

50 years of Naxalbari

Hold High the Banner of Naxalbari Struggle

A Revolutionary Peasant Struggle for Land, Food and Liberation!

25th May 1967 was a day when nine peasant fighters fell to the bullets rained by the armed police and became Martyrs in Naxalbari, Siliguri Sub-division, Darjeeling district of West Bengal. It is 50 years since then.

On this day, the Naxalbari peasants had sacrificed their lives, set the masses of Indian peasants once again on the rails of revolution and brought a most essential historic turn in the Indian politics.

Our hearts will overflow with revolutionary enthusiasm even after 50 years when we recollect the scenes of surging revolutionary waves of Naxalbari. The blood shed by the Martyrs will fill the eyes with tears and turn red. The higher level of consciousness, path of struggle and the message handed down by this struggle would further sharpen one's understanding.

Those were the Revolutionary Days

Those were the days when the national liberation and national independence movements, people's revolutions and anti-imperialist struggles were advancing in many countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Particularly, the US imperialists, who were most arrogantly threatening to crush the world people under their feet were biting the dust facing one defeat after the other in the hands of heroic people of Vietnam. The solidarity and unity among the anti-imperialist and anti-aggression struggles were sweeping in the world. The working class and other toiling people in the capitalist countries were increasingly coming into struggle in defence of their lives and rights. The rise of modern revisionism in USSR and world was, doubtlessly, a painful and adverse development. But it is also an indisputable fact that the Marxist Leninist forces in the world were not swept away by demoralization. They did not compromise with the situation. The Marxist Leninist forces in various countries had revolted against modern revisionism and intensified the ideological struggle against it under the leadership of CPC and Albanian Party. All this had enhanced the confidence and strength of the forces striving to protect and advance the revolutionary movements in various countries of the world.

Those were the days when the economic and political crisis had intensified in India. The exploiting ruling classes in India had driven the country into much deep crisis by devaluing the rupee as dictated by the US imperialists. They imposed unbearable burdens on the backs of people. The food crisis had taken an ugly form. It led the people in some areas of the country into waves of struggles. In many areas, the workers, other toiling people, middle classes, students and youth took to the path of struggle. More particularly, with the intensification of contradictions between the landlords and poor, landless peasants, the rural India in many parts had turned into a volcano ready to explode. The anti-feudal struggles had erupted in Bengal, Andhra, Bihar, UP, Punjab and other states. In several areas, the land to the tiller was no more a slogan of propaganda. It had come to the fore as the slogan of action for lakhs of poor and landless peasants and demanded an immediate resolution. The task of questioning the authority of feudal classes over the land and defending from their mercenaries had come to the fore in practice where ever the peasant struggles had taken an organized and militant form. The struggle against modern revisionism has had its wide impact on the communists in India too. The tremendous victories won by China in Socialist construction and the victories and advances of national liberation movement had given a great impetus to the peasant movements and the movements of working class and other toiling people in India. The Congress which was monopolizing power in the country till then, had suffered inglorious defeats in several states in the March 1967 elections and was replaced by coalition govts in 9 states. This development came as a pointer to the intensifying contradictions and crisis faced by the comprador bourgeois –

landlord ruling classes as well as the growing disenchantment and protest among the people against the autocratic rule of the exploiting classes. All these were pointers to the existence of fine revolutionary situation in the country at the time.

Naxalbari

Naxalbari was not a spontaneous, local or isolated occurrence as some think or seek to interpret. It was not an adventurist act by some “extremist” or impetuous elements isolated or separated from the people as some seek to vulgarise or sling mud at it.

The Naxalbari peasant revolutionary movement is a product of consistent and dedicated work carried on by the Communists for several years among the most exploited and oppressed people with a revolutionary orientation and in the light of revolutionary mass line and in a fine revolutionary situation.

