its principal leaders were neither peasants nor the sons of peasants. (The same could be said for the majority of its hard-core supporters.) Indeed, as critics were quick to note, the class and therefore the ideological orientation of the CPML seemed decidedly petit bourgeoisie, with all the tactical dangers of adventurism and romanticism which this was likely to bring.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, the formation of the CPML was less the culmination of a spontaneous sense of unity among Indian Maoists than the consequence of a decision taken by the AICCCR in the face of opposition from other Maoist and CPM radical dissidents in Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and other states, most of whom had their own organizations or else constituted virtually autonomous branches within the CPM. Prominent Mao-oriented CPM splinter groups, like the one led by Nagi Reddy in Andhra Pradesh, declined to participate in the CPML's founding, though they subsequently maintained an informal on-and-off liaison with the new party.

The reasons for the splinter groups' suspicion of the CPML lay partly in personality clashes and leadership rivalries, nurtured over the years in the hothouse atmosphere of ideological theorizing, as well as in genuine tactical differences. One of these differences may perhaps be briefly analyzed. Charu Mazumdar, the ex-schoolteacher who became the CPML's chief theoretician and Party chairman, appeared to have great confidence in the radicalizing effect of a campaign of terrorism and guerrilla war on peasant participants. Mazumdar seemed to deprecate the necessity of developing a mass organization in the countryside as a support for the guerrillas; the guerrilla force itself, through its demonstrable power in the rural areas, could and would create an informal support base among the peasantry. Mazumdar's controversial "annihilation" theory was a natural extension of this premise: by systematically annihilating the *jotedars* (landlords) and their henchmen, the peasant revolutionaries not only would heighten their own political consciousness, but also would make an indelible psychological impact on—and hence presumably create the proper supportive attitude among—the rural masses. One Indian Maoist outlined this part of Mazumdar's strategy as follows:

The main Party program for the present is guerrilla war in the countryside.

38. See, e.g., "A Few Words About CPI(ML)," *Liberation War* (Calcutta), June 1971, pp. 57-63.

A. Annihilate the class enemies.

1. A guerrilla band is formed in utmost secrecy and this band takes as its task the annihilation of a well-known oppressor of the locality.
  - a. There is never any shortage of well-known usurers, rapists or murderers in the Indian countryside;
  - b. The news of such a person's death is always a great relief to the community and raises Party prestige immensely;
  - c. The news of the demise also brings terror to his fellow exploiters, who have to think about "leaving town," or rather, getting to a town, since it's the countryside where they are at. They only feel safe in the towns once one of their number has been wiped out.
2. This policy leads to the building of revolutionary base areas.
  - a. The absence of class enemies in the countryside deprives the government of its sources of information. Therefore, the Party becomes able to move and organize more freely;
  - b. The goods and land seized from those who depart are distributed to the poor peasants and the conditions for rudimentary socialism within the base area created.<sup>39</sup>

In apparently minimizing the relative importance of mass organizational support for the guerrillas, and by stressing the role of the guerrilla band itself as a revolutionary learning and radicalizing matrix, Mazumdar, according to some observers, seemed to be veering away from orthodox Maoism and toward Guevarism, particularly Guevara's concept that "we need not always wait for all the revolutionary conditions to be present; the insurrection itself can create them."<sup>40</sup> The close identification of the Communist organizational structure with the guerrillas also seemed to hearken back to Régis Debray's proposition that "the guerrilla force is the party in embryo."<sup>41</sup> It may be doubted, however, if Mazumdar consciously sought identification with the views of Guevara as a deviation from Maoist orthodoxy. As has been noted above, some of Peking's own

39. Inquillah Zindabad, "Revolution over India," *PL-Progressive Labor* (New York), September 1970, p. 35.

40. Ernesto Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare: A Method* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1964), p. 2.

41. Régis Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution?* (New York: Grove Press, 1967; paperback), p. 106.



utterances on the Indian peasant rising have a Guevarist ring. Other writers in the CPML media, meanwhile, though agreeing with the need to "annihilate" class enemies, also emphasized the importance of organizing the peasantry to raise their revolutionary consciousness and to help them determine their class friends and enemies.<sup>42</sup> But the "annihilation" doctrine, and Mazumdar's evident belief in the creation of not just one potential Yenan in India, but many (recognizing that a number of these might be destroyed, but that others would spread the revolutionary movement), all seemed to some of Mazumdar's critics to be an undisciplined and wasteful posturing, which could only bring discredit and failure. This was essentially the view of most Andhra Pradesh Maoists and CPM radicals, particularly including their leader, Nagi Reddy. It was also common among CPM dissidents and former CPM members in Bihar (the so-called Laxman Singh group), and eventually developed force within the ranks of the formal CPML leadership as well.

Representative of this mounting criticism, for example, was the following analysis appearing in an anti-Mazumdar organ of Indian Maoist intellectuals in Calcutta:

Mr. Mazumdar's article "A Few Words About Guerrilla Action" in no uncertain terms puts his theory of individual annihilation in black and white for the first time. . . . This theory was an admixture of Narodism and Guevara's petit-bourgeois romantic theory of revolution. It interpreted "guerrilla war" as the "only" means to arouse the people. As a result the cadres began to leave the fields of mass work. They cut off their connection with the front of students, workers, and other mass organizations where the neo-revisionist party [i.e., the CPM] still held its sway. It is a most arduous and painstaking task to remain among the people of a revolutionary base and give leadership to all their movements and expose the neo-revisionist parties. . . . All these fundamental facts are being systematically ignored by Charu Mazumdar. Impatience and revolutionary impetuosity form the basis of the Che Guevara politics—the politics of petit-bourgeois romanticism. People belonging to the petit-bourgeois class are very prone to it.

