

# Naxalite Politics In Punjab

AN OBSERVER

**E**VEN before the event of Naxalbari took place, antagonisms were smouldering within the Punjab CP(M) unit between the militant cadres and the leadership on many crucial questions. Owing to a rickety organisational structure the unit had only a superficial influence on the people and had no real powerful mass base among the basic classes.

Immediately after Naxalbari a process of rift and division started in the Punjab CP(M) unit, resulting in the expulsion of Maoist-oriented cadres, who later on formed a co-ordination committee at the State level. But soon serious differences arose between them on many important questions, the line of annihilation being the central one. From the very beginning the Bhatinda District Committee of Revolutionaries adamantly opposed the line of individual annihilation and differed on many other issues such as uneven development of revolutionary struggles, economic struggles, origin and development of people's

war, leadership of the working classes, formation of the CP(ML) and above all on the issue of mass organisations. Despite the flood of humiliating phrases such as renegades, traitors, people's enemies, revisionists, etc., etc. they stuck to their guns, in isolation, without being awayed along the powerful current of revolutionary terrorism. After a time the Punjab unit of the CP(ML) was confronted with internal bickerings, mutual disbelief and allegations which further split the unit into two groups, called itself 'Punjab-Himachal Committee of CP(ML)' and started its own monthly paper Lok Yudh as its political-ideological organ. Both groups had similar politics, but one attributed the recognition of the other by the central leadership to political manoeuvring and sectarianism. After the fizzling out of the first phase of terrorism, rift and division at the central level, the Punjab-Himachal Committee joined hands with the Satya Narain Sinha group, while many of its members defected to the Bhatinda District Committee of Re-

the CP(ML) in February 1970 and had been working independently. Now there are three different groups of communist revolutionaries in Punjab, the original CP(ML), the SNS group and the Punjab Communist Revolutionary Committee (PCRC) which was originally the Bhatinda District Committee.

As laid down by Charu Mazumdar in Liberation, the line of individual annihilation was the only form of struggle to rouse the masses while all other struggles were branded sheer economism. The formation and development of militant mass movements was declared outmoded and guerilla activities by secret squads were specially emphasised. At a later stage it was declared that annihilations of class-enemies should be carried out, only with conventional weapons in order to release the initiative of the oppressed peasantry. Thus a series of annihilations was carried out by the secret squads of revolutionaries in which not more than 90 class enemies were destroyed, the majority of them being moneylenders. In so-called encounters with the police about one hundred revolutionaries were killed. (About 20 revolutionaries have been sentenced to different periods of imprisonment and are languishing in jails without the help of any aid committees).

A wave of terror was let loose by the Punjab Government. Money was announced for the heads of revolutionaries and special police cells were created to hunt, torture and kill them, their family members and sympathisers. In Punjab the annihilations carried out by the Naxalite cadres traversed a typical pattern. Once the annihilation was carried out, revolutionaries had to leave that area and could never consolidate there again. Thus they shifted from one place to another and the real purpose of "rousing the masses and releasing their initiative" could never be realised. In the heat of terrorism nobody had the time to stop and think over this state of affairs. Nasty, individual police officers were attacked by the revolutionaries. There were fierce police onslaughts on villages—Dadahoor (Sangrur district), Manguwal (Jullundur idstrict) and Kala Sanghain (Kapurthala district.) The

discriminately beaten up, crops burnt and houses destroyed. People felt utterly helpless before such mass repression. How should the organised white terror of the State be opposed in the absence of some mass organisation? The line of terrorism, of course, had no answer to this most burning practical question. The climax was approached with the death of the seventy-year-old Ghadarite communist, Baba Boojha Singh. After he was declared shot dead by the police in a so-called encounter, there was not one demonstration in Punjab in protest against this wanton killing. For the CPI and CP(M) such opportunities proved really god-sent. They organised meetings in which instead of exposing the police, Naxalites were attacked for leading the masses astray and leaving them in the lurch at a crucial moment.

