China and Indian Communism

Bhabani Sen Gupta

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Unlike the Bolshevik revolution, the Chinese revolution had little impact on the Indian nationalist elite. The liberation of the working class from the shackles of capitalism in Russia had stirred the minds of many leaders of the Indian nationalist movement, including Nehru. The liberation of the masses of the peasantry from the shackles of feudalism in China had no comparable impact. The Indian Communist Party (CPI) hailed the Chinese revolution as an epoch-making event, but continued to regard the Soviet Union as the fountainhead of doctrinal as well as tactical directions.

Three factors appear to explain the CPI's resistance to the agrarian dimensions of the Chinese revolution. First, the city-oriented CPI had made no particular attempt to study the special characteristics of the Chinese revolution; the tendency was to regard it as an extension of the Bolshevik revolution. Second (and this is important for an insight into Indian communism), the middle class leaders of the CPI showed a striking affinity with the intellectual orientation of the progressive bourgeoisie. It was an urban and Eurocentric orientation. Intellectual affinity with the bourgeoisie made the Communists accept the parliamentary system without much of a debate, without a serious attempt to think in terms of an alternative. Nehru and others had conferred a certain "legitimacy" on Marxism-Leninism by making "socialism" part of the ethos of the nationalist movement; the anti-communism of the Congress did not reject the "good and beneficial" aspects of Marxist socialism. A trade
union movement had grown in the suburbs of the nationalist movement before the CPI was born. Even when the CPI, at the Comintern's behest, pitted itself against the Congress, it functioned within the Congress "system" of politics, which was an urban-oriented "system." Moscow showed no particular anxiety to send the Indian Communists to the villages to arouse the mass of peasantry and work for an agrarian revolution.

The third reason was Moscow's determination not to allow the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to persuade the Communists of the colonies and semi-colonies that the Chinese revolution was more relevant to their backward, agrarian societies than the Bolshevik revolution. In 1949–50 the Chinese attempted to claim that their revolution was different from the Russian, but in doing so, they immediately came up against Soviet opposition. Soviet ideologues refused to concede that the Chinese revolution and Mao Tse-tung had made any momentous contribution to the theory and methodology of Communist revolution not already contained in Soviet strategic and tactical thinking. The CPI was perhaps not more than marginally aware of the ideological rivalry between Moscow and Peking during 1949–51; in any case, its loyalties were firmly fixed on Moscow.³

Liu Shao-chi's well-known formulation at the Peking conference of the World Federation of Trade Unions in November 1949 that the "path of Mao Tse-tung" could also be the "main path of the peoples of other colonial and semi-colonial countries for winning their emancipation" was a somewhat muted version of his articles in Pravda,⁴ earlier that year and much milder in tone and content than the claims made by other CCP leaders. For instance, Ch'en Po-ta asserted Mao's intellectual independence of Stalin, while Lu Ting-yi drew a geographical line dividing the "spheres of influence" of the Soviet and Chinese revolutions.⁵ However,

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⁴ Liu's speech or the relevant portions of it can be found in Kautsky as well as McLane; for a lengthier quotation, see V. B. Sinha, The Red Rebel in India (New Delhi: Associated Publishing House, 1968), pp. 46–7. Liu in his Peking speech listed four pillars of success for the Chinese revolution: rural bases, broad national front, people's revolutionary army, and armed struggle. In a long article printed in Pravda of 7–9 June 1949, Liu had stressed the need to mobilize the peasantry for protracted armed struggle in the colonies and semi-colonies, and recommended for the Communist parties there, including India by name, the strategy of the broadest united front from below. See Sen Gupta, The Fulcrum of Asia, p. 335n.
⁵ Ch'en Po-ta claimed in 1949 that Mao had reached conclusions similar to Stalin's "on many fundamental problems through his independent thinking." "Stalin and the Chinese revolution," Sino-Soviet Friendship (Peking), 15 December 1949. In so doing, Ch'en was, in fact, asserting that Mao led the Chinese revolution...
Moscow did not concede these Chinese claims particularly in respect of the Indian revolution. Some scholars have suggested that the Cominform Journal, *For a Lasting Peace, For a People's Democracy (LPPD)*, in an editorial article on 27 January 1950, recommended the Maoist (or neo-Maoist) path to the Communist parties of the colonies and semi-colonies. This suggestion, however, proves too much. The article summed up for the Communists of the colonial and semi-colonial countries the following two main "lessons" of the Chinese revolution:

1. The working class must unite with all classes, parties, groups and organizations willing to fight the imperialists and their hirelings and to form a broad, nationwide front headed by the working class and its vanguard, the Communist Party, the Party equipped with the theory of Marxism-Leninism, the Party that has mastered the art of revolutionary strategy and tactics, that breathes the spirit of revolutionary irreconcilability to enemies of the people, the spirit of proletarian organization and discipline in the mass movement of all peoples.

2. A decisive condition for the victorious outcome of the national liberation struggle is the formation, when the necessary internal conditions allow for it, of People's liberation armies under the leadership of the Communist Party.

Both "lessons" were distortions of the principal methodology of the Chinese revolution, the second grosser than the first. Liu Shao-ch'i in his *Pravda* articles had recommended to the Communists of colonial and semi-colonial countries the tactics of a united front *from below* on the basis of a clear differentiation between the reactionary and progressive sections of the bourgeoisie. They must "for the sake of their national interests . . . adopt a firm and irreconcilable policy against national betrayal by the section of the bourgeoisie, especially the big bourgeoisie, which has surrendered to imperialism. . . . On the other hand, Communists . . . should enter into an anti-imperialist alliance with that section of the national bourgeoisie which is still opposing imperialism and which does not oppose the anti-imperialist struggle of the masses of people." The Cominform article made no such differentiation, nor did it specifically recommend a united front from below. In the second "lesson," there was no mention of rural bases, of protracted warfare by peasant guerrillas. The Cominform article did ask the Communists to strengthen revolution *independently* of Moscow, and that in creative Marxist-Leninist thinking, he was on a par with Stalin. Two years later, Ch'en Po-ta claimed with further clarity the distinctiveness of the Chinese revolution from the Soviet revolution, especially with its rural base area and guerrilla warfare. "Mao Tse-tung's theory of the Chinese revolution is the integration of Marxism-Leninism with the Chinese revolution," *People's Daily*, 28 June 1951. Lu Tung-yi, in an article in the Cominform Journal in 1951, said that the classical model of revolution, the Soviet, held good for the imperialist (capitalist) countries, while the Chinese revolution was the model for the colonies and semi-colonies. *LPPD*, 29 June 1951.