The peasant revolutionary movements and the peasant armed struggles that were waged by the people in the world and India (China, Vietnam, Tebhaga, Telangana and others) were a source of great inspiration for this struggle. The ideological struggle carried on by the Communists in this region against revisionism and neo revisionism as well as the political work among the people had provided the necessary ideological guidance, political direction and created the conditions for this struggle. The efforts made by the Communists in this area to build the party and mass organizations had ensured the necessary organizational basis and leadership for this struggle. The masses of people had developed their consciousness and organized in the course of struggles in various forms – legal, illegal, peaceful, violent and many other forms – against the jotedars and the govt. The people were not satisfied with and did not stop at the resolution of immediate problems. They sought to resolve the land question-the main content of agrarian revolution and overthrow the feudal authority through their struggle. They sought to carry out the revolutionary land reforms.

Dajeeling is a mountainous and forest region in West Bengal. The inhuman exploitation and oppression by the Tea plantation Owners had pushed the peasants here into abject poverty and turned landless. Naxalbari, Kharibari and Phansideva were the main arena for the Naxalbari peasant struggle in Siliguri Sub-division of Darjeeling district. Com. Charu Mazumdar, Com.Kanu Sanyal, Com. Khudan Mallick, Com.Jangal Santhal and Com.Khokan Mazumdar had provided the leadership to the party and peasant movement here.

The efforts to build the peasant movement here had begun in 1959. By 1964, the consistent and dedicated work carried on by the Communists had given a definite shape to the peasant movement. But the state leadership of the CPI (M) had taken no steps to put the movement on the rails of revolutionary movement as expected by the party ranks. But the local leadership sought to develop the activities in the area with a revolutionary orientation. The struggle against revisionism had provided the necessary favourable atmosphere and background for their activities.

In this course, in 1965, the leadership of the party and peasant organization in the area had propagated the revolutionary slogans among the peasant masses. It propagated about the necessity of poor and landless peasants seizing and distributing the lands and breaking the authority of landlords. It moved the peasants in a militant form. The peasants marching in rallies with their arrows and bows and other traditional arms and preparing themselves for self defence became a part of it. The activities that went on in various forms in this manner and the course of struggle in two years had raised the consciousness and organization of the peasants to higher level. The Congress lost power in the March 1967 elections for the State Assembly and an UF regime with CPI (M) and CPI as its main constituents was formed in West Bengal. This govt. had created some hopes and illusions among the people in the State. But the conscious masses of Naxalbari people did not setback with folded hands. The local leadership of the party sought to intensify the movement further. The movement which had already spread to wider areas had acquired revolutionary features.

Revolutionary Turn

The Silguri Sub – division Peasant Organisation held its Conference at Butaganj in March 1967. This became a significant event in the life of Naxalbari peasant movement. The Conference gave the clarion call; *“All the lands in Terai region belong to none but tillers;”* *“The poor and landless peasants must seize and distribute the lands among themselves and overthrow the feudal*

authority". The peasants, who were already organized and in action, were very much enthused by this Call. It made them to jump into the struggle with all determination. Led by the party and the peasant organization, the peasants had moved into action in thousands. They began seizing and distributing the lands of landlords, tea plantation owners and the Govt. They began harvesting the crops in the lands of landlords. They seized the grain illegally hoarded by the landlords. They seized the arms which were used by the landlords in the attacks against the people. They tried the landlords and their goons in people's courts and accorded suitable punishments for the crimes committed by them against the people. They had shown powerfully how different the people's power can be from that of landlords; how the landlords and their henchmen would be reduced into mere paper tigers when the masses of oppressed people get themselves organised and move into a revolutionary action. They had shown that the people can enjoy real freedom when they become the masters of their lives. The Naxalbari peasant revolutionary movement, had, once again, shown how the Agrarian Revolution is crucial in India's New Democratic Revolution, how significant is the land question in the Agrarian Revolution; how the struggle for land and the struggle for state power are linked and intertwined and how the armed revolution is crucial in the struggle for state power. The Naxalbari Peasant Revolutionary Movement had shown that the revolution is not or cannot be an act of a few armed bands. It can only be a people's revolution carried on by the crores of people under the leadership of working class. The exploited and oppressed masses of people exhibit marvelous revolutionary consciousness, inexhaustible strength of organisation and potential of struggle once the proletarian party properly organizes, prepares and leads them into revolutionary action.