In our country too, young people from this class were being stimulated by this catchy slogan "We are in the midst of civil war" and were sent to the peasant belt with the politics of individual annihilation in their heads. . . . Their impatience has been incited by Charu Mazumdar's romantic theory backed by

42. See, e.g., Satyanarain Singh, "Mushahari and Its Lessons," *Liberation* (October 1969), p. 21.

revolutionary catch-words. The political value of these youthful immature boys is being assessed by the criterion of "action."<sup>43</sup>

To other, non-Maoist, observers too the Mazumdar style lacked realism: "Only romanticists, adventurists and frustrated intellectuals can convince themselves that this country is ripe for a revolution of the Chinese variety," a columnist in India's leading daily wrote.<sup>44</sup>

Whatever the aptness of all such criticisms, the fact remained that Mazumdar not only was able, here and there, to create new, if short-lived Yenans, but, more importantly in the long run, was moving toward a fusion of urban and rural guerrilla insurgencies. This fusion was occurring largely on the strength of disaffected students and radicalized youths, who, especially in and around Calcutta, began gravitating to the CPML in growing numbers in the course of 1969-1970. (By November 1970, the CPML had a formal affiliation of about 18,000 members, a third of them in West Bengal.<sup>45</sup> One senior West Bengal police official informed the author, in June 1971, that three-fourths of the CPML followers in West Bengal by his estimate were under the age of 25.) At the close of 1969, a handful of Calcutta students, all members of the CPML, took the lead in organizing a peasant rebellion in the Debra-Gopivallabpur area, in the Midnapur district of the state of West Bengal. Terrorist squads struck at local *jotedars* and urged the peasantry to expropriate stored grains and seize the landlords' holdings and arms. In Mazumdar fashion, the shock of the guerrilla action was expected to raise the political consciousness of the peasantry and mobilize their mass support for further raids. Though a number of "autonomous" peasant committees began to function, scores of villages fell under rebel control at one point, and while "people's courts" meted out death penalties to landlords and moneylenders, coordination among the insurgents was lacking. In a few months, and in the face of effective sustained police countermeasures, the CPML raiders were compelled to roam over an ever broader region without much plan or evident long-term purpose.

43. "A Few Words About CPI(ML)," *Liberation War* (June 1971), pp. 57-63. Mazumdar, in contrast, has particularly stressed the importance of youth in revolutionary action, on the grounds that youth are educated, resilient, and prepared to face hardships. Hence, too, Mazumdar's demand that peasants and youth unite. Charu Mazumdar, *Vartmān Rajnaitik Avom Sangathanmak Samsyaon Ke Bāre Men Kuchh Saval Tatha Kuchh Anya Lekh (A Few Questions About Present Political and Economic Problems and Other Essays)* (Deshvratī, Calcutta, 1969?), p. 13.

44. Girilal Jain, "The True Face of Naxalites," *The Times of India*, April 22, 1970.

45. *The Statesman* (Delhi), November 4, 1970.

Even so, the rising in Debra-Gopivallabpur had been the first significant taste of revolutionary battle for the CPML's new youth contingents from Calcutta and other major urban areas.

In April 1970, these youthful Indian Maoists began their own "Cultural Revolution" (fashioned after the one in China) in Calcutta and its environs.<sup>46</sup> Raids were made on universities (where the staff was often frightfully man-handled in a continuing reign of terror) and on other schools, on hospitals, on public institutions and government offices, and even on railway stations. An orgy of destruction was visited upon such buildings. Not only were books and furnishings destroyed, but the raiders seemed especially intent on vandalizing portraits, photographs, and statues of Indian national and Bengali heroes and leaders, particularly Mohandas K. Gandhi, Chandra Vidyasagar, and Rabindranath Tagore, who were seen as exemplifying the old "feudal" culture. Assaults on and occasionally even the murder of Bengali college and university principals and vice-chancellors by Naxalite students were interspersed with bloody fights between rival student gangs. These fights were but one element in a widening pattern of violence, as various political parties in West Bengal, including the CPM and the Jana Sangh, began forming their own "volunteer forces."<sup>47</sup> CPML Chairman Mazumdar, in an address on August 15, 1970, specifically commended the Naxalite students' attacks on the universities, declaring that no new revolutionary culture or education could prevail unless the colonial and imperialist culture and school system had been obliterated. As for the vandalization of the statues of prominent Bengali heroes, Mazumdar declared that those who objected to this were in effect advocating the traditions of slavery.<sup>48</sup>

Between April and October 1970, according to official figures, Naxalites were reportedly responsible for 108 murders and 1373 acts of lawlessness. On December 9, 1970, India's Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, K. C. Pant, declared that during the first ten months of 1970 there had been 226 political murders in West Bengal as a consequence of "inter-party clashes and extremist activities," as compared with 95 in 1969.<sup>49</sup> Application of the Bengal "Suppression

46. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, March 27–April 3, 1971, p. 24514.

47. Sankar Ghosh, "Education in Shambles: Havoc Wrought in West Bengal," *The Times of India*, November 3, 1970; T. J. S. George, "Calcutta—City of Fear," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January 9, 1971, p. 17; and *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, January 31–February 7, 1970, p. 23800.

48. *The Times of India*, August 19, 1970; also cited in J. C. Johari, "The Political Ideas of a Bengal Naxalite Revolutionary: Charu Mazumdar," *Pacific Community* (Winter 1971), p. 50.

49. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, March 27–April 3, 1971, p. 24514.

of Terrorist Outrages" Act of 1932, and formal enactment, on November 22, 1970, of the West Bengal "Prevention of Violent Activities" bill, soon led to police reaction and an increase in charges made by various quarters of excesses in terrorist suppression. On December 1, 1970, a Calcutta police spokesman declared that disciplinary action had been taken against more than 300 police constables for "over-reaction" to terrorist violence in the city.<sup>50</sup> Labor unrest, fanned by Naxalite and CPM-influenced trade unions, continued to widen, however; and the United Front government in West Bengal, which had come to power in February 1969, and which was soon to be riven by contending CPI- and CPM-led blocs, seemed powerless to stop it.<sup>51</sup> President's rule was again promulgated in West Bengal on March 19, 1970, but the violence scarcely abated. Nearly a year later, for example, India's leading daily observed editorially that "the daily quota of political murders in West Bengal"<sup>52</sup> made it seem unlikely that elections for parliament and state assembly could be held. (In the event, elections in West Bengal were in fact held, President's rule was lifted, and a new government—this time with the CPM in opposition—took office on April 2, 1971; but by the end of June 1971, President's rule had to be reimposed on the state, after the West Bengal Minister had declared that the law and order situation in the state had gone "beyond control.")<sup>53</sup>

At the end of March 1970, Calcutta's Maoist urban guerrillas seemed to be reaching full stride. Crude, home-made potassium nitrate bombs were being manufactured extensively by the Naxalites in Calcutta for sale at about 2 rupees (about 14 cents) each; one foreign diplomat characterized the whole city as "a bomb factory."<sup>54</sup> With the mounting violence, Naxalite students appeared to be becoming well-armed, reportedly using weapons recently smuggled from China.<sup>55</sup> Naxalite ranks in Calcutta and other cities undoubtedly swelled because of the growing unemployment of the educated throughout India, particularly in West Bengal. By 1970 West Bengal led all Indian states in registered unemployment (585,000). Nation-

50. *The Times of India*, December 2, 1970.