7. Quoted in a statement by the editorial board of *Communist*, monthly theoretical journal of the CPI, February–March 1950.
the “alliance of the working class with all the peasantry in order to fight for the introduction of the urgently needed land reforms.” This, however, was very different from mobilizing the peasantry around a revolutionary and militant programme of land reform. The Cominform article directed the CPI to forge an alliance between the working class and all the peasantry, and this was projected as “the experience of the national liberation movement in China and other countries.” However, it took no account of the fact that the CCP had been able to mobilize the general mass of peasantry mainly because of the Japanese imperialist invasion of China, and that there was not only no such objective condition in India; on the contrary, the newly established Indian national government had already forged political links with the big landlords and the rich peasantry. The CPI interpreted the Cominform directive predictably as guidance to lower the ideological sight of its activity among the peasants, and soon the peasant movement lost whatever limited militancy it had gained during the 1940s in isolated areas in the country.

First “Debate” on the “Chinese Path”

It is probably more correct to suggest that the Cominform directive to the CPI in 1950 was meant not to allow Indian communism to tread the Chinese path, but to bring it back to the Soviet path after its brief and traumatic diversion towards a peasant-oriented strategic-tactical line during 1949–50. Inspired by the impressive exploits of the armed peasant struggle in Telengana, a group of Andhra Communists, led by Rajeshwara Rao, had in June 1948 submitted the famous “Andhra thesis” to the central executive committee of the CPI. These Communists were reported to have eagerly studied the theoretical works of Mao Tse-tung and Liu Shao-ch’i and other prominent leaders of the CCP, and they argued that “the only way to victory of communism in India was through applying the strategy of the agrarian revolutionary war, which had been developed and tested in China.” Ranadive, who was general secretary of the CPI, doggedly resisted the Andhra thesis, and at one time even

8. A. Rasul, *Krishak Sabha līthas (History of the Kisan Sabha)*, chs 10–14. According to the author, the Bengal branch of the Kisan Sabha, perhaps the strongest peasant front under CPI leadership, held no annual conference between 1947 and 1951. The Bengal unit had only 30,000 primary members in 1952 (pp. 179–80). Primary membership rose to 104,000 in 1953, but there was practically no peasant struggle except two mass rallies in August–September (pp. 187–9). It was not before 1959 that the peasant protests against shortage of foodgrains assumed some mass proportions (p. 212). In 1960 the Kisan Sabha for the first time formulated demands for land reforms rather than tenancy reforms (pp. 207–12).

denounced Mao's claim to be regarded as a creative Marxist thinker.\textsuperscript{10}

While the CPI leadership was torn between the Ranadive and Andhra groups, a debate had been going on among Soviet ideologues on how much of the Chinese model could be adopted by the CPSU for guiding the Communist movements in the colonies and semi-colonies. During this debate some Soviet scholars for a while inclined towards the Chinese path, and the Telengana peasant struggle was glorified in a number of Soviet formulations.\textsuperscript{11} There is, however, no evidence to confirm the suggestion that during Mao's visit to Moscow in 1949–50, Stalin agreed to place the Communist parties of South and Southeast Asia under the strategic direction of the CCP.\textsuperscript{12} It is doubtful whether Mao made such a claim. In fact, even during 1949–50, when Stalin was anxious to placate Mao without making more than the minimum concessions either on ideological or national-interest issues,\textsuperscript{13} Soviet ideological writings, while acknowledging the Chinese revolution's significance for the Communists of the colonial and semi-colonial countries, did not admit that Mao had accomplished anything in the realm of strategic and tactical thinking that Stalin had not already done. This was a major difference between the writings of those years in Chinese and Soviet newspapers and journals.\textsuperscript{14}

The main purpose of the Cominform article was to indulge the ideological preferences of the Andhra Maoists to some extent, and at the same time bring the CPI back firmly under Moscow's direction. This was confirmed in the interview the British Communist Party leader, Rajni Palme Dutt, gave to two CPI leaders at the beginning of 1951. The “Chinese interlude” in Indian communism, said Dutt, had served a useful purpose. “After the slanderous attack on Comrade Mao Tse-tung, the refusal to recognize the difference between the Russian and the Chinese way

10. Ranadive wrote about Mao: “Firstly, we must state emphatically that the Communist Party of India has accepted Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin as the authoritative sources of Marxism. It has not discovered new sources of Marxism beyond these. Nor for that matter is there any Communist Party which declares adherence to the so-called theory of new democracy alleged to be pronounced by Mao and declares it to be a new addition to Marxism.” \textit{Ibid.} p. 31. “While there is no evidence to suggest that the Andhra Leadership had any communication with the Chinese party it is quite possible that Ranadive had Soviet backing when he denounced Mao.” \textit{Ibid.} p. 32.


and the great lesson of the Chinese revolution for India, it is correct and necessary to break with this past and assert that India must adopt the China way. . . . But having once recognized this, we should guard against drawing a mechanical parallel with China and try to evolve a correct policy for India on the basis of the concrete situation in India, bearing in mind the broad lessons of China. The Indian situation presents some essential differences from China."  

The Search for an “Indian Path”

It appears that this task was taken up by some CPI leaders in 1951. In that year, the CPI resolved to discover an “Indian path to communism,” a path which would be “neither only the Soviet path nor the Chinese path, but a path of Leninism applied to Indian conditions.”  

A creative contribution to Indian communism stemmed from the combined efforts of Dange, Ajoy Ghosh, Rajeshwara Rao and Basavapunniah to apply the Soviet and Chinese experience to Indian conditions. The four leaders went to Moscow where they had discussions with various Soviet leaders. A “highly secret” document jointly prepared by them was circulated to the central committee members during the third congress of the CPI at Madurai in December 1953.  

It attempted some concrete and comparative analyses of objective conditions in China and India, and came to the conclusion that it was a “wrong understanding of the experience of the Chinese revolution” to assert that “the Indian revolution would develop exactly the same way as the revolution in China and that partisan war would be the main or almost the only weapon to ensure its victory.” What was needed in India was the building of a “genuine mass peasant movement” and an “alliance between the working class and the peasantry.” Conditions in China that had made large-scale partisan warfare possible did not exist in India. While premature peasant uprisings in isolated areas must be discarded:

in the course of development of the movement a situation will arise in several areas which will demand armed struggle in the form of partisan warfare. . . . The Party is of the opinion that partisan warfare in such a situation, undertaken on the basis of a genuine mass peasant movement, especially the most oppressed and exploited strata, combined with other forms of struggle, such as social boycott of landlords, mass no-rent struggles, agricultural workers’ strikes, can, if correctly constructed and led, have a rousing and galvanizing effect on the peasant masses in all areas and raise their own struggles to a higher level.

17. For the text, see CPI Documents, pp. 71–85. The report, entitled Tactical Line, was not circulated to the delegates of the congress.
In the initial stages, partisan struggle could only be “defensive” – “the objective of partisan struggle is above all to defend the peasants from the attack of the government and its punitive organs.” The document firmly rejected individual terrorism; the “objective of partisan struggle is not to destroy particular individuals, but to destroy the hated regime in a prolonged struggle of the popular masses.”