### The New Phase

The bankruptcy of the line of individual assassination has been completely exposed and a new phase of criticism—self-criticism has already begun. But what should form the basis of such a process of criticism-self-criticism of the past? In spite of the longstanding experience of the international communist movement and the concrete experience of past Indian history, why in India the communist movement reverted to terrorism time and again? This is perhaps the fundamental question which the revolutionaries have not been able to raise and answer properly, and inability to raise and solve this question may again lead us to tread the old path in a new uniform. When we look from this angle at the recent history of Punjab, the most important single lesson which Bhagat Singh and his comrades have to teach is the futility of the path of terrorism. In a letter from jail, addressed to young political workers on February 2, 1931, he wrote: "It is said that I have been a terrorist but I am not. I am a revolutionary who has definite ideas, ideals and a long programme before him. I shall be blamed, as Ram Prasad Bismil has already been, that by remaining in a condemned cell my ideas have undergone a change. There is nothing like this—my ideas are

burning enthusiasm and ideals a heart which I had while outside the... It is my firm belief that with the... we cannot achieve any advantage. The matter becomes clear easily from the history of Hindustan Socialist Republican Army. Throwing Bomb is not only useless, but many a time, it is harmful. It is needed only in a specific situation. A military department will continue to collect arms to be used only at a particular period." In a message addressed to the Second All-Punjab Students Conference (October 19, 1929) Bhagat Singh and B. K. Dutt wrote: "We cannot advise the youth to take up Bombs and Pistols. There are bigger tasks for them to perform. The Youth is to carry a message of revolution to the labouring labourers working in the factories, the slums and the huts in the country—to disseminate it in every nook and corner of the country. Because Punjab is generally considered politically backward, therefore, heavy responsibility is on the youth in this part of the country." But the Naxalites who followed the terrorist path adopted a sentimental attitude towards past history. They derived inspiration from Bhagat Singh and his comrades, incessantly uttered his names to show their spirit of sacrifice but never analysed and evaluated the historical perspectives which gave birth to their movement and the lessons of their failure. Historical personalities were replaced with abstract sacred names and they marched on the forbidden path carrying red flags, with the names of Bhagat Singh and his comrades inscribed on them. This is how history repeats itself and people have to pay for it, by millions short of their lives. Incidentally, it also shows why the repetition of history is always a tragic one.

Impressed by the strength of the proletariat after the Russian revolution of 1905, a participant with a rare insight made the following prophetic statement: "Terror has migrated far to the East to the Provinces of Punjab and Bengal. It may be that in other countries of the Orient terrorism is still destined to pass through an epoch of flowering. But in Russia it is already a part of the wreckage of history." But how poorly

... of the Naxalbari mo-  
 ... bala were equipped with the  
 ... lessons of the Russian revo-  
 ... clearly shown by an article of  
 ... Kanu Sanyal, 'More about  
 ... published in Proletarian Path  
 ... (1974). In this article,  
 ... accuses Charu Mazumdar for  
 ... the path of terrorism before the  
 ... activists. Let me quote in  
 ... the points on which the leading  
 ... of the local Committee stressed  
 ... the indispensability of workers',  
 ... organisation and mass move-  
 ... ments of inner-party ideologi-  
 ... ; political work  
 ... are not opposed to  
 ... , on the contrary action will  
 ... be successful if politics is not put in  
 ... and so political work is the  
 ... preparation; necessity of  
 ... through which organs of  
 ... to be built up and necessity  
 ... organisation in urban areas.  
 ... Babu declined to agree on these  
 ... In short, from the very start  
 ... were two distinct opinions which  
 ... called confrontation between two  
 ... At this stage, a compromise was  
 ... to be learned through practice; that  
 ... of the local committee would  
 ... practice in Naxalbari area on  
 ... points in accordance with  
 ... experience and the new cadres  
 ... according to Charu Babu's  
 ... in an adjacent area known as  
 ... in West Dinajpur  
 ... As Charu Mazumdar was  
 ... in the workers and peasants  
 ... in Jalpaiguri district until 1952,  
 ... of Darjeeling District were  
 ... to him and so this compro-  
 ... was possible")  
 ... at the contradictions of the whole  
 ... The true leaders of Naxal-  
 ... compromised to learn through prac-  
 ... lessons the validity of which,  
 ... of the Russian revolution (not  
 ... of the history of the Chinese  
 ... in Vietnamese revolutions) has  
 ... clearly shown. Beginning with the  
 ... of the past century, two genera-  
 ... of Russian Marxists in their per-  
 ... experience lived through an era of  
 ... learned from its tragic lessons,  
 ... organically instilled in themselves  
 ... attitude towards the heroic