51. This labor unrest was a continuation of trade union political agitation that had begun under the first United Front government in West Bengal, formed in 1967. See in this connection, especially, J. C. Johari, "Gherao: A Pernicious Technique of Agitational Politics in India," *Journal of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies* (New Delhi), April-June 1970, pp. 231-240.

52. *The Times of India*, February 17, 1971.

53. *The Statesman*, June 23, 1971.

54. Sydney H. Schanberg in *The New York Times*, March 27, 1970.

55. *Ibid.*

wide, the official number of graduate and post-graduate unemployed rose from 180,000 in 1968 to 280,000 in 1970.<sup>56</sup> In West Bengal's stagnating economy, where working conditions for the industrial mass (in Calcutta) "recall a situation which might have existed in the days of Zola or Kafka,"<sup>57</sup> the "B.A. degree is no more than a passport to a clerical post," and a "small ad for a journalist produced 300 replies, many from scientists and engineers who were totally unsuited but desperate to try anything."<sup>58</sup> However, the Naxalite appeal and the CPML organization seemed to provide a means of legitimatizing not only the violent outbursts of the frustrated educated unemployed, but also the behavior of common criminals who claimed to have become "politicalized."<sup>59</sup> Murders attributed to the Naxalites "showed a finesse unattainable without long practice," suggesting that the criminal element was using the political cover of the CPML for its own depredations.<sup>60</sup>

Perhaps because of this, CPML recruiting became more selective and organizational controls more severe in the course of 1969-1970. After careful screening, young Naxalite recruits would usually be assigned to a small unit in their local area, whose general leader would never be seen; orders would usually be handed down via one's immediate "cell" leader, who directed from ten to twenty persons.<sup>61</sup> Obsessive secrecy surrounded inner CPML party operations from the start; "open" party congresses or local meetings have, given the organization's objectives, never been held, and the hierarchy of party committee levels and chains of command are known only to a select few. Degrees of ideological training have varied greatly between local areas. One analysis made by the police of 300 Naxalites arrested in Calcutta between June and October 1970 disclosed that two-thirds had read no books by Marx or Mao Tse-tung, and had in fact no knowledge of the theories formulated by them.<sup>62</sup> In some Calcutta universities, however, Naxalite students (in the author's experience) appeared to be ideologically quite well informed.

There is no denying that much of the fighting in Calcutta between the Naxalite bands and their opponents, especially in the CPM, had

56. *The Indian Express*, June 16, 1971.

57. "Pre-Revolutionary Climate in Bengal," *Le Monde Weekly* (Paris), November 11, 1970.

58. Lionel Mason, "The Archers," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 24, 1970, p. 47.

59. Hugh Tinker in *Current* (May 1971), p. 56, citing an Indian reporter.

60. Sankar Ghosh, "The Naxalite Struggle in West Bengal," *South Asian Review* (January 1971), p. 103.

61. *The New York Times*, May 27, 1970.

62. *The Times of India*, October 16, 1970.

all the characteristics of ruthless Chicago-gangster-style warfare, with police reportedly colluding with CPM cadres in raids on the Naxalites.<sup>63</sup> Stories of small squads of plainclothes police going on their own raids and killing suspected Naxalites on the spot, presumably in retaliation for allegedly indiscriminate police killings by Naxalites, helped to accelerate police reorganization and the implementation by the end of 1970 of more careful police tactics in Calcutta.<sup>64</sup> A lowering in the level of violence seemed to be slow in coming, however, for Naxalite "annihilation" tactics began spreading to other states, such as Kerala, while attempts persisted to establish still more Yenans. As early as April 1970, an Assam state government spokesman declared in the state assembly that West Bengal Naxalites had entered two Assam districts and established rural bases in areas bordering Bhutan, Nagaland, and the Northeast Frontier Agency. Meanwhile, according to the same spokesman, local Assam youths had been sent to Jalpaiguri for "indoctrination in Mao's thoughts and training in guerrilla warfare."<sup>65</sup> Three months later the Tamil Nadu state government arrested some 2,600 persons after the CPI had announced plans to forcibly occupy unused government lands and surplus lands of landlords. While the CPI had initiated the principal land-reform agitation, it was the Naxalites who soon exploited it and who attempted unsuccessfully to transform a "land liberation" movement into a "national liberation" campaign. By the close of 1970, Bihar CPML leaders claimed to have established four "guerrilla zones" in that state, and reports were beginning to circulate that the Naxalites were planning for an eventual "long march" through the plains of Bengal during which "class enemies," like policemen and landlords living along or near the route of the march, would be "annihilated."<sup>66</sup>

These developments had no coordination, however. By the beginning of 1971, discontent with Mazumdar's leadership within the CPML was seriously debilitating the strength of the Naxalites. Yet somehow there was little let-up in random acts of terror. Particularly significant in the first half of 1971 were the extensive arms robberies, notably in West Bengal's Birbhum district, a major Naxalite stronghold. Rifles, revolvers, and more primitive, home-made "pipe-guns" were stolen, often at gunpoint, from police as well as from civilians;

63. See, e.g., the CPI publication *CPM Terror in West Bengal* (New Delhi, New Age Printing Press, 1970), p. 5.

64. *The Economist* (London), November 28, 1970, and *The New York Times*, November 26, 1970.

65. *The Times of India*, April 8, 1970.

66. *Ibid.*, November 7 and December 23, 1970.

nearly 300 such fire-arms were taken between early March and June 1971 in West Bengal.<sup>67</sup> Speculation that the arms robberies occurred in preparation for a new, broader, sustained wave of violence in 1972 increased with reports that large quantities of arms and ammunition, along with Maoist propaganda literature, had been seized in police raids on Naxalite strongholds in other areas in India not previously thought to be Naxalite centers, such as the Punjab.<sup>68</sup>

Despite continued manifestations of Naxalite terrorism, the CPML was in serious trouble. Between June and September 1970, some 2,000 Naxalites had been arrested in West Bengal alone, prominent party leaders among them. CPML chairman Mazumdar was suspected to have been involved in betraying rival leaders to the police.<sup>69</sup> Charu's "annihilation" tactics were increasingly seen by cadres as wasteful of manpower and weapons and as serving not the Party but Charu's own ambitions to make a name for himself. In September 1970, CPML Bihar leader Satya Narain Singh openly criticized Mazumdar's "dual" revolutionary tactic—i.e., simultaneously launching terrorist and liberation action in both the cities and the countryside at the same time. The disparity in development and in levels of political awareness between rural and urban areas inhibited any common front at this time, Singh asserted. Rather, action in the cities should be secondary to the formation of a secure guerrilla base in the countryside from which the cities could be attacked in sustained and systematic fashion.<sup>70</sup> Mazumdar summarily rejected Singh's thesis, thereby aggravating the resentment of his cadres, who were quick to point out that Mazumdar was directing the party on his own and that the Party politburo and central committee to all intents and purposes had ceased to function. The CPML leadership crisis apparently did not go unnoticed in Peking (although the Chinese media kept silent). In June 1971 there were Indian press reports that the Chinese were "trying hard" to bring the CPML factions together and that at least one member of the CPML Central Committee had already gone to Peking the previous year and had returned with "guidelines to help the unity effort."<sup>71</sup> By this time,

67. *Ibid.*, May 28, 1971, and *The Hindustan Times Weekly* (New Delhi), June 20, 1971.