This document was only mildly reflected in the political resolution adopted by the Madurai congress. The resolution raised the strategic slogan of a Government of Democratic Unity, which “demands organization and unleashing of mass struggles on the widest scale” to defeat the economic and political policies of the ruling classes. It spoke of democratic unity from below to be forged on the anvil of struggle, and it warned against “top negotiations and manoeuvres and weakening of the mass movement.” It called for the building up of an extensive peasant movement and categorized agricultural workers and poor peasants as “the foundation for the broader unity” of this movement. While these militant formulations fell short of the tactical content of the “Indian path” document, the most significant point of the political resolution was its recognition that Nehru’s foreign policy actions in recent years “have been helpful to peace” and appreciated by “all peace-loving peoples.” Once the “peace-loving peoples” – meaning the socialist countries – had begun to appreciate the foreign policy of the Indian government, it was only a matter of time for the CPI to rally to its support.

CCP–CPI Relations in the 1950s

For a variety of reasons, the Chinese Communist leaders made no attempt in the early and mid-’50s to project the model of their revolution directly to India and other Asian countries nor did they try to influence the indigenous Communist movements. American involvement on behalf of the Kuomintang during the last years of the Chinese civil war had prevented Mao Tse-tung from asserting the independence of the Chinese Communist movement when the People’s Republic was founded in 1949; the outbreak of the Cold War and the U.S. resolve to contain what Americans perceived as a monolithic Communist threat to the “free world” persuaded Mao to lean openly on Moscow and denounce the concept of a “third road.” Then came the Korean war which increased the People’s Republic’s dependence on the U.S.S.R., and enabled Moscow

18. The editors of CPI Documents say “The Statement adopted by the Madurai Congress was entirely on the lines of this document received from Moscow.” This, however, is not borne out by a comparison of the two documents. The fact is that the policy statement contained very little of the major formulations of the four CPI leaders. For the text of the Madurai congress political resolutions, see CPI Documents, pp. 93–124.
to exert considerable influence on China's internal as well as external strategies. The CCP probably had neither the will nor the capability in the early 1950s to foster Maoist movements outside the frontiers of China. The Chinese leaders fought their battles for the recognition of their revolution as the model for the colonial and semi-colonial societies within the legitimate formalities and procedures of the international Communist movement. The main thrust of these battles was to wrest from the CPSU a status for China within the socialist bloc and the world Communist movement that would be the co-equal of the U.S.S.R. This intra-bloc foreign policy objective of Peking has been persistently rejected by Moscow throughout the post-war period.

The CCP maintained a policy of studied non-involvement in Indian communism all through the 1950s; during his two visits to India in 1954 and 1956, Chou En-lai met with no leaders of the CPI, and none of the CPI leaders was invited to Peking for an in-depth exchange of ideas and experiences. The CCP, as John Kautsky points out, accepted Moscow's leadership of the Indian Communist movement. At the 1957 Moscow conference of Communist parties, Mao, who led the Chinese attack on the CPSU 20th Congress thesis of peaceful transition, found the CPI delegation led by Ajoy K. Ghosh working closely with the Russians. In the following year Mao and his colleagues, in their impotent bid to liberate the off-shore islands, came to realize the severe limitations of China's security and friendship treaty with the U.S.S.R. From this traumatic realization stemmed, at least to a large extent, China's decision to go nuclear on its own. However, Mao did not allow the state-level or party-level differences with Moscow to come out in the open. He was evidently anxious not to do anything to tarnish the American image of the world Communist monolith. While since 1957 the CCP had been fighting with the CPSU within the fraternal formalities of international communism, the Russians deliberately risked the first overt disclosure of Sino-Soviet differences by their "neutrality" statement of 9 September 1959 on a bloody incident along the disputed Sino-Indian frontier. Similarly, the quarrel between the CCP and the CPI was brought out in the open by the CPI.

In the nationalist confrontation between China and India over Tibet in 1959, the dominant faction in the CPI sided with Indian nationalism rather than proletarian internationalism, and in this they had the not-so-covert approval of Moscow. The CPI had been one of the first non-Soviet Communist parties to uncritically endorse the CPSU 20th Congress formulations on non-inevitability of war, peaceful transition, and the national liberation movement. With full knowledge of the CCP's strong

19. Kautsky, Moscow and the CPI, last chapter.
20. Pravda, 10 September 1959. The Tass statement was issued in spite of Peking's request to the contrary. The CCP noted in 1963 that this was the first public disclosure of Sino-Soviet differences. See "No one can save the Indian reactionaries from their political bankruptcy," Peking Review (PR), 30 August 1963.
objections to some of these concepts, the CPI adopted a resolution a few weeks before the 1960 world Communist conference in Moscow rejecting the Chinese, and supporting the Soviet, position on these controversial issues.\(^{21}\) At the Moscow conference, the CPI sided resolutely with the CPSU against the CCP.\(^{22}\)

In fact, the CPI had no particular compulsion since 1954 to pay any special attention to the lessons of the Chinese revolution. Having adopted the strategic line of the 20th Congress, and the tactical line of peaceful transition and parliamentary path, the CPI progressively shifted away from the strategy and tactics of the CCP. Between the Sino-Indian crisis over Tibet and the India-China border war, the dominant faction in the CPI identified itself with the Indian nationalist ethos and came to look upon China as an aggressive, expansionist power guilty of serious and unpardonable deviance from Marxism-Leninism. The majority faction elected for the CPSU position on the Sino-Soviet ideological disputes not so much on the merits of the issues — these were hardly debated beyond a small coterie of top-level Communists — as because the Chinese formulations appeared to undermine the strategy and tactics which had, since 1952, gained the CPI legitimacy within the Indian political system. Also, in the conflict between the Chinese and Indian nation-states, the CPI, which had developed a vested interest in the prevailing political system, thanks to its parliamentary preoccupations of nearly a decade, sided with Indian nationalism rather than Chinese communism. True, the CPSU was anxious to keep the CPI under its wing, and in 1963 was even prepared to see a split in the party lest the revolt of the leftwing led to a mass exodus of the cadres at the state level.\(^{23}\) However, the majority faction's uncritical complete alignment with the CPSU was largely self-willed. Like the CPSU and the Indian bourgeoisie, the majority faction in the CPI saw more China than communism in the CCP; this China was

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21. "On certain questions before the International Communist Movement," unpublished resolution of the central executive committee of the CPI, September 1960. This document was one of the three major papers before the preparatory commission of the Moscow conference which included Ghosh, the two others being a secret 84-page CPSU letter to some of the fraternal parties on the ideological disputes, and the CCP's rejoinder to it.

22. The CPI claimed that it had made a major contribution to the formulation of the concept "national democracy" in the 1960 Moscow document. Mohit Sen, a CPI theoretician, described the concept as the "culmination" of the party's own formulations on the same lines since 1956. See Mohan Ram, *Maoism in India* (Delhi: Vikas, 1971), pp. 27-9. Its author says, "The concept of national democracy is an innovation of Soviet-Indian revisionism."

