

Naxalbari Peasant Revolt – Extracts from Terai Report

1) Why has the peasant movement in the Terai region proved to be an event having more far-reaching consequences than even an earthquake ?

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

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

We have seen how the criterion for judging political events changed as soon as the struggle of the heroic peasants started and thus proved how true are the teachings of Chairman Mao. The struggle made it clear as daylight who in a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country like ours is a revolutionary and who is a counter-revolutionary, who is progressive and who is reactionary, who is a Marxist and who is a revisionist, and which political party wants to advance the cause of democratic revolution, that is, the agrarian revolution, and which party wants to cover up the semi colonial and semi feudal system in order to preserve it. (From pages 664-665)

2) Our Deviations and the Lessons we Learnt :

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

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

Why have we failed, though temporarily, to advance the struggle of the heroic peasants of Terai? The reasons are: lack of a strong party organisation, failure to rely whole-heartedly on the masses and to build a powerful mass base, ignorance of military affairs, thinking on old lines and a formal attitude towards the establishment of political power and the work of revolutionary land reform. We must always bear in mind Chairman Mao's teachings in discussing these matters.

He teaches us:

"New things always have to experience difficulties and set-backs as they grow. It is sheer fantasy to imagine that the cause of socialism is all plain sailing and easy success, without difficulties and set-backs or the exertion of tremendous efforts".

By the lack of a strong party organisation we mean absence of a party which is armed with the theory of Marxism-Leninism and its highest development in the present era Mao Tse-tung's thought which is closely linked with the masses, which does not fear self-criticism and which has mastered the Marxist-Leninist style of work. It is true that the revolutionary comrades of the Siliguri sub-division led by our respected leader, Comrade Charu Mazumdar, were the first to rise in revolt against the revisionists. But this does not mean that we fully assimilated the teachings of our great teacher Chairman Mao. That is, while we accepted the teachings of Chairman Mao in words, we persisted in revisionist methods in practice. Though it is true that the worker and peasant party members of Terai were in a majority inside the party and that there was party organisation in almost every area, yet in reality the worker and peasant comrades were led by the petty bourgeois comrades and the party organisation in every area actually remained inactive. The party members were all active at the beginning of the struggle but they were swept away by the vast movement of the people. We did not also realise that the Party had a tremendously significant role to play in advancing firmly the struggle of the heroic peasants. As a result, whatever might be the role the party members played spontaneously at the beginning of the struggle, it was afterwards reduced to nothing in the face of white terror. To belittle the

role of the Party in the struggle is nothing but an expression of the old revisionist way of thinking. The Party played no role in matters like deciding what are the needs of the struggle at a given moment, giving political propaganda priority above everything else, advising the people about what they should do when the enemy attacks, preparing the people politically to meet the moves of the enemy, and developing the struggle step by step to a higher stage.

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

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

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

Though we repeatedly recognised this in words during the period from April to September, 1967, in reality, however, we, the petty bourgeois leadership, imposed ourselves on the people. Whenever the heroic peasant masses took the initiative and wanted to do something, we of the petty bourgeois origin opposed them. The reason is, we did not understand, nor did we even try to understand, the actions of the masses. On the contrary, under the influence of old revisionist habits we arbitrarily set limits as to how far they should go. This resulted in thwarting the initiative of the masses and blunting the edge of the class struggle. Having worked in a revisionist party, we used the bourgeois laws and conventions and so, tried to convince the masses about what was right and what was wrong. So, when the people wanted to attack the police, we prevented them on the ground that our losses would be heavy. We looked at the people's attitude towards the jotedars and the police from the angle of bourgeois humanism. As a result, we failed to organise the large masses, who numbered more than 40 thousand, and were thus unable to build a powerful mass base during April and May, 1967.

Therefore, during the second stage of our struggle we have resolved, we must link ourselves with the needs and wishes of the people, go to the people with boundless love and respect in our heart and integrate ourselves with the people. We must learn from them and take the lesson back to them again through practice. In other words, we must not impose anything from above. Mistakes may be made owing to this, but it is possible to correct such mistakes. The most important thing is- never to allow the initiative of the masses to be suppressed. Our duty is to develop their initiative. (From pages 672-674)

(These extracts are taken from Terai report, from "Historical and Polemical Documents of the Communist Movement in India", Vol-2.) published by Tarimela Nagireddy Memorial Trust.)