68. *The Times of India*, September 27, 1971.

69. Nayan Chanda, "India: Naxalites on Hard Times," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, September 5, 1970, p. 12, and T. J. S. George, "The Squealer?" *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 5, 1971, p. 8.

70. On Singh, see George, "The Squealer?"

71. Dilip Mukerjee, "Naxalite Depradations," *The Times of India*, June 26, 1971. Regardless of these CPML leadership crises, however, the Party's publications continued to articulate the Mazumdar line of giving priority to

however, an important new dynamic had entered Naxalite strategy: the struggle for Bangla Desh.

### III

This is not the place to detail the long-simmering political and constitutional crisis between West Pakistan and East Pakistan (Bangla Desh), nor the complex pattern of often badly split political parties in East Pakistan involved (by March 1971) in the outbreak of open resistance against the Islamabad Government. An understanding of the East Pakistan left, however, is necessary.<sup>72</sup> In the left a central position has been held since the 1950s by the peasant-based National Awami Party (NAP). The wing of the National Awami Party led by Maulana Bashani, NAP's founder, until April 1971, when Peking openly supported Islamabad's attempt to crush the Bangla Desh movement, was avowedly pro-Chinese. The Maulana evidently believed that China's development might serve as a model for East Pakistan. However, because of the Maulana's free-wheeling leadership and the ideological unorthodoxy of his "Islamic Socialism," the Chinese were never particularly sympathetic to him. The developing official Sino-Pakistani cordiality in the 1960s further tended to inhibit Peking's support for a restive party that was looked on with deep suspicion in Islamabad. Meanwhile, however, the repressive authoritarianism of the Islamabad Government, which was dominated by the military and business élite, was increasingly felt in East Pakistan and greatly assisted in accelerating a radical, including Maoist, reaction there. This process was further aided by the splitting off of increasingly militant factions from the Communist movement in neighboring India, especially in West Bengal.

The original East Pakistan Communist Party had never been much more than a paper organization of furtive underground radicals, particularly after the advent of the Ayub Khan regime<sup>73</sup>; but in emula-

the establishment of "peasants' political power in the countryside." Cf. *Liberation*, January-March 1971, cited in *Indonesian Tribune* (Tirana), Vol. 5, No. 4 (1971), p. 33.

72. There is no comprehensive study of East Pakistani Communism. In the following sketch I have particularly drawn on Jyoti Sen Gupta, "Under the Maulana's Umbrella," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 31, 1971, pp. 44-45. I have also benefited from conversations with a former member of the East Pakistan Communist Party-Marxist from Dacca, and two former members of the West Bengal state assembly from Calcutta.

73. On the background of East Pakistani Communism before the Bangla Desh war, see Franda, "Communism and Regional Politics in East Pakistan," pp. 588-605.



tion of the Indian Communist development, an East Pakistan Communist Party-Marxist (EPCP-M) came into existence in 1964, picking up a following of several thousands, especially in student circles and among textile workers. Initially, the EPCP-M and many adherents of the Maulana's National Awami Party had much in common, including a vaguely Maoist-oriented political philosophy (although the latter lost some of its younger members to the former). Differences increased, however, toward the close of the 1960s, largely because the Maulana did not believe that his 60,000 NAP peasant followers were prepared for a West Bengal-style revolutionary militancy, toward which the EPCP-M appeared to be steadily drifting. These differences in the East Pakistan Left were further accentuated when, in 1969, one of the Maulana's once most trusted followers and a one-time secretary general of the NAP, Mohammed Toha, founded the East Pakistan Communist Party-Marxist-Leninist (EPCP-ML).<sup>74</sup> Toha's erstwhile popularity as a radical youth activist in his native Dacca stood him in good stead, particularly when, in the course of 1970 and after a visit to Peking, he began to insist that the immediate launching of armed insurgency and the formation of Naxalite-style terrorist squads in East Pakistan were indispensable.

Meanwhile, conflict within the NAP, and the steady migration leftward of younger radicals who were attracted by Toha, was further complicated as other left radical groups took up more or less independent positions. Among these were such organizations as the Purba Bangla (East Bengal) Communist Party (PBCP), led by Abdul Matin, a peasant organizer who maintained nominal affiliation with the NAP; the reputedly pro-Moscow wing of the NAP, led by Muzaffar Ahmed; various "independent" Maoist study clubs, like the one led by Shiraz Sikdar of Dacca; and so on. The PBCP now occupies nearly the same position as (and has absorbed much of the membership of) the original EPCP-M. The new Communist Party of Bangla Desh is pro-Moscow and has supported the Rahman regime. Over against this fragmented left, the East Pakistan political center and right presented a much greater degree of unity, largely though not exclusively in the form of the middle-class-oriented Awami league led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

As the East Pakistani guerrilla resistance against West Pakistani forces gained momentum in the middle of 1971, the two wings of the NAP, the PBCP, and other radical groups moved closer together

74. The author has been unable to find documents verifying claims that the EPCP-ML had already come into existence at the close of 1967, and that Toha joined rather than founded the organization.

in a multi-organization "National Liberation Front"; but Toha's EPCP-ML remained outside. Ostensibly, the reason was ideological, Toha's followers asserting that the real struggle in East Pakistan was not so much between Islamabad and the Bangla Desh freedom movement as "between feudalism and the oppressed classes" in East Pakistan itself.<sup>75</sup> Meanwhile, Naxalite posters were appearing in Calcutta which attacked the East Pakistani insurrection as an "imperialist conspiracy against China." At the same time, according to the West Bengal state government, some CPML cadres had crossed into East Pakistan to aid the EPCP-ML guerrillas, and the CPML Bengali journal *Deshabrati* was publishing letters by Toha addressed to a West Bengal "comrade."<sup>76</sup>

In subsequent months, as China's support of Islamabad stung Indians to fury, the split in the ranks of the West Bengal Naxalites over China's policy seemed to widen, most Naxalites eventually siding with Bangla Desh. According to West Bengal police officials with whom the author talked in July 1971, Toha's sympathizers, sometimes operating as quasi-independent guerrilla units against West Pakistan troops, and supplied by Naxalites from West Bengal, particularly in the early stages of the fighting, soon became an important part of the Bangla Desh "liberation" struggle. (Some EPCP-ML followers, however, led by Toha's cohort Abdul Huq, remained aloof, siding with what appeared to be Peking's official position of support for Yahya Khan in the Bangla Desh crisis.)