23. The CPSU accused the dissidents of attempts to split the CPI even in 1959. See *Partinya Zhizh*, No. 11, part I. "The CPSU leadership raised the bogey of a split in the CPI long before the dominant right group of the CPI came across any evidence of it. It was in the Soviet interest to avert a split at the Vijaywada Congress in 1961, and Suslov worked for a compromise. But, in 1964, the CPSU seems to have felt that if a split was not forced immediately, there was every chance of the whole party going over to the left group at the next party congress." Ram, *Indian Communism: Split Within a Split*, pp. 185-209.
perceived to be an arrogant and powerful threat to an India allegedly treading the peaceful transition path, to the beating of which the CPI believed that it had made no mean contribution.24

The CPI(M) and China

After the split in the CPI in 1964, the parent party as well as the Indian Government (supported by Moscow for a while and the Indian press for a long time) joined together to dub the CPI (Marxist) (M) as pro-China.25 The new Communist party, however, was at best a limited ally of the CCP in its conflict with the CPSU, never a partisan. Even this partial alliance was one-sided and short-lived. Chinese media welcomed the formation of the CPI (M) but refrained from reporting its strategic and tactical formulations. In fact, no ideological unity bound the CPI(M) leaders together; the party was formed on the basis of an agreed programme, not an agreed ideology. E. M. S. Namboodiripad made this clear in August 1965 when he pointed out that the party had taken no stand on the ideological issues that divided the international Communist movement; whatever views were expressed by individual leaders and members were their own. At that time the CPI(M) was caught in a crisis of revolutionary conscience: India was fighting Pakistani infiltrators in Kashmir. This shadow war led in September to the India-Pakistan war in which the Chinese firmly stood by Pakistan, condemned India as the aggressor, supported the Kashmiri people’s right to national self-determination and served India with an “ultimatum” threatening to intervene with force along the Sikkim-Tibet-Indian border. During the Indo-Pakistan war, the CPI(M) politburo condemned the Chinese intervention along the Sikkim border as well as the “ultimatum”; it rejected the

24. “Ajoy Ghosh, who had outlined a programme for a ‘national democratic front’ in India as early as February 1956 [on the eve of the 20th CPSU Congress] and had anticipated the Soviet thesis of peaceful co-existence was among those who prepared the documents for the 1960 Moscow conference. So the CPI can legitimately claim the concept of national democracy as its contribution to the international communist movement.” Maoism in India, pp. 28–9. A noted Indian intellectual believes that the friendship between India and the Soviet Union rests partly on the fact that Russia is the least occidental of the western countries and India the least oriental of the eastern societies. Sisir Gupta in Seminar, January 1965.

25. In a broadcast from Delhi on 1 January 1965, Union Home Minister, Gulzarilal Nanda said, “There is reason to believe that the new party (CPI(M)) was formed under Peking’s inspiration. It was to serve as Peking’s instrument in creating conditions of instability in the country and to facilitate the promotion of Chinese designs against India in furtherance of her grand strategy of establishing hegemony . . . over Asia and her declared aim of world revolution. There is reason to believe that the Left Communist Party has close links with the Chinese from whom it draws ideological inspiration and receives support in other forms.” Sinha, The Red Rebel in India, pp. 186–9.
Chinese interpretation of the Kashmir problem. It did not concede that the Nagas and Mizos were fighting for their "national liberation," nor that Pakistan was a progressive anti-imperialist country. The only difference between the two Indian communist factions was that while the CPI entirely echoed all of Moscow's charges against Peking, and shared the "nationalist" anti-China sentiments, the CPI(M) played its criticism of China rather low, and was anxious not to contribute to the "nationalist" hostility towards the Chinese. Thus, the CPI had denounced, while the CPI(M) had not, the first Chinese nuclear explosion in October 1964, but the Marxists had not sent greetings to the CCP like the pro-China Communist groups in Nepal and Ceylon.

For more than two years, the CPI(M) postponed taking decisions on the major ideological issues between Moscow and Peking. This remarkable passivity on the part of its leaders allowed various ideological groups to form within the party. In 1965 several leaders in prison reacted sharply to some of the ideological formulations by individuals or groups within the party and asked the leaders still at large to deliberate on the major ideological issues and come out with an authorized party position. The politburo prepared a draft which met with strong opposition from some of the leaders. The matter was dropped at that stage. It was, however, decided that while party journals could publish formulations of the fraternal parties on various issues, including the Indian situation, party members were strictly to go by the CPI(M)'s own line and reject all views that deviated from its official programme.

The CPI(M) leaders were obviously unprepared in 1966 for the first serious attempt that was to begin in Peking to construct a Maoist line for the Indian revolution. As I have tried to show in an earlier essay printed in this journal, construction of this line was taken up in Peking in early 1966; it picked up momentum soon after the official launching of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. It seems that the CCP started with the hope that it would be able to persuade at least a strong minority in the CPI(M) leadership to adopt the Maoist line or an acceptable Indian version of it. The Chinese justified the launching of the Maoist line for India on what Peking media perceived since the beginning of 1966 to be a widening revolutionary political crisis overtaking the Indian system. "The surging waves of the Indian people's struggle show that the various political forces of India are undergoing a great political upheaval, a great political division and a great reorganization," declared Peking Radio in the autumn of 1966, echoing the CCP 11th Plenum resolution on the Cultural Revolution. India was getting ready for the fourth general election in February 1967, and the CCP evidently wanted the CPI(M) to break away from the parliamentary tradition of the united CPI. The CCP probably did not want the CPI(M) to eschew parliamen-

26. Why the Ultra-"left" Deviation?, CPI(M) (Calcutta, 1968), p. 44.
tary politics *per se*, but it certainly wished to see the emergence in India of a militant form of legal struggle. This inference is based on the repeated projection through Peking media of the Maoist tactic of the broadest possible united front against the "reactionary authorities," big landlords, big capitalists and their imperialist masters. The CPI(M), however, opted for election strategies essentially no different from those of the CPI. The Chinese were disappointed. In April 1967 Peking Radio pronounced that "there is no Communist party of India. There are only certain individual Communists." 28

These "individual Communists" functioned from within the CPI(M); they were strong in West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh, but they existed in almost all the state committees. They had opposed the parliamentary line of the CPI(M) leadership. Some of these Communists in Bengal exalted the spontaneous tribal-peasant rebellion in the Naxalbari area of Darjeeling district in the spring of 1967 to an event of revolutionary import, and they were taken by surprise, as were the leaders of the CPI(M), when Peking hailed the rebellion as the "front paw" of a Maoist-type Indian revolution. Peking now put forward a well-constructed strategic-tactical line for Indian revolutionaries within and outside the Communist movement.