The revolutionary reforms carried out by the Naxalbari people had very much frightened the exploiting classes and their hangers on . It became a nightmarish dream for them. Everyone had faced the question who stands on whose side – the side of landlords or the struggling peasants? – in a powerful, straight and inescapable manner.

The CPI (M) and CPI leaderships—the main constituents of West Bengal UF Govt- were seriously disturbed by the developments in Naxalbari. The leaders had rushed to the area. They complained that the peasant movement had crossed the " limits " and it posed a "law and order" problem. They asked the leadership of the movement to bring the movement back within the limits of law, lest, the movement may provide an alibi for the Central govt. to dismiss the UF Govt. They even warned of disciplinary action as the party organization in the region still was a part of CPI (M). But the leadership of the movement did not heed to them.

The movement saw an added momentum. The West Bengal State Govt. had resorted to arrest and foisting of cases against the cadre and leadership of the movement. The party leadership in the area took the necessary steps to protect the organization and movement.

MAY 24

On May 24, 1967, a big police force had rounded the Khodijosh village under the Hatighisha panchayat of Naxalbari. But the peasants armed with bows and arrows had rounded up the police in an attempt to defend themselves. Having suffered a loss, the police had temporarily retreated and fled away from the scene.

MAY 25 MARTYRDOM

Next day, ie., on May 25th, when the people had gone to Dhakna Jote in Manirampur panchayat to attend a public meeting to be addressed by Com. Kanu Sanyal, a big police force had landed in Prasad Jote at a distance to Dhakna Jote. At that time, there were mostly women and children in the village. The women, in an attempt to defend themselves, had rounded up the police. But, the police, pretending to be retreating, suddenly and indiscriminately showered the bullets on the people. As a consequence, 7 women, one male person and one baby together with the mother holding the baby in embrace became Martyrs.

Thus the CPI (M) leadership had exposed its true character nakedly. Its Govt. acted like any govt. of the exploiting classes. It did not hesitate to gun down the struggling people when it was required to defend the interests of landlords and exploiting system.

The Naxalbari peasant revolutionary movement, however, gave a great inspiration to the then ongoing ideological struggle against the Soviet modern revisionism, revisionism and neo-revisionism in India. It gave an impetus to the efforts of Communist Revolutionaries inside the CPI (M) to organize themselves into a separate political force in Bengal as well as at an all India level.

Wave of Solidarity

In the course of Naxalbari peasant movement, the tea plantation workers had most closely and in practice allied themselves with the peasant revolutionary movement. As the plantation workers were of peasant origin, in the main, they had responded well to the urges and aspirations of peasants. Both had forged a strong alliance. Not only had the workers carried on the struggles on their own problems, but also in strong support and solidarity with the peasants in all difficult phases of their struggle. They fought shoulder to shoulder with the peasants. They defied the police repression and protected the peasant cadre and leaders as their own kith and kin. Many Workers had directly joined with the peasants in their efforts to organize the peasant movement. They provided the leadership to the peasants. Thus the solidarity that developed between the peasants and workers in Naxalbari had set a fine model for the worker – peasant alliance, which is a most essential need of advancing the New Democratic Revolution in India.

The exploiting classes and those who stood by them could not achieve the expected results by their policy of repression.

There erupted a massive protest in Bengal and other parts of India against the firings and repression in Naxalbari. A Naxalbari Peasant Struggle Solidarity Samithi was formed with an aim of widely propagating the news of Naxalbari peasant struggle and mobilizing the support and solidarity to the Naxalbari struggle.

The students of North Bengal University had responded in a big way. A large number of students had gone to Naxalbari. They provided the leadership. They held solidarity rallies in several places. In some places, they even clashed with the police. The Bangiya Provincial Students Federation and its members stood by the Naxalbari peasant revolutionary movement. The slogans like “*Amra bari – Naxalbari; Amra bari Kharibari; Amra bari Phansideba*”; “*Tumra nam – Amra nam – Naxalbari and Vietnam*” had reverberated everywhere. Thousands of peasants took out a massive rally in the streets of Kolkata in protest against the Govt. repression and in solidarity with the Naxalbari peasant struggle. The solidarity actions were witnessed in many other places in India.