Shortly, the Maoist involvement in the Bangla Desh struggle was to be noted in the press. In early April 1971, for example, Professor Nayan Chanda of Calcutta University, who had just returned from a visit to Jessore in rebel territory of East Pakistan, declared that the West Pakistani Army's attack on East Pakistan had come as a

75. "Naxalites Reverse Stand on Bangla Desh," *The Militant* (New York), May 21, 1971, p. 19.

76. *Ibid.*, and *The Times* (London), April 24, 1971; A. K. Roy, "National and Communist Forces at the Cross Roads in Bangla Desh," *United Asia* (Bombay), May-June 1971, pp. 167-168. The division in the ranks of the Naxalites, intensified by disputes over policy to be adopted toward Bangla Desh, reached a climax on November 7, 1971, when Charu Mazumdar was expelled from the CPML and was succeeded as general secretary by Satya Narain Singh. More than controversy over Mazumdar's guerrilla-warfare and annihilation strategy lay at the heart of his expulsion; also involved was his view that the CPML should endorse, or at least not oppose, the Bangla Desh nationalist movement. The latter view was especially attacked by the Naxalite leaders of the Birbhum district in West Bengal. One consequence of the division in Naxalite ranks was a temporary remission of attacks on "class enemies," as CPML members began assassinating each other (*Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, January 1-8, 1972, p. 25018).

"windfall" to East Pakistan's Maoists, who now felt justified in their strategic concept of the necessity of guerrilla war. Chanda claimed to have found "Maoist students controlling almost all the schools in Jessore"; even in remote villages he encountered posters with Chairman Mao's thoughts.<sup>77</sup> At about the same time, a French journalist in East Pakistan observed Toha's radicalizing efforts in the context of the guerrilla war and his concomitant attempts to transform Bangla Desh into a Communist state.<sup>78</sup> Soon other commentators began applying the generic term "Naxalites" to Bangla Desh's Maoists as well, noting at the same time the growing concern in the ranks of the Bangla Desh liberation forces (Mukti Bahini) over Maoist efforts to seize control of the whole resistance:

But the biggest anxiety the Mukti Bahini fighters have is caused by the attempts of local Maoist extremists to assume the leadership of the liberation movement. Such a struggle within the struggle had been forecast by many observers even in the early stages of the crisis. Now it appears that the "Naxalites" have become influential in some districts; in Noakhali near Chittagong they are said to be in command.

Eyewitnesses say the fight between the Naxalites and the Awami League elements in the Mukti Bahini is even more fierce than between the Bengalis and the West Pakistanis. The Naxalites denounce the Awami League in ideological terms. While the Awami League is bent simply on driving the West Pakistanis out of Bangla Desh, the Naxalites seem to be looking further ahead to an ideological dawn over East Bengal.<sup>79</sup>

The continuing political confusion in Bangla Desh today makes an adequate assessment of the "struggle within the struggle" waged by Toha and his associates, and of the split between Toha and Huq during the Mukti Bahini's guerrilla war, as yet impossible. On a number of occasions there were clashes between Toha's Maoist guerrillas and Mukti Bahini forces; yet there have been reports that the two groups cooperated against West Pakistan forces. However, it is necessary to stress the obviously persisting pattern of radical interaction between West Bengal and the now-liberated Bangla Desh. One dimension of this interaction, that of the Naxalites, has already been noted. But the Naxalites' enemies, the CPM in West Bengal, also must be considered briefly.

77. *The Times of India*, April 12, 1971.

78. *Ibid.*, April 28, 1971.

79. Werner Adam, "On the Eastern Front," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 20, 1971, p. 20.

In June 1971, the West Bengal CPM was reported to be extending assistance to the Bangla Desh liberation movement and to be cultivating an identity of interests between West Bengal and East Pakistan, on the grounds that the former is a kind of "colony" of India, just as the latter is a "colony" of West Pakistan.<sup>80</sup> The West Bengal CPM was reportedly also active along the East Pakistan border, searching for new supplies of arms as the Bangla Desh guerrilla war developed. The CPM began to put new emphasis on its demand for the "right of self-determination for nationalities in India," a demand interpreted to mean the "right of states like West Bengal to secede." As one observer has noted, the CPM's "charter of grievances" against New Delhi bears a "striking similarity to the Awami League's against Islamabad."<sup>81</sup> Formally, the CPM is of course not a Maoist organization (indeed, Peking has branded it revisionist), although from time to time, and despite occasional CPM condemnation of the Chinese Communists, its policy positions and the ideological preferences of its members have veered in a markedly Maoist direction.<sup>82</sup> What is to be noted, however, is that the CPM, once West Bengal's strongest political party, has in effect moved significantly closer toward the Chinese Communist position of support for ethnic secessionists in South and Southeast Asia (e.g., in Nagaland and Upper Burma), and by implication has given further comfort to those welcoming a united (and preferably a "red") Bengal state comprising West Bengal and Bangla Desh. There are those in Bangla Desh who would look upon such a consummation with sympathy, and the whole struggle for Bengali freedom against Islamabad has had a widespread, politically radicalizing effect that is not always sufficiently appreciated outside Southern Asia. Even within the Awami League such slogans as "Land to the tillers," and demands that workers be "the owners of the means of production" (as Sheikh Mujibur Rahman himself put it in a May Day message in 1970), have not been uncommon.<sup>83</sup>

80. *The Times of India*, June 18, 1971. The notion of West Bengal's primarily "colonial" status in the Indian Union is not without vogue in non-Communist circles as well. See, e.g., Sankar Ghosh, *The Disinherited State: A Study of West Bengal 1967-70* (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1971).

81. "Dark Side of Freedom," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 20, 1971, p. 21. See also the CPM party manifesto in the March 1971 parliamentary elections with its sharp attack on the powers of the central Indian Government and its demand for a "revision of the allocation of powers and functions between the States and Centre with a view to making the States' powers real." "CPM Manifesto," *Seminar* (New Delhi), February 1971, p. 41.