This line covered all of the three major issues in a Marxist-Leninist evaluation of an objective situation: the class character of the Indian state and government and the role and character of different sections of the bourgeoisie; an analysis of the objective political-economic situation, the nature of contradictions, and the tactics relevant to these contradictions; and the strategy and tactics of the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist party of the proletariat. The Chinese perceived the Indian bourgeoisie to be a parasitic class fostered by the British; they represented comprador-bureaucratic capital. The Congress government was the chief instrument and mouthpiece of this comprador-bureaucratic, monopoly capitalist class. For a while after independence, Nehru had acted on behalf of the progressive sections of the bourgeoisie. However, in the latter years of his life he had completely gone over to the imperialist camp as a result of the sharpening of internal class contradictions, as Chiang Kai-shek had done in China in 1927. The Congress government in 1967 represented the anti-national big bourgeoisie and big landlords; its foreign policy served the interests of imperialism as its domestic policies those of comprador-bureaucratic capital. While the Chinese saw actual or potential revolutionary ferment in most sections of the Indian population, they projected the broad mass of the peasantry as the motor force of revolution which must inevitably pursue the Maoist path of protracted peasant guerrilla warfare with bases built in the countryside. For this kind of armed peasant guerrilla struggle, they found the Indian countryside eminently ripe and suitable.

It was not quite clear whether the Chinese wished a vertical split of

28. Quoted in *Link* (Weekly), Delhi, 23 April 1967.
the CPI(M), or whether they were asking the Communist revolutionaries to capture leadership of the party through persistent inner-party struggle. However, when some of the Bengal revolutionaries launched the third Indian Communist party, the CPI(Marxist-Leninist), it was welcomed by the Chinese, who listed it as part of the Peking brand of the "international Communist movement.” Major formulations of the CPI(ML), notably of its leaders, Charu Mazumdar and Kanu Sanyal, both of them theoretical interpreters of the Naxalbari peasant uprising, were reported in Chinese media for more than two years, along with accounts of armed peasant struggles conducted under the party’s leadership, particularly the armed struggle of the Girijan tribals in the Srikakulam region of Andhra Pradesh. Peking was not unaware, as will be shown later, of the existence of several Maoist groups in India which had stayed out of the CPI(ML) and which had strong differences with the tactical line of Mazumdar, particularly after 1969 when Mazumdar proclaimed the tactic of “annihilation of class enemies,” and thereby reduced his movement to individual terrorism in isolated villages and, finally, since 1970, in the Calcutta industrial area where it became enmeshed with the violence of the lumpen proletariat. Nor were the Chinese ignorant of the severe organizational weaknesses of the Srikakulam “local committee” of Maoist revolutionaries that directed the peasant struggle in co-ordination with the CPI(ML), and their fatal differences with the “state committee” of Andhra Pradesh Maoists, who had nothing to do with the new Communist party.29

In reproducing the CPI(ML) formulations and reporting the exploits of the armed peasant struggles in Srikakulam and elsewhere, the Chinese, however, persistently tried to keep before the revolutionaries the essential features of Maoism, without which it would be impossible to mobilize the peasantry for a revolutionary agrarian programme and armed struggle. It was repeatedly stressed, for example, that there could be no guerrilla war without the active support of the rural masses; that the revolutionary Communist party must firmly rely on the poor peasants and the mass of the rural proletariat; that the party’s task was to carry out an agrarian revolution for which it must have a revolutionary agrarian programme and its cadres must integrate themselves with the peasants, sharing their thoughts and living their life; that there were clearly definable stages in a rapidly escalating peasant armed struggle – it had to progress from self-defence in rural bases to attacks on feudal forces after the peasantry had set up its own armed organizations; that the guerrillas could frustrate the encirclement and mopping up operations of the enemy only when they were closely united with the peasant masses; and that peasant armed struggle in the countryside must be supplemented by struggles of the

29. For an informative account of the various Maoist factions in India and their inter-relations during 1967–70, see Ram, Maoism in India, as well as my forthcoming Communism in Indian Politics (New York: Columbia University Press).
broad masses of people. Some of these essentials of Maoism were noticeable in Srikakulam and a few other much smaller areas for a while in 1969. But the "revolutionist" impatience of Charu Mazumdar, his refusal to organize broad mass struggles, his insistence that the CPI(ML) must function as a secret party, and the guerrillas operate in small, self-sufficient squads, his neglect of building up broad peasant support, the absence of any agrarian programme of the party, and, finally, Mazumdar's drift towards urban terrorism led to the failure of the armed peasant struggles in all of the CPI(ML) "bases." The Chinese suspended the publicizing of the CPI(ML) formulations and exploits in the autumn of 1970.

The CPI(M) Rejects the "Chinese Path"

The trauma of Chinese efforts to guide and inspire Indian communism could not escape either the CPI(M) or the CPI. Nor, for that matter, could it be ignored by the Indian government and the non-Communist political parties and forces. The Government and the non-Communist and anti-Communist parties predictably sought to utilize the Chinese intervention to mobilize nationalist sentiments against the CPI(M). However, behind this political game, there was an uneasy awareness that Communist mobilization of rural proletarian militancy would pose a formidable challenge to the Indian political system.

The CPI borrowed and then made its own the Soviet stance of the CCP and Mao Tse-tung. It had no theoretical problem in meeting the Chinese challenge. Maoism, for the CPI, was not Marxism-Leninism but a narodnik deviance fortified by petit-bourgeois chauvinism. The CPI adopted the entire spectrum of Soviet assessment of the CCP and its Maoist leadership. The CPI’s assessment of the Indian and world objective situation and of the major contradictions within India and the international community ran parallel to that of the CPSU.

For the CPI(M) the problem was very different and difficult. Among its cadres was a substantial number that would have preferred to abandon the parliamentary line and go in for militant mobilization of the masses. The party had been born of a protest against, and rejection of, revisionism, Soviet as well as Indian. It could not afford to have its radical image tarnished. It had rejected the anti-CCP "bourgeois-nationa-
list” stance of the CPI. The Marxists owed it to their genesis to have at least an open mind towards the Communist Party of China.31

It has been seen that the CPI(M) postponed for some two years its decisions on the main ideological issues that divided Moscow and Peking. When it did finally take up positions on these issues, it accepted most of the Chinese charges against Soviet revisionism without accepting any of the Chinese alternatives. The CPI(M), then, decided to be anti-revisionist without being a Maoist party. On two crucial claims of the CCP, however, the Marxists adopted a negative stand. They were not prepared to recognize that the Soviet Union had become a country of capitalist restoration or that it had forged a collusive relationship with U.S. imperialism against China. Nor were they prepared to accept the Chinese formulation that contradictions between revisionism and Marxist-Leninism, that is, between the U.S.S.R. and China, had become antagonistic, ruling out unity of action against imperialism. The effect of rejecting these two major aspects of Maoism since 1965 was that the CPI(M) was able to extract the CPSU’s recognition of it as “the rival Indian Communist Party.” The Chinese, however, were less indulgent. The CPI(M)’s acceptance of most of the CCP position on the international Communist movement and on the revisionist character of the CPSU leadership was not enough for it to be recognized by the Chinese as a true Communist party.