adventurism of lone individuals. Plekha-  
 nov, the founder of Russian Marxism;  
 Lenin, the leader of Bolshevism; Mar-  
 tov, the most eminent representative of  
 Menshevism; all dedicated thousands of  
 pages and hundreds of speeches to  
 struggle against the tactic of terror.  
 Today, if we are to learn the futility  
 of terrorism again through practice,  
 then what have we learnt from history?  
 What does it indicate? Does it not  
prove the theoretical poverty of the  
Naxalbari leaders? Kanu Sanyal indir-  
 ectly suggests that Charu Mazumdar  
 had no hand in the organisation and  
 development of the Naxalbari movement  
 and attributes the compromise purely to  
 the respect he enjoyed for being attached  
 to the struggle only until 1952. This ar-  
 gument is superficial and does not con-  
 vince a logical mind. Kanu Sanyal fails  
 to scrutinise the sphere where the real  
 roots of compromise lay.

### Political Suicide

The very fact of individual acts of  
 terror is an infallible token of the poli-  
 tical backwardness of a country and  
 the feebleness of the progressive forces  
 there. Terrorism by its very essence  
demands overestimation of personal  
heroism and, lastly such a hermetically  
concealed conspiracy excludes comple-  
tely any agitational and organisational  
activity among the masses. The basic  
 property of terror as a system is to des-  
 troy that organisation which by means  
 of explosive ingredients seeks to com-  
 pensate for its own lack of political  
 strength. There are, of course, histori-  
 cal conditions where terror can intro-  
 duce confusion among the governing  
 ranks. But in that case who is it that  
 can reap the fruits? At all events, not  
 the terrorist organisation itself, and not  
 the masses behind whose backs the duel  
 takes place. In so far as terror breeds  
 disorganisation and demoralisation in  
 the ranks of the government (at the  
 price of disorganising and demoralising  
 the ranks of the revolutionists), to that  
 extent it plays into the hands of none  
 other than the liberals themselves. In-  
 dividual terrorism in the eyes of a  
 Marxist, who has seriously studied the  
 tradition of three revolutions, is inad-  
 missible precisely for the reason that it  
 lowers the masses in their own conscious-

ness, reconciles them to impotence,  
 direct their glances and hopes towards  
 the great avenger and emancipator who  
 will some day come and accomplish  
 his mission. Last but not the least, in  
 the blind alley of terrorism, the hand  
 of provocation rules with assurance.

In Russia, in the epoch of Czarism, a  
 young Marxist who went over to the  
 ranks of the terrorist party, was a com-  
 paratively rare phenomenon—rare  
 enough to cause people to point their  
 fingers at him because at that time an  
 unceasing theoretical struggle, a bitter  
 polemic was being waged against terro-  
 rism. But in India, due to the wide-  
 spread phenomenon of theoretical po-  
 verty and ignorance of the history of  
 revolutions, the surging tide of terro-  
 rism enveloped the country in  
 its grip in an extremely short period,  
 and abuses and terribly venomous  
 propaganda were hurled against those  
 who tried to stop the blind tide.  
 Those, who in retrospection attribute it  
 to the mistakes and sectarianism of only  
 a few persons demonstrate nothing but  
 their sheer ignorance of the laws of  
 class struggle and the dialectics of his-  
 torical development. The spirit of sec-  
 tarianism is the natural enemy of scepti-  
 cism and sectarianism is not an error  
 of individuals; it is a social portent of  
 death. Terrorism as political think-  
 ing dies very hard and even its death  
 is accompanied by most deadly far-  
 reaching after-effects. Individual ter-  
 rorism in its very essence is bureaucra-  
 tism turned inside out. For Marxists  
 this law was not discovered yesterday.  
 Bureaucratism has no confidence in the  
 masses, and endeavours to substitute  
 itself for masses. Terrorism behaves  
in the same manner; it wants to make  
the masses happy, without asking for  
their participation. Like bureaucratism,  
 the 'hero' cult is also the religion of  
 terrorism, only with a minus sign. Owing  
 to suppression inflicted by the ruling  
 classes, it recedes for some time;  
 swears by the masses to keep up its  
 psychological balance, yet without being  
 sincerely convinced that it was the  
 same terrorist ideology which led to the  
 destruction of scores of its best men.  
 Now, when the question of unity among  
 communist revolutionaries is the most  
 serious and urgent question, every group

is talking of unity but still the remnants of terrorist psychology and political thinking are acting as an impediment in the path of Indian revolutionaries. But the question is: "Will it be possible without fighting tooth and nail against that politics which sanctifies terror, raising it into a system?"