82. On the theories of the CPM see also A. K. Roy, "Ideological Bases of the CPI(ML)," *United Asia* (January-February 1971), pp. 49-57.

83. S. B. Kolpe in *Blitz* (New Delhi), June 12, 1971.

The "People's Republic of Bangla Desh's" official commitment to socialism provides a further framework for West Bengal CPM and Naxalite interaction with the Maoist and other political currents in the new state.

Peking's official position in all this has been ambiguous, probably deliberately so. On April 12, 1971, Islamabad disclosed a message from Chinese premier Chou En-lai to Pakistani President Yahya Khan, supporting the latter in upholding the "unity" of Pakistan and pledging China's aid to the Pakistanis in the event of an Indian attack. In October and November 1971, there were reports that some 200 Chinese specialists in guerrilla warfare had been sent to East Pakistan to assist in counterguerrilla warfare training; earlier, secessionist Mizos and Nagas seeking independence from India were, according to Indian sources, also said to be receiving training from Chinese instructors in East Pakistan.<sup>84</sup> In early December 1971, in an analysis of "Soviet revisionists" and their interference in Pakistan's internal affairs, Peking charged that Bangla Desh was "simply a plot" on the part of India to subvert Pakistan.<sup>85</sup>

Despite all these developments, all was not well between Peking and Islamabad. As in mid-1971, the Mukti Bahini's struggle, thanks to ever increasing and more overt Indian aid, became more successful, as worldwide sympathy was aroused for the plight of the Bangla Desh refugees. As Peking's quandary of finding itself on the wrong side of a typical "national liberation" war became deeper, Sino-Pakistani relations began to deteriorate. The abrupt mission of the then Pakistan Foreign Minister Z. A. Bhutto to Peking early in November 1971 reflected both Chinese concern and Pakistani disappointment over failure to obtain an agreement similar to the recent Soviet-Indian treaty of friendship.<sup>86</sup> At a banquet in Peking on November 7, given in honor of the Pakistani visitors, acting Chinese Foreign Minister Chi Peng-fei pointedly urged Pakistan to seek a "reasonable settlement" of the Bangla Desh problem and asked that India and Pakistan hold talks to reduce tensions.<sup>87</sup> Chi's address, although markedly conciliatory in tone, was notable for the absence

84. *The Times of India*, October 30, 1971; and *India News* (Indian Embassy, Washington, D.C.), January 16, 1970.

85. *Peking Review*, December 10, 1971, pp. 13-15. On Chinese policies toward Bangla Desh, see also Mira Sinha, "Bangla Desh from the Chinese Perspective," *China Report* (Delhi), November-December 1971, pp. 34-37.

86. *The Times of India*, November 6, 1971. See also the views of Bangla Desh officials on changes in Peking's attitude in *Ananda Bazar Patrika* (Calcutta), October 5, 1971. For Peking's covert support of the Bangla Desh rebels, see again George, "Peking's Pre-War Message to Pakistan," p. 8.

87. *The Times of India*, November 8, 1971.

of any strong or categorical assurances of Peking's support for the Pakistanis.

The extent to which the policies of Bangla Desh Maoists, supported by their ideological *confrères* in West Bengal, were having an effect on an apparent Chinese change of heart can, at this juncture, only be surmised. But to some Indian observers, at any rate, it was evident as early as May 1971 that Peking was being drawn in two opposite directions in the Bangla Desh affair. As one commentator, after an analysis of Toha's role and of his trips to Peking, put it: "Hardcore Naxalite leaders in India therefore know that China, while obviously playing a double game by backing the Yahya regime in public and supporting the extremists in Bangla Desh in private, has its eye on the main chance of pro-Peking groups capturing power in Bangla Desh."<sup>88</sup> Such leading Indian elder statesmen as Jayaprakash Narayan appeared to perceive Peking's long-term ambitions in the same way, declaring that China would "sooner or later" back the Bangla Desh independence movement, having its eye on the Bangla Desh port of Chittagong.<sup>89</sup> In contrast, and hardly surprisingly, the Pakistani press, subjected to relatively greater official and covert control than India's, seemed to observe no fundamental change in Peking's position in the Bangla Desh crisis (whatever qualms Pakistani leaders might be having privately), calling attention instead to Chinese generosity in offering a new \$20 million interest-free loan to Pakistan (announced on May 15, 1971) in contrast to the "dithering" of other aid-dispensing nations that had been approached by Islamabad for assistance.<sup>90</sup>

While analysis of Peking's true role in the Bangla Desh crisis and beyond must remain speculative for some time to come, it is necessary to counter the argument that it would be out of place for Peking to assist in subverting a government with which it has officially been maintaining cordial relations, especially in the context of the Sino-Soviet dispute. Pakistan's problem in Gilgit illustrates the difficulty of maintaining such an argument. Gilgit, in Northern Pakistan-held Kashmir, in the course of 1970 and after completion of the Gilgit-Sinkiang road, became a focal point of an increasing number of Chinese visitors, who arrived with the apparent concurrence of the Pakistan Government. Neighboring towns like Hunza and Punial similarly appeared to be attracting the Chinese, and a special vacation lodge was constructed for the Chinese at Hunza. Mere tourism,

88. N. C. Menon, in *The Hindustan Times*, May 30, 1971.

89. *The Hindustan Times*, June 24, 1971.

90. *The Pakistan Times*, May 17, 1971.

however, went hand in hand with political proselytizing. Reportedly, not only were the Chinese flooding Gilgit with Communist literature and attempting to make "political contacts with students, workers, and peasants," but also a number of Chinese military had taken to training the Gilgit Scouts in guerrilla warfare.<sup>91</sup> An explosion was not long in coming. In April 1971, officers of the Gilgit Scouts' forces spearheaded a revolt in Gilgit, Hunza, Nigar, and Puniyal against the Pakistani authorities. Martial law was declared by the Pakistani authorities, who proceeded to crush the rebellion, with hundreds arrested and killed. It is noteworthy that prominent Pakistani and Kashmiri newspapers openly charged China with being behind the insurgency, and accused it of wanting to establish a foothold in the strategic Gilgit area.<sup>92</sup>

There has been speculation as to whether the virtually simultaneous outbreak of rebellion in East Pakistan and in Pakistan-held Kashmir was altogether coincidental. Also, Pakistan's problem of Chinese subversion in Gilgit, it might be remarked *inter alia*, is not out of keeping with the experience of other Southeast Asian nations like Indonesia or Burma. These nations at a time of officially cordial relations with Peking were nevertheless targets of similar Chinese burrowing.<sup>93</sup>

#### IV

Especially since the imposition once again of President's rule in West Bengal at the end of June 1971, and the transformation of much of West Bengal into a military camp and staging area for India's operations against East Pakistan, security measures against the Naxalites have improved in their repressive efficiency. The continuing arrests of prominent CPML leaders, and the rupture of much of the urban terrorist network by police, have done as much to draw the Naxalites' fangs as the interminable leadership and policy quarrels, particularly between the Bengali Maoists and their counterparts in Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. The seeming ambiguities of Chinese policy in the Bangla Desh affair have left scars. It will take more than mere outbursts of urban or rural banditry—the level to which the Naxalite movement and its allies often give the

91. *The New York Times*, November 1, 1970.