The Marxist leadership came out with its formulation on ideological issues after the Chinese had condemned it as revisionist, and acclaimed the Naxalbari peasant revolt as the herald of the Indian revolution. Naturally, the leadership defended its own strategic-tactical line and rejected the Maoist alternative put forward by the Chinese media. The CPI(M), in fact, rejected the entire CCP assessment of the objective Indian situation as “highly exaggerated and extremely subjective,” and running counter to the Marxists’ own understanding of Indian realities. India, according to the CPI(M), was going through a “deepening economic crisis and the initial stages of a political crisis,” whereas the CCP perceived it as already plunged into a political crisis of revolutionary magnitude.32 To the CPI(M), the Indian Government was a bourgeois-landlord government led by the big bourgeoisie which was compromising and collaborating with foreign monopoly capital, and not a “puppet government led by comprador-bureaucratic capitalism, run principally in the interests of imperialism.”33 On the contrary, the Indian Government,

31. For ideological perspectives of some of the prominent CPI(M) leaders in 1964, see A Contribution to Ideological Issues, New Delhi, 1964. This publication was not issued on behalf of the party evidently because the party at that time had no official ideological line.

32. Political resolution adopted at the Madurai session of the CPI(M) central committee. Supplement to People's Democracy, 10 September 1967. Earlier, in July, the politburo issued a statement declaring that the “entire assessment” by “Peking Radio” of the Naxalbari struggle was “at complete variance with that made by our Party.” The Statesman, 2 July 1967.

33. Supplement to People's Democracy, 10 September 1967.
China and Indian Communism

according to the CPI(M), had a wider social base when compared to most of its counterparts in several countries," and it did not face the imminent danger of class revolution at home. It had therefore no need to play the role of a puppet, a stooge or lackey of imperialism.  

Our own experience teaches that the congress party still holds considerable political influence among the people, that several bourgeois-landlord reactionary parties still command a certain mass following, that the character of many petty-bourgeois parties and groups still is not exposed to any appreciable extent, and that the proletariat and its revolutionary party are far from properly organized and built. In the face of such reality it would be a grave error to exaggerate this aspect of sharpening class contradictions to the point of suggesting that class revolution on the part of the masses has already become [so] immediate and acute and menacing to the bourgeoisie as to make its capitulation to imperialism final and irrevocable.  

The CPI(M) believed that contemporary Indian capitalism and the Indian bourgeoisie were very different from their counterpart in China before liberation. The place and role of the comprador-bourgeoisie and its bureaucratic capital in pre-liberation China was also different from the role and place of the big bourgeoisie in contemporary India. Bureaucratic capital was a special feature of the Chiang Kai-shek regime. Though bureaucratic capitalist tendencies were present in India, these were by no means the principal characteristic of the situation. However, the CPI(M) did not consider the Indian bourgeoisie, because of its "natural" counter-revolutionary character, to be deserving of a place in the people's democratic front despite its occasional contradictions with foreign monopolies.  

The CPI(M) took a much harder view of the Chinese ideological position after the 9th Congress of the CCP. The politburo in a statement in May 1969 rejected some of the principal strategic formulations in the Report to the 9th Congress as "highly incorrect" and as violating the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism. Among these were, first, the "completely novel and absurd class division" of the imperialist and social-imperialist countries, "reducing the contradictions between the Soviet Union and the imperialist countries to one of inner-imperialist contradictions." Secondly, the CPI(M) rejected the Chinese term "revisionist countries" as applied to those socialist States whose leaders had taken to various norms of reformism and revisionism. The Chinese concept implied that all countries of the socialist camp, with the sole exception of China and Albania, had become "revisionist States and countries," and had ceased to be socialist; this to the CPI(M) was an attempt to define these States not on the "essential criterion" of productive relations, but on the basis of "ideological errors and deviations of...

34. Ibid.  
35. Ibid.  
36. Ibid.  
the leadership.” Thirdly, the CCP at the 9th Congress had so formulated and presented the contradictions as to “arbitrarily elevate” all the ideological-political differences in the world Communist movement to the “level of social contradictions.” Revisionism and right opportunism was no doubt a bourgeois trend of thought and as such alien to Marxism-Leninism, but “it is highly incorrect to equate it with, and transform it into, one of the antagonistic and fundamental world social contradictions.” The CPI(M), then, refused to recognize Maoism as the only manifestation of correct and pure Marxism-Leninism, and rejected the Chinese claim that the U.S.S.R. and the East European countries had ceased to be socialist.

Even less acceptable to the CPI(M) was the claim that Mao Tse-tung Thought was the Marxism-Leninism “of the era in which imperialism is heading for total collapse and socialism is advancing to worldwide victory.” The politburo statement said, “It is elementary that no individual, or for that matter, no Communist Party and its leading committee can be considered as infallible.” Marxism-Leninism had come to be used “to convey the complete meaning” of the “science” of socialist transformation of capitalism, and although Mao had made a great contribution in guiding the new-democratic revolution to victory in China, the politburo “neither sees the justification to add the word ‘Mao Tse-tung Thought’ to Marxism-Leninism . . . nor does it deem to be correct that all that is being thought by Mao Tse-tung shall necessarily be infallible Marxism-Leninism.” The CPI(M) also took serious objection to the nomination of Lin Piao as the successor to Mao; this was building a Communist party “on faith,” and not on the sound foundation of democratic centralism. It was “really strange and monstrous” to replace the principle of democratic centralism by the “principle of succession.”

The CPI(M) thus came close to the Italian Communist Party in exercising its right to publicly criticize the CPSU as well as the CCP. In so doing, it projected itself as one of the few really independent Communist parties in the non-Communist world. Unlike the Italian party, however, the CPI(M) was kept officially outside both factions of the world Communist movement, and of either of the two premier Communist parties.

Neither the CPI nor the CPI(M) visualized the Indian revolution traversing the Chinese path. The CPI, because of its close ties with the CPSU, took an even dimmer view than the CPI(M) of the relevance of the Chinese revolutionary model for India. The CPI was categoric in its conviction that

There is not a ghost of a chance for that type of a long drawnout armed guerrilla warfare which went on in China for 22 years to succeed in India. Here and there some type of armed resistance might go on for some time. But it cannot take you to final victory as in China. In India any revolution can succeed only under the direct leadership of the proletariat with cities as the leading center of revolution.38

This conclusion came from the once-Maoist Rajeshwara Rao. In 1969 Rao took a very different view of the role of the peasantry in the Indian revolution. Considerable capitalist development had taken place in India, argued Rao, to make it very unlike the China of the 1930s and 1940s. A “big, modern proletariat” had come up, rendering out of place the Chinese model of armed guerrilla warfare in the countryside.