The Naxalbari had created a big commotion throughout India. It had seriously shaken the Indian politics. It lit a ray of hope in the hearts of exploited and oppressed people. In many areas, the Communist ranks as well as conscious people had come to the fore to identify with and own the Naxalbari.

By this time, the adivasi peasant movement in Srikakulam (AP) which was developing for a decade, had picked up the momentum. The adivasi and peasant movements in other districts of AP like East Godavari, Khamman and Warangal had advanced. The adivasi and peasant movements in Debra – Gopiballabhpur, Mushahari, Lakhimpur Kheri and other areas of India had developed taking inspiration from Naxalbari. Thousands of poor and landless peasants had moved into revolutionary action to occupy and distribute the lands of landlords and challenge the feudal authority in the rural areas and against the Comprodar Bourgeois – landlord’s State.

The Communist Revolutionaries had formed an All India Co – ordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries inside the CPI (M) on Nov 13th, 1967. The four main tasks set by the Declaration adopted by this Committee had called upon the CRs: “1) To develop and co – ordinate militant and revolutionary struggles at all levels, specially, peasant struggles of the Naxalbari – type under the leadership of the working class; 2) To develop militant, revolutionary struggles of the working class and other toiling people to combat economism and to orientate these struggles towards agrarian revolution; 3) To wage an uncompromising ideological struggle against revisionism and neo-revisionism and to popularize the Thought of Mao Tse Tung, which is Marxism – Leninism of the present era, and to unite on this basis all revolutionary elements within and outside the party; 4) To undertake preparations of a revolutionary programme and tactical line based on the concrete analysis of the Indian situation in the light of Com. Mao Tsetung Thought.”

Historically, this was a most significant, revolutionary and correct call. It had a very positive impact on the struggle of CRs for revolutionary politics and the revolutionary work being carried by them in various states. It had greatly helped the efforts to develop the revolutionary movements.

Exploiting Classes need not be Jubilant

True; Naxalbari and other revolutionary movements which had come up in that period had temporarily suffered serious setbacks. These movements have not yet recovered from the setbacks. But can the exploiting ruling classes say that they had solved even a single problem of the Indian people? Don't they know that all the promises and sops they are throwing at the people are only masks for the deception, loot and atrocities carried on by them against the people? Should we believe that they do not know and they are not a party to the colossal growth of corruption, farce, deception, conspiracy, repression and violence carried on against the people under the pet words like development, democracy and parliamentary rule? Are not disgust, revulsion and protest strong and widespread among the people towards the way the exploiting ruling classes are waging a dog fight and gamble for power? Don't they know what they are doing in the name of economic development and reforms is nothing but shamelessly and treacherously mortgaging and selling away our Country to foreign imperialists? Why they are building up the repressive machinery into such a colossal body when they really believe that they had completely suppressed the CRs and set the people on the road of peace and progress? Why they are taking so much trouble to sow illusions, divisions, hostilities and mutual clashes among the people and divert them in thousand and one ways? Because, whether they accept it openly or not, the exploiting ruling classes are definitely aware of one bitter truth. The society they are sitting on and seeking to protect by all means is based on exploitation and oppression. It is a society that squeezes the blood and robs the overwhelming majority of people to fatten a miniscule minority of landlords, comprador bourgeois and imperialists. It is a truth of life that no masks, no bluffings, no brandishing of repressive weapons can conceal or suppress. Therefore, ups and downs, setbacks and temporary defeats will not deter the people from their efforts and struggle. They would definitely learn from their experiences, find ways and means to overcome the problems and march toward final victory. So the exploiting ruling classes need not be overtaken by the jubilation because it is an illusion.

A Symbal of Revolutionary Mass Line

The Naxalbari is a product of revolutionary mass line. It gave an inspiration and impetus to some similar movements. It cannot be denied that by the time these movements had come up, they had some weaknesses to be overcome. The CRs at the time took the view that the weaknesses that were to be or that could be overcome must be attempted, not by keeping aside the then ongoing struggles, but in the course of providing suitable leadership to them.