92. *The Indian Express* and *The Hindustan Times*, June 14, 1971, citing Pakistan and Kashmiri papers like *Chatian*, *Kohistan*, and *Azad Kashmir*.

93. See, e.g., J. M. van der Kroef, "Peking, Hanoi and Guerrilla Insurgency in Southeast Asia," *Southeast Asian Perspectives* (September 1971), pp. 1-67.

impression of having sunk at the moment—to make the Maoist revolution in India succeed.

On the other hand, one cannot fail to note that in the steady immiseration of the Bengali masses Naxalite radicalism continues to exercise a powerful appeal, especially among the unemployed young. "In a sense the Naxalites are the only practical people," one British sociologist has noted. "They are not preoccupied with political rituals and do not bother to participate in shadow-boxing matches about fine phrases. . . . They know what it means to live in a rural or urban slum, in a bustee [shanty] next to open sewers where you share, if you are fortunate, a water tap and a latrine with scores of neighbors. . . ." <sup>94</sup> Moreover, the ongoing radicalism of Bengal politics, now accelerated by developments in neighboring Bangla Desh, has, in the context of the CPM-CPML clash, the tendency to draw moderates steadily left of center; so that even the "conservative" CPI can begin urging land-reform programs that rival those of their opponents still further to the left. <sup>95</sup> Above all, there is the problem of Bangla Desh and its own Maoists. A Bangla Desh heavily dependent on Indian or Soviet aid would provide the Toha-Huq forces with a new political dialectic in which Peking could join, this time with much less reservation. Already by April 1972 this dialectic was becoming visible. For, on the one hand, the Communist Party of Bangla Desh (constituted from divers pro-Moscow Marxist factions, some newly revived) was aligning itself against the Maoist faction, still formally calling itself the East Pakistan Communist Party-Marxist-Leninist; meanwhile, Bangla Desh Premier Rahman began denouncing "extremists" (e.g., Maoist guerrillas) who were refusing to surrender their arms. On the other hand, the ever more cordial official relations between Moscow and Dacca following Rahman's visit to the U.S.S.R. in early March 1972 permitted China formally to restructure its position, preserving its official support for Rawalpindi while taking an increasingly critical attitude toward the Rahman Government of Bangla Desh and its "persecution" of EPCP-ML-armed partisans. The Bangla Desh

94. Glass, "Bengal Notes," p. 36.

95. Cf. the CPI resolution of May 1970, "On the Struggle for Land to Agricultural Workers, Landless Peasants and Tribal People," *Information Bulletin* (Prague), Nos. 13-14 (1970), pp. 33-38. It is also evident that the CPM's program and tactics have adopted the spirit of the CPML, despite its own denials. Though such writers as Gupta ("Indian Communism and the Peasantry," p. 2) stress the distinctiveness of the CPM approach, in fact, as Gupta notes, the priority which the CPM now gives to organization of the rural rather than the industrial proletariat seems much more in accord with Maoist and CPML tactics.



government's formal commitment to "socialism" in economic development heightens the appeal of the CPBD's more moderate "national democratic" strategy at a time, it might be emphasized, when across the border in West Bengal Marxist radicalism, whether of the CPM or the CPML variety, also is in eclipse in the wake of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's sweeping election victory.

The logic of these developments dictates that Peking perceive both India *and* Bangla Desh as being in the grip of "Soviet revisionism's neo-colonialism."<sup>96</sup> Such a perception permits the Chinese Communists to keep faith with their (West) Pakistani friends, and to continue assistance to the Bhutto Government in Rawalpindi. Bhutto's visit to Peking (January 31–February 2, 1972) saw Chou En-lai link India formally with the Soviets' "social-imperialism" and further condemnation of India's "occupation" of Pakistani territories. With Bangla Desh politically and militarily secure, China is now in the comfortable position of being able simultaneously to please Rawalpindi in sustaining the latter's pro-forma claim to its lost irredenta of East Pakistan (Bangla Desh) and to encourage its still divided Maoist followers in their struggle against the "revisionists." Soviet "revisionist social-imperialism and India's expansionism are puffed up with conceit," Peking's *Renmin Ribao* editorialized on January 31, 1972, "believing that they have scored a success in South Asia. But they had better not celebrate too early."<sup>97</sup>

Conversely, while the Soviets have scored a major diplomatic victory both in the creation of Bangla Desh and in forging firm ties with it so early, they have also appreciably widened their line of confrontation with China in Asia. Moscow radio and Soviet media have accused "the Maoist clique" in Bangla Desh of sabotaging Bangla Desh's "liberation" struggle, and have charged Peking with having "betrayed all the people of Bengal."<sup>98</sup> Inexorably, the U.S.S.R. has come to be linked not only with the Rahman regime in Dacca but with the Gandhi regime in New Delhi, thus becoming

96. *Peking Review*, January 21, 1972, p. 18.

97. On January 24, 1972, members of the Chinese diplomatic mission in Dacca departed for Peking. Bangla Desh spokesmen officially expressed regret over this leave-taking, but the Chinese have given no indication that they envisage a relationship with Bangla Desh other than the frozen and suspended (though not officially broken) variety that has prevailed between Djakarta and Peking since October 1967. On August 25, 1972, China voted against the admission of Bangla Desh to the United Nations. The Chinese veto was cast after the Chinese representative in the U.N. Security Council excoriated both Indian and "Soviet socialist imperialist" policies toward Bangla Desh. Cf. *Peking Review*, August 18, 1972, pp. 12–13.

98. *USSR and Third World*, II, 2 (1972), p. 79.

the target not just of the Naxalites and the EPCP-ML but of the CPM as well. The net effect may be to make the U.S.S.R. appear increasingly conservative in the Indian political spectrum as the radicalization process goes on. In Bangla Desh the Soviet-endorsed segment of the left—i.e., the CPBD and its fronts—is generally accepted in the current political establishment dominated largely by the Awami League; moreover, Moscow-Dacca diplomatic and aid relationships make it quite legitimate. If Peking's confrontation of the Rahman Government and support for the Maoist organisations becomes more pronounced, the result may be to force Rahman's Awami League into an as yet unwanted open alliance with CPBD and into increased reliance on Moscow, in the manner of the Indira Gandhi Government at present.