Experience of the last decade and a half in our country shows that it is always the working class, apart from its strike actions, which is at the head of the mass movements like bandhs (moratoriums), bartals (closures) etc. that have taken place against the Congress regime. The peasantry is yet unable to come forward in a big way into the general mass movement.39

The CPI(M) saw for the rural proletariat a much bigger role in the revolution than did the CPI; its experience of peasant mobilization in West Bengal since 1969 enabled it to take a more hopeful view of the role that peasantry could play in the general mass movement. However, the Marxist party’s thinking on the role of the peasantry in the revolution appeared in the summer of 1971 to be still in the process of development. At the theoretical level, the Marxists had already given the rural proletariat an equal position with the urban working class as motor force of revolution: the two were equal allies, rather than leaders and followers. Tactically, a certain priority had been given since 1969 to mobilization of the rural poor and to base-building in the countryside. However, the CPI(M) was not prepared to put the peasantry in the place of the vanguard of the Indian revolution; in other words, it was not ready to go in for “peasant communism” in India. Nor did the Marxists believe that India was ready yet for protracted peasant guerrilla warfare. Without formally rejecting the relevance of the Chinese model for India, the Marxists appeared in 1971 to be willing to adapt certain aspects of the Chinese revolution to Indian conditions. Creative thinking in this regard came primarily from Harekrishna Konar, General Secretary of the All-India Kisan Sabha (the peasant organization of the CPI(M)), and member of the party’s politburo. Konar appears to be emerging as the principal CPI(M) theoretician on the crucial question of peasant mobilization. What distinguishes Konar from the Indian Maoists of the early ’50s is that his strategic concepts and tactical thinking stem not from preconceived dogma but from the actual experience of peasant mobilization in West Bengal since 1967. It is largely due to Konar’s organizational ability and intellectual acumen that the CPI(M) has succeeded in building an extensive as well as intensive rural base in West Bengal and Tripura, thus liberating the Indian communist movement, for the first time, from the predominantly urban working-class orientation imposed upon it by the CPSU.

During the last four years, there has been a systematic development in Konar’s tactical direction of the Marxist-led peasant movement in

West Bengal, and his tactical line is now accepted as the party's main guideline for peasant mobilization throughout India, although mobilization is still woefully weak outside Bengal, Tripura and Kerala. Konar explained his tactical line in an interview with me in June 1971. "India is neither China nor the Soviet Union," he said; "our revolution has to be fashioned by the objective realities of our own society, which neither the Chinese nor the Russians can be expected to understand in all their complexities. The main difference between India and China is that the Chinese have had no experience of legal forms of struggle, as Mao Tsetung has himself admitted. We in India, on the other hand, have little experience of illegal forms of struggle. Our task is to combine legal and extra-legal forms of struggle to build up a revolutionary momentum amongst the poor and the deprived. In other words, we must learn how to make revolutionary use of the parliamentary system. And in this neither the Soviet nor the Chinese revolution has very much to teach us. We have to beat our own path, and if we can do it, we would have added our contribution to the vast and varied pool of the revolutionary experience of Marxist-Leninists all over the world."

Konar agrees with Mao that the peasantry must be the mainstay of the Indian revolution, although neither he nor the CPI(M) leadership is prepared to concede to the peasantry leadership of the revolution. The CPI(M) tactical line provides for a revolutionary alliance of the working class and the rural proletariat, and there is a Gramscian emphasis on mobilization of the landless peasants and sharecroppers. The CPI(M) is, then, closer to Togliatti than to Mao in its peasant mobilization tactics. However, Konar was able to obtain from the CPI(M) leadership in 1969 endorsement of a tactical concept, born out of the rapid expansion of the party's rural base in West Bengal during 1969–70, that in the present context of Indian realities, priority be given to mobilization of the rural masses rather than the urban working class. At the same time, he developed the concept of an intensive peasant movement in "large, contiguous areas," which would provide the CPI(M) with a strong and extensive rural base. Since mobilization had to be around class demands of the peasantry, the polarization created by class struggles had to be immediately politicalized, so that the peasant movement did not become a prisoner of reformism, the bane of the Indian working class movement. Evidently, in Konar's thinking, Indian communism cannot expect to flourish without large and strong peasant bases, but these could not clearly resemble the peasant guerrilla bases of the Chinese Communist Party. The reason is simple: the India of the 1960s and 1970s is very different from the China of the 1930s and 1940s.

Konar does not reject the idea of armed peasant struggle; in fact, he is steadily moving towards the conclusion that this may be inevitable in India. What he rejects is the idea of "armed struggle here and now." In West Bengal and Tripura, the peasant movement now allows for extensive employment of the concept of "armed resistance"; the landless have been organized to take possession of the excess land of the jotedar
(that is, land possessed fraudulently in excess of the ceilings imposed by law), and to defend these lands “with blood, if necessary.” Sharecroppers have been encouraged and organized to defend their crops with whatever arms they can get hold of. These instrumentalities have informed the peasant movement in West Bengal, Tripura and Kerala (in that order) with a controlled, organized militancy hitherto unnoticed in India. Peasant militancy has introduced parts of the countryside to the anguish of an agrarian civil war. The fact that at the time of writing more than 100,000 troops are currently engaged in restoring law and order in the Bengal countryside and that troops have had to be deployed in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and, on a smaller scale, in Uttar Pradesh to ensure peaceful harvesting indicate that communist mobilization of agrarian unrest has already imposed a severe strain on the Indian political system.

“We are fully conscious of the importance of strong bases in the countryside and we are trying to build such bases,” Konar said in the course of the interview. “The CCP was right in pointing out the fatal weakness of the PKI in Indonesia: it had no bases to fall back upon when the army pounced upon it, and in a few weeks’ time in 1965 nothing remained of the largest Communist party outside the socialist bloc. Similarly, in East Bengal, the army was able to rout the nationalists in March 1971 only because they had no organization outside Dacca and a few district towns.” The CCP, however, was wrong in asking Indian Communists to build peasant guerilla bases immediately. The Indian revolution must proceed step by step, through its own experience, learning from the accumulated experience of the Soviet, Chinese, Vietnamese and other revolutions, and also from the failures of other revolutionary attempts, especially in Indonesia. The objective conditions in Bengal and in India were far from ripe for armed struggle. Communists must make the fullest use of the parliamentary system to mobilize the poorer sections of the peasantry as well as the working class and the urban middle classes for revolutionary action. “When we say that we intend to wreck the system from within, we mean that we intend to use it for the purpose of revolutionary change, not to whitewash the status quo.” 40

Conclusion

Of the two significant manifestations of Communist-led peasant struggles in India since 1967, the Maoist-type guerrilla war has been flushed out by the state security forces, while the CPI(M)-led struggle of

40. For a fuller account of Konar’s interview, see my “Peasant mobilization by Indian Communists,” in Problems of Communism, January–February 1972. See also Harekrishna Konar: “What does it really mean?” People’s Democracy, 31 March and 7 April 1968; Millions Fighting for Land and Wages, CPI(M) (Calcutta, 1970); Why the Ultra-Left Deviation?, CPI(M) (Calcutta, 1969) and Letter to Andhra Comrades, CPI(M) (Calcutta, 1969).
defensive militancy has gained ground in three states and has built up a presence in three or four more. Meanwhile, Chinese support for the military regime in Pakistan in its determined bid to destroy the nationalist struggle of the people of East Bengal has caused dismay even in the ranks of the CPI(ML). The CPI(M) has denounced both the Chinese and Soviet positions on the "Bangladesh" issue, while the CPI has gone along completely with the Soviet Union, condemning the Chinese for their support of the Pakistan Government.