The CPI (M) leadership at the time argued that the revolution was unimaginable without a strong and wide base of party organization, mass base and democratic movement. When the revolutionary movements had faced setbacks and the CRs were struggling to overcome the divisions, wrong trends and other difficulties, some sought to heckle the CRs saying that they were reaping the fruits of their petty bourgeois impetuosity. It was indeed pathetic for anyone who claims to be adhering to Marxism Leninism to heckle or laugh at the setbacks, losses, temporary defeats and difficulties encountered by the revolutionary movements. With all modesty we would like to know what efforts they have done in the last 50 years to overcome the kind of weaknesses they warned about and put the class struggle on the rails of revolution?; What efforts they have done to apply the teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin (Here we are not mentioning the names of Stalin and Mao), the experiences of victorious revolutions to the concrete conditions of India and formulate a revolution line applicable for India? We agree that they are having a mass base many times greater than that of CRs. But what politics they had imparted to the masses of people? Are their steps, however slow they might be, taking them towards revolution or in the opposite direction? Here we do not draw any conclusions. The facts speak for themselves.

The left adventurist politics that had emerged right in the early phase of CR movement and came to dominate had played havoc with the CR and revolutionary movement. It made the task of overcoming the weaknesses in the movement more difficult. The left as well as right trends and

series of splits had badly affected the CR and revolutionary movement. The CRs are carrying on consistent and relentless efforts to overcome them, unify the CRs on the basis of revolutionary mass line and to build a single, united party of the proletariat in our Country. As part of this, we are seriously striving to put an end to the prejudices, antagonisms and clashes and develop an healthy atmosphere in the CR movement. At some levels and in possible forms we are having united action. We hope, the results we win in these efforts would place the CRs in a better position. They would also help to overcome the weakness and divisions, gain strength and advance with greater momentum.

Revolutionary Movement did not Stop

The conditions today are not gloomy. The Marxist Leninist forces in various countries of the world are striving to reorganize themselves and provide the leadership to the people. All the basic contradictions in the world, more particularly, the contradiction between imperialism and oppressed nations, people; the contradictions among the imperialist powers are getting intensified with every day. Last decade had witnessed mass upheavals in several countries of the Middle East against the effects of imperialist – dictated policies of liberalization, globalization and autocratic and the anti – people policies of their Govts. The US policies of hegemonism, threat, intervention, armed invasion and war carried in the name of opposing the Weapons of Mass Destruction, terrorism and other pleas had encountered and are encountering massive opposition, resistance and protest from the oppressed nations and people in the world as we have seen in Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Syria and many other Countries of the world. The Palestinian people are continuing most difficult and prolonged struggle for Home Land against the imperialist – backed Israeli Zionist rulers. The world capitalist economy is rocked by worst crisis. The working class and other toiling people in the capitalist countries are increasingly coming out into strikes, protests and massive agitations demanding better working and living conditions, jobs and opposing the closure of industries, cuts in the welfare programmes, so called austerity measures, imposition of heavy economic burdens by the rulers. The hue and cry raised by the rulers in the capitalist and imperialist countries is being used as a convenient tool to divert the people from the problem of unemployment which has assumed serious dimensions. The rulers in these countries, in an attempt to divert the people from the real problems and justify their suppressive policies, are using the danger of terrorism and are promoting the fascist and racist forces and activities. The conscious masses of people in these countries are seeing this game and raising their voice against them.