Whether such a development can really be in the Chinese long-term interest remains to be seen. One decisive factor, it is submitted, will be the momentum behind the unification of the two parts of Bengal. The recent electoral repudiation of the CPM in West Bengal and the relative weakness of the EPCP-ML at the moment do not suggest that unification attempts are around the corner. But certainly in West Bengal only the very foolhardy would care to predict that the present low ebb of the CPM or the CPML is likely to remain for long (these two parties being the principal organizational dynamics there for unification). As for Bangla Desh, the ideal of one Bengali nation not only is propagated by the left but goes to the deepest roots of the region's nationalism. The rationale of their present position makes Peking a supporter of the detachment of West Bengal (and its unification with Bangla Desh into a Bengali state), while causing Moscow to oppose it, at least for the time being. The critical question will be the extent to which Muslim nationalism in Bangla Desh can make common cause with non-Communist Bengali nationalism in West Bengal, and the degree to which both will be prepared to support a possible CPM-Naxalite-EPCP informal alliance toward an independent, united Bengal state. For the moment such developments seem highly speculative—as speculative as was the movement toward an independent Bangla Desh fifteen or even ten years ago.

Neither India nor the U.S.S.R. can permit Bengali nationalism to develop—but Peking can. The specter of a united "Red Bengal" may well be the indicated Chinese countermove to the Soviet-Indian rapprochement in the South Asian international political arena. No doubt the dominant Awami League Government in Dacca will resist as long as possible being caught in the interlocking Sino-Soviet and Delhi-Calcutta power-plays. But Bengali nationalism and the issue

of a separate Bengali state are and remain the hidden factor in the continuing confrontation between the Naxalites and their overt enemies the CPM, on the one hand, and the Gandhi Government and its CPI allies, on the other, just as it is a principal background dynamic within Bangla Desh as the Rahman Government seeks to checkmate its Maoist opponents.

The Bengal unification movement has at present no distinctive organizational matrix. It must operate through politically seemingly innocuous cultural channels centered around the universities and coteries of intellectuals, or else through the Maoist underground and the CPM ancillaries. Combining West Bengal's resentment over its colonial status *vis-à-vis* New Delhi with Bengali nationalism and with expected popular discontent with the Awami League's "bourgeois" government in Bangla Desh, and then formulating the solution to the frustration and discontent in terms of the united Bengal state ideal—that is to be the difficult but likely tactic for the CPM, the Naxalites, and the EPCP-ML. Mutual rivalries between these groups and their more ephemeral fronts may well make such an objective as unlikely of implementation as the certainty that New Delhi, backed by its Soviet friends, would never permit (1) a peaceful West Bengali secession, and (2) its merger in a Peking-influenced, united Bengal state. For the CPBD, therefore, as much as for its Moscow-oriented CPI counterpart, Bengali radical nationalism is likely to become an important—perhaps the principal—tactical "enemy" in the near future. But this enemy, it need hardly be stressed again, is but an element in the Sino-Soviet power struggle now likely to intensify in the years ahead in the South and Southeast Asian area.

In the past, New Delhi has been reasonably effective in dealing with linguist and other forms of regional nationalism within India's borders. But West Bengal as a state within India already exists, and obviously that is as far as present constitutional provisions will permit Bengali nationalism to go. The problem of Bangla Desh's future dependence on India will interact with the question of Bengali nationalism generally, as well as with Maoist tactics in Bangla Desh. In February 1972, Toha declared that Bangla Desh "has become a protectorate of India."<sup>99</sup> The appeal of such an accusation must be

99. Cited in Dilip Mukerjee, "Uncertainties in Bangladesh," *The Times of India*, April 29, 1972. Early in 1972, Toha released a statement, subsequently circulated by the League of Bengali Marxist-Leninists in Great Britain, denouncing "the penetration of Indian capital" in Bangla Desh, charging that some Mukti Bahini had "killed hundreds of genuine Freedom fighters," and declaring that the "task before our Party and the People is to transform our

appreciated in terms of the earlier-noted CPM charge that West Bengal is a "colony" of India. The radical fusion of the two parts of the Bengal nation under the aegis of an unappeased Bengali nationalism, of which India would be the prime target, is not an improbable prospect.

Despite Mazumdar's death in a Calcutta prison hospital ward on July 28, 1972, Naxalite radicalism, shattered and divided as it currently may seem, is far from being a spent force. Optimistic assertions by Indian officials over the decline in Naxalite terrorism are belied by continuing press reports of Naxalite murders of rural officials, clashes with police, and violent altercations between Naxalite gangs and resistance groups, like the one organized by the ruling Congress Party and other groups.<sup>100</sup> By the middle of October 1971, more than 16,000 such resistance groups were said to be active in West Bengal, with a membership of over 300,000.<sup>101</sup> It would not seem that Bengal's tradition of political violence, in which the Naxalites were permitted to develop in the first place, will soon be broken.<sup>102</sup>

country into a real People's Democratic Republic," free from foreign domination and dedicated to achieving socialism "as charted" by "Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tse-tung." *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 2 No. 2 (1972), pp. 221-224.

100. *The Times of India*, May 4 and 6, 1972; *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, March 25-April 1, 1972, p. 25170.

101. *Ibid.* (*Keesing's*).

102. By mid-1972, armed student groups in Bangla Desh, which had originally assisted in the struggle for their country's independence, were continuing guerrilla activities, including the looting of banks at gun point, despite government appeals that they devote their efforts to "constructive works." *The Asian* (Hong Kong), July 9-15, 1972, p. 9. With escalating opposition against Sheik Mujibur Rahman across a broad spectrum of Bangla Desh political opinion, Maulana Bashani is now calling for the creation of a new "Greater Bengal," including the Bengali-speaking areas of India "which must secede to join Bangla Desh" (A. L. Khatib in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, September 16, 1972, p. 20). Although thousands of Naxalites are now in prison (4,000 in West Bengal in February, 1972, over 2,000 in Bihar—*Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, August 12-19, 1972, p. 25417), West Bengal top police officials stress that "the Naxalite idea has not been destroyed" and that the social and economic conditions that promoted the development of the insurgency persist (cf. Fred Bridgland's Reuter despatch, New Delhi, August 28, 1972).