It is difficult to say at this time whether the Chinese are revising their policy of direct intervention in the affairs of Asian Communist movements, specially the Communist movement in India. Indications are that they will not completely abandon intervention, indeed they cannot, in view of their conviction that they have discovered the path revolutions must take in the newly liberated societies. What is possible, nevertheless, is a return to the caution and realism of the pre-Cultural Revolution period. The triumph of Maoism within the frontiers of China has witnessed no victories for Maoism outside these frontiers. This had led the CPSU to conclude that while Maoist China will remain an unpleasant fact of life for an indefinite period, Maoism has failed as an international movement.41 Paradoxically, Maoism seems to have had a greater impact on intellectuals and youth leaders in the advanced countries of the West, including the East European societies, than in Asia and Africa. If Mao has resolved to devote the rest of his life to building "true" socialism in one country, namely, China, he may also have realized, in a somewhat Stalinist fashion, that this China must live peacefully with the rest of the world until it has acquired sufficient economic and military strength to measure muscles with its principal adversaries. The current phase of sweet reasonableness in Chinese foreign policy may, then, witness a return to the Maoist wisdom that revolution is not for export, and that while the Chinese revolution remains the model for the agrarian societies of Asia and Africa, each national Communist movement (if not party) must through trial and error arrive at this inevitable path on its own. This was the central theme of the Lin Piao thesis of September 1965 –

41. Immediately after the 9th CCP Congress, the CPSU came to the conclusion that "the CPR's return to the path of scientific socialism will be a complicated and difficult process, attended by all sorts of unexpected occurrences." The CPSU took an alarmist view of China's intervention in the socialist countries to foster anti-Soviet groups. "The policy of the Mao Tse-tung group in the international arena," Kommunist, No. 5, March 1969, pp. 104–16. However, two years later the CPSU apparently found Maoism to be less of a danger to international communism and to the socialist bloc. "The so-called cultural revolution in China completed a definite cycle in the evolution of the Maoist political line. It would appear that at the present stage of China's historical development, the Maoist political and ideological platform has won a temporary victory . . . assessing the struggle against Maoism in the broad historical perspective, it can now be said that Maoism has suffered defeat on an international scale." "24th CPSU congress and international situation" (a symposium report), International Affairs, No. 8, 1971, pp. 4–5.
it was the most organized attempt to export the strategic and tactical content of the Chinese revolution without promising active Chinese assistance to the making of revolution or threatening direct Chinese intervention in the affairs of revolutionary movements and parties.

The mid and late 1960s probably held some compulsion for the CCP to assume a role in actively guiding revolutionary movements in some of the neighbouring countries. In 1965 the majority of the Asian Communist parties were inclined to side with Peking in its ideological conflict with Moscow; the Communist Party of Indonesia’s (PKI) pro-Peking and anti-Moscow stance was undoubtedly a source of strength to the CCP. The collapse of the PKI must have come as a tremendous shock to the Chinese. It is probable that in analyzing the causes of the PKI’s rout, the CCP leadership came to the conclusion that China must do whatever it could to more than warn the Communists in Asia, Africa and Latin America of the dangers inherent in copying the Soviet revolution and in pursuing the CPSU 20th Congress strategies and tactics. It was probably with this objective in view that the decision was taken in 1966 to encourage the formation of Maoist groups and movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The rivalry with the U.S.S.R. – especially the rejection of unity-in-action in early 1966 – was, of course, an additional motivation.

It so happened that this attempt to energetically promote Maoism in the “third world” coincided with the proletarian Cultural Revolution of which the CCP “establishment” became one of the first and worst victims. The tested, battle-hardened leaders were either under persistent, and often cruel, attack of the Maoist revolutionaries or were anxious to demonstrate that their own revolutionary fervour equalled or even surpassed that of the Red Guards. There is no evidence to suggest that the projection of the Maoist line to the Asian Communist movements, at any rate to the movement in India, was preceded in 1966–7 by careful objective assessment of actual social, economic and political situations obtaining in individual societies. Revolutionary fervour apparently got the better of Marxist-Leninist homework. This seems to be borne out by the Chinese assessment of the Indian situation in 1966–7; the CCP saw a revolutionary political upheaval in India because it wished to. The CCP’s perception was the poorest when it came to subjective realities of the Indian situation.

Apparently this was realized in Peking after the CCP was brought under control of the leadership installed at the 9th Congress. According to documents allegedly seized from top “Naxalites” by the Calcutta police, the CCP in 1970 made “bitter criticism” of the “style of work” and the tactical concepts of Charu Mazumdar and of the leadership of the CPI(ML).42 In the autumn of 1970 Peking media ceased publicizing

42. The CCP reportedly offered four main points of criticism. Mazumdar was wrong in concentrating his activities in the Calcutta urban area and in neglecting the rural areas; he had failed to consolidate the gains made in the rural areas
the exploits of Mazumdar and his party. Then followed a long period of studied silence about Indian communism and a substantial lowering of attack on Indian “reactionaries,” as well as on the CPI(M). In the first week of October 1971 (the time of writing), however, Peking Radio took notice of the factional quarrels within the CPI(ML) leadership, and reported, for the first time, the exploits of a Bengali Maoist who broke with Mazumdar probably in 1970 and has since set up a parallel body, “the West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa Regional Committee of the CPI (ML).” Mazumdar’s rivals are apparently making a bid to take over the party, and the CCP appears to have lent them its moral support.

The Chinese should have realized that it is by no means easy to promote a Maoist movement in India. They are not likely to give up all attempts, nor are they expected to go back to the euphoria of the late 1960s. They will probably make low-level efforts to encourage peasant-oriented militant radicalism in the Indian communist movement. Meanwhile, their intervention during 1967–70 has not been without some profound impact on the movement. The Chinese have succeeded in bringing the rural proletariat to the forefront of Indian communism. They have certainly persuaded the CPI(M) to turn to the poor and middle peasant as the motor force of revolution and adopt such potentially promising concepts, in the context of Indian realities, as “priority to the rural proletariat over the urban working class,” “building of an intensive peasant base over extensive, contiguous regions,” and “armed resistance” by peasants in “defence of their gains and rights,” with the help of “armed volunteers.” They can also be said to have helped in making peasant guerrilla warfare part of Indian political language.

during 1967–9; he had been guilty of too much centralism as well as of sectarianism. The Statesman, 11 October 1971, pp. 1 and 9.

43. The name of this man is Ashim Chatterji. He was able to build a strong rural base for the CPI(ML) in Birbhum district while Mazumdar concentrated his strength on urban terrorism. Chatterji is now reported to have extended his activities to Orissa and Bihar. However, there are several other Maoist groups in West Bengal, Bihar, Punjab, Andhra, Tamilnadu and Kerala, who have either kept away from Mazumdar or have broken with him. So far these groups have made no attempt to come together or even to co-ordinate their activity.