India is plagued by serious economic and political crisis. The democracy, electoral process through which the exploiting ruling classes claim the legitimacy and people’s consent for their rule have exposed their hollowness, farcical nature and crisis today more than never before. The people are seeing more clearly the disastrous consequences of the so called new economic policies and reforms of the ruling classes to the country and people. Their slogans like “develop-ment”; “make in India” are nothing but opening flood – gates for the imperialist powers to recklessly loot and control the country’s resources and shamelessly prostrate before them. These policies are curtailing the hard won rights of the workers; denying the opportunities for employment to the millions of youth, robbing away and depriving the adivasis, coastal people, peasants and other toiling people from their right over the lands, natural resources, traditional means of livelihood, house sites, evading the responsibility to provide the basic necessities of life. The people are reacting against these policies in various forms. They are increasingly coming out into protests, organized and united struggles in defence of their rights. The adivasis and peasants in different parts of the country like AP, Odisha, TN, Jharkhand and Bihar are carrying on struggle against the forcible acquisition of lands and the loot of natural resources carried on by the rulers in the name of big projects, setting up of industries and atomic power plants, etc; by the MNCs and Indian Corporate Houses. The fisher folk in many coastal areas are carrying on struggle to protect their traditional rights of fishing and other means of livelihood. Dalits, together with other democratic forces, are increasingly taking the road of organized struggle against the caste discrimination, caste oppression, atrocities and brutal attacks perpetrated by the feudal, upper casteist and hindu communal fascist forces backed by the BJP led regime and under various pleas like gow raksha, etc; Women, youth and students are on the path of struggle. The progressive, rationalist and democratic forces in the field of history,

science, art, literature and education, etc., are defying threats, attacks and even murderous acts and are putting up a conscious and organized struggle against the dark forces of obscurantism, communalism, pseudo nationalism and pseudo patriotism. The struggle for democratic rights of people and against the environmental destruction aggravated by the anti-nature and pro-imperialist policies of the rulers is developing in the country.

The adivasi and peasant revolutionary move-ments are continuing in various parts of the country even in the face of many odds and ups and downs. Organised and united themselves in the adivasi and peasant organizations the people are waging militant struggles to defend and restore their rights over the lands. They are protecting the lands seized back from the illegal possession of landlords and from the brutal attacks by the landlords and police. The adivasis are struggling to foil the attempts of landlords, their henchmen and the govts. to sow divisions among them as well as between adivasis and non – adivasi poor, develop the mutual hostilities and clashes among them.

All these facts show that the objective conditions in the country are favourable for the peoples struggles to take a militant and revolutionary form and the people are looking for a party and leadership that can provide the leadership to their struggle in all its forms and in all its stages of development for the resolution of their basic problems.

Hold High the Flag of Revolution

On the eve of 50 years of Naxalbari Peasant Revolutionary Movement, let us remember the revolutionary heroes who became Martyrs in 1967. Let us pay our revolutionary homage to them.

Recollecting the Naxalbari Peasant Revolutionary Movement is not just an act of ritual. Some still seek to wrongly depict this struggle as a product or symbol of left adventurist politics and practice with a view to keep the left adventurist politics alive in one form or other. Let us take the message of Naxalbari Peasant Revolutionary Movement widely among the people as a struggle that powerfully represented the revolutionary mass line, the path of agrarian revolution and advocated the need of developing the peasantry as the main revolutionary force under the leadership of working class and on the basis of firm worker – peasant alliance; The Naxalbari Peasant Revolutionary Movement was a struggle of the revolutionary classes for land, food and change of semi – colonial and semi – feudal society into a New Democratic Society and a struggle that represented the path of protracted armed revolution. Let us deeply study the experience of this struggle and learn from the valuable lessons this struggle provides and use them to set the CRs and the revolutionary movements on the assured road of advance. Let us pledge to carry forward and complete the unfinished tasks of Naxalbari. Let us own and carry forward best of the consciousness and Communist qualities represented by the Martyrs of Naxalbari. Let us get rid of the alien class and unhealthy tendencies that crept into us and the CR movement in the last 50 years of our journey in the midst and under the impact of ups and downs, setbacks and stagnations, and, in one word, we must shed all the tendencies that are not consistent with the CRs and Communist Revolutionary Organisations and cause harm to the revolutionary movement.

Let us overcome the divisions among the CRs, develop united action, a fine atmosphere of unity and pave the way for the building of a single, unified Party of proletariat in our Country.

Let us use all our energies and efforts to advance the New Democratic Revolution in India in the light a correct revolutionary mass line.