

# The Darjeeling Peasant Armed Struggle

A PEASANT armed struggle base has been set up in the countryside in Darjeeling District, West Bengal State, under the leadership of the revolutionaries in the Indian Communist Party. A glowing spark of the fire of revolutionary armed struggle launched by the Indian people under the guidance of Mao Tse-tung's thought, it represents the general orientation of the Indian revolution at the present stage.

## A Red District

Indian papers have disclosed that this armed struggle area is located around the three villages of Naxalbari, Kharibari and Phansidewa in Siliguri Sub-Division of Darjeeling District in the mountainous area of north West Bengal. This Red district, first established in early March, covers an area of some 270 square miles and has a population of 80,000. For nearly four months since its formation, it has withstood encirclement by the White regime. Nearly 20 hamlets where the revolutionary power is comparatively strong have raised the red flag.

In 1965, the revolutionaries in the Indian Communist Party in Siliguri put forward the slogan of arming the peasants and setting up rural bases in preparation for armed struggle. For two years they devoted themselves to mobilizing and organizing the peasants. After the fourth general elections in early March this year, a non-Congress "united front" government in which members of the Indian Communist Party participated was formed in West Bengal (see *Peking Review*, No. 24, p. 33). It served as a tool of the Indian reactionaries to deceive the people and benumb their revolutionary militancy. Then the members of the Indian Communist Party in the state who want to make revolution unfolded a movement of "deserting the united front government" and "joining the Darjeeling struggle." They went to Naxalbari and other villages to lead and organize the peasants to carry out the agrarian armed struggle.

Led by the revolutionaries in the Indian Communist Party, poor peasants and farm labourers began to arm themselves by the thousands. They estab-

lished their own political power and organized peasants' societies. Trampling in the dust the reactionary government's law which protects the landlords' property, they occupied by force the estates of the landlords, plantation owners and reactionary government. They plowed the land, drove away the plantation owners, used force to harvest the paddy in the fields of the landlords, seized grain, guns and ammunition from the homes of the big landlords, collected money and grain from the landlords, and forbade hoarding and speculation. They established people's courts to try and punish the local bullies and bad gentry. Ignoring the reactionary government's order prohibiting assembly of more than four persons and forbidding the carrying of weapons, they held armed demonstrations and moved about in armed groups.

In the hamlets the organized peasants, armed with bows and arrows, guarded their homes day and night against police "sweeps." They set up alarm systems to warn the villagers of the police's approach.

## Defeating Counter-Revolutionary Dual Tactics

Soon after the armed struggle area was established, the Indian reactionaries resorted to counter-revolutionary double-dealing—political deception and armed suppression—to clamp down on the people's revolutionary armed struggle.

In mid-May, the West Bengal state government sent a land and revenue minister to Naxalbari to induce the local people to lay down their arms and seek a "political settlement." But the revolutionaries in the Indian Communist Party who led the struggle refused to meet him.

When these "soft" tactics failed, the state government resorted to a hard line. It dispatched large numbers of armed police to Naxalbari. However, the rebelling peasants successfully ambushed the reactionary troops and police sent out on "mopping-up" operations.

On May 24, when a police team went to Naxalbari to "round up" and arrest the peasants taking part in the struggle to seize land, they were ambushed and encircled by 400 armed peasants. Four police officers

were wounded. On May 25, a police party led by the Siliguri sub-divisional officer and the deputy superintendent of police went to a place near Naxalbari to fire on the peasants harvesting the paddy in the fields of the landlords. They were attacked by armed peasants, one of the party being killed and three others wounded. On May 26, 500 peasants encircled a landlord who had guns in his house. Altogether, in various conflicts in late May, one police officer and over ten policemen were killed and the rebellious peasants eliminated the police stations in the three villages.

When this suppression failed, West Bengal Chief Minister Mukherjee (member of the Bengali Congress Party which split from the Congress Party) went personally to Siliguri on May 27 and called an emergency meeting of district officials of north West Bengal to plot further moves.

In mid-June, Mukherjee sent two companies of police from Calcutta to reinforce Siliguri and prepare for suppression of the people's armed struggle. Troops and police also blockaded the frontiers in Darjeeling bordering Pakistan and Nepal. Meanwhile, six state ministers were sent on June 12 to Naxalbari for political manoeuvring. They tried to fool the local people with promises that the government authorities would "pay immediate attention" to their complaints. At the same time they issued an ultimatum, threatening that the government would resort to armed force after June 20. The *Hindustan Standard* admitted on June 20 that "for three days the six ministers worked very hard to bring what they called the 'misguided' leaders to the conference table, but their . . . efforts could make no headway against the increased tempo of lawlessness in the affected areas."