At present, all the three groups in Punjab are emphasising in their theoretical organs the indispensability of militant mass movements. The SNS group has its own separate mass organisations such as Kirti-Kisan Sabha and Nau Jawan Bharat Sabha. During JP's Punjab visit in October 1974, when the CPI was busy mobilising the people for the anti-JP rally and the other parties were working to make the JP rally a grand success, the mass organisations under the influence of the PCRC staged an impressive demonstration at Moga on October 22 with the participation of 10,000 people to suggest the politics of the Third Alternative. The SNS group openly supports the JP movement and during the JP rally at Ludhiana, one of its workers addressed the public. But the PCRC firmly rejects the politics of JP and the argument of radicalising it from within in order to harness the movement for a revolutionary cause. Though the Punjab Student Union (PSU) is a single organisation, all the three groups have their influence among the students and a tussle is going on between the three separate tendencies to capture the organisation. It is worth mentioning here that at the beginning of the terrorist phase the PSU was completely abandoned, but later on it was solely revived by the efforts of the PCRC and after the Moga massacre emerged as a powerful organisation of

the Punjab students with leftist tendencies. A few months back a militant demonstration of peasants led by the Wahikar Union (peasant front of the PCRC) was fired at, at Jagroan, in which one man was killed. The PCRC is the only fast developing Naxalite group which is extending its influence among the different social groups and is the main target of CPI and CP(M) criticism. The latest spectacular achievement of this organisation was the powerful demonstration staged at Bhatinda on November 26. According to the local press (including CPI and CP-M) processionists numbering about 15,000 under the leadership of Wahikar Union, Bharat Naujiwan Sabha (the same name is used by SNS group) and PSU gheraoed the district headquarters to press their demands and immediate release of some of their workers arrested earlier. According to the press, the Naxalite elements were carrying lathis and sharp-edged weapons during the clash, when the police opened fire seriously injuring many people. Later on, the police brutally lathi-charged the demonstrators, people in the nearby shops and arrested many. The news of such a militant demonstration was suppressed by all the Delhi-based big newspapers, knowing well that the JP-blessed, so-called People's Front had no hand in it.

In their respective newspapers **Nawan Jamana** and **Lok Laher** the leaders of the CPI and CPM are sharply attacking the Naxalites, politically as well as ideologically. After the Bhatinda demonstration, in two consecutive editorials, the editor of **Nawan Jamana**, Jagjit Singh Anand, member of National Council of the CPI, criticised the complacency of the Government concerning the demand of the peasantry and thus leaving it at the mercy of the Naxalites. He also suggested that the Government should reorganise the police force from top to bottom, keeping in view the changing situation in the country. Just after the demonstration Avtar Singh Malhotra, Secretary, Punjab CPI Unit, rushed to Bhatinda to personally inform the peasants of adjoining areas that behind such demonstrations Naxalites have nothing but "political motives" and that at the crucial mo-

ment of confrontation with the Government they will leave them to their fate. The CPI is much agitated at this shifting trend of the masses in this area, especially the catchy slogan of the demonstrators such as "haram jackals with tricoloured belly and face; look at the CPI's fraud, embraces, outside war, etc. etc." These parties, while hurling abuse, point towards the terrorist phase to show how the Naxalites used to do whenever there was a police action after the annihilating action. This is another example of the negative contribution of terrorism to the fast developing movement in Punjab. To counter the designs of the CPI and CPM to break the political and ideological solidarity of the various Naxalite groups in Punjab, the chances of which do not seem bright in the near future because of the uncordial relations among the Punjab Naxalite Revolutionaries, no weekly or fortnightly political journal paper to answer the attacks of the adversaries and to disseminate the politics among the broad masses, only this, the open alliance of the group with the JP-blessed "People's Front" also spreads confusion among the people concerning the line of correct Naxalite politics. Keeping in view the crucial juncture through which the country is passing, in the present political context of Punjab when the CPI and CPM are finding it very difficult to keep the masses under their influence, the united action of all the Naxalite groups has the potentiality of building a significantly broad-based, powerful mass movement in order to have considerable impact on the political life of the province.

১০ই জানুয়ারী ৬-৩০ মিঃ

একাডেমী সঞ্চ

চারপদলের

"এই দশকের অভিমত"

হলে টিকিট—১-৭ট

For "Frontier" contact:

WORKERS' BOOKSHOP

81, George Street

Glasgow G. 1