The Darjeeling peasant armed struggle has greatly encouraged the revolutionary people of West Bengal and has had wide repercussions throughout India. On June 27, the revolutionary masses staged a demonstration in front of the West Bengal state assembly house in Calcutta to support the Darjeeling armed struggle led by the revolutionaries in the Indian Communist Party. They shouted: "Red Salaam (salute) to Naxalbari!" and "Down with the revisionists!" They also raised slogans in praise of Mao Tse-tung's thought. As revealed in the Indian press and Western news agencies, peasant armed action is "on the rise" in many areas of West Bengal and "more and more places are developing in the direction of becoming 'Naxalbari districts.'"

### Panic-Stricken Reactionary Government

This situation has greatly alarmed India's central government. Congress Party President Kamaraj rushed back to New Delhi from the state of Madras, and the first meeting he held with Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on June 8 was to discuss the West Bengal situation. On June 13 Interior Minister Chavan's report to parliament on Naxalbari touched off a heated row within the Congress Party. Some members advocated a presidential take-over of the "non-Congress" govern-

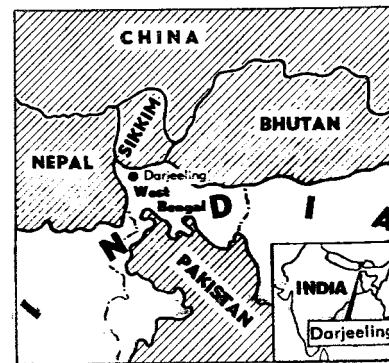
## The Darjeeling District

Darjeeling in West Bengal State is a mountainous district of great strategic significance in northern India. Situated not far from Bihar and Assam States, its 1,100 square miles border on several neighbouring countries. Naxalbari is only 4 miles from Nepal, 30 miles from Sikkim, 14 miles from East Pakistan and 60 miles from China's Tibet. Siliguri is a trading and communication centre through which runs the only railway linking Assam with other parts of India.

Darjeeling District is West Bengal's major tea-producing area. It also produces rice and other grain. Large tracts of its land have been seized by plantation owners and landlords who brutally exploit and oppress the labouring people. Most of the population are Santhals and other tribesmen, the majority being landless farm labourers who are the most heavily exploited and oppressed.

Of the 60,000 acres of farmland in Siliguri, 19,000 acres belong to the Indian Government and the rest to the big landlords. Under the protection of the

Congress government, the big landlords and plantation owners often forcibly occupy land reclaimed by the poverty-stricken peasants and plunder them of their crops.



ment in West Bengal. However, the Congress high command vetoed this proposal, feeling that they need this "non-Congress" government to put out the revolutionary fire in Darjeeling.

What is worth special attention is the fact that the reactionary central government is not frightened of the West Bengal government in which a number of Indian Communists are in power, but allows this "non-Congress" government to continue as part of the apparatus for its own reactionary rule. However, when the peasants' armed struggle led by revolutionaries within the Indian Communist Party started in three villages in the state, this made the reactionary central government quake with fear. This clearly proves that "peaceful transition," the "parliamentary road" and other revisionist wares cater to the needs of reactionary rulers. Only through revolutionary armed struggle can the reactionaries be dealt heavy blows; only in this way can the foundations of reactionary rule be shaken.

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Thirty-seven years ago, summing up the experience of the Red political power of the Chinese worker-peasant armed independent regime, Chairman Mao

wrote in his article *A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire*: “. . . **in semi-colonial China the establishment and expansion of the Red Army, the guerrilla forces and the Red areas is the highest form of peasant struggle under the leadership of the proletariat, the inevitable outcome of the growth of the semi-colonial peasant struggle, and undoubtedly the most important factor in accelerating the revolutionary high tide throughout the country.**”

Like pre-liberation China, India is a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country. To liberate themselves, the Indian people must proceed along the path pointed out by Comrade Mao Tse-tung. The establishment of the Darjeeling peasant armed struggle area under the leadership of the revolutionaries in the Indian Communist Party shows that the Indian people have begun to advance along this victorious road.