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The CPI precisely sets itself that objective. The CPI is perfectly clear that India cannot complete the national democratic revolution, much less make the transition to socialism, under the present state power. It is of the view that the present state power is the state power of the capitalist class as a whole. Under this state power and this class rule India can make only

limited progress along the capitalist path. It cannot lead to the elimination of the imperialist economic positions and influence. It cannot lead to the liquidation of landlordism and the tiller becoming the master of agriculture. It cannot lead to the abolition of Indian monopoly capital. India cannot attain economic independence nor can the vast masses of our people be relieved of their terrible poverty, disease and illiteracy. Inequality, corruption and injustice are inherent in the capitalist path and in the class rule of the Indian capitalist class epitomised in the Indian state.

The CPI is firmly of the view—and always has been—that the class power of the capitalists as a whole in India has to be ended and the state power taken over by the working class, the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie and the non-monopoly strata of the capitalist class. India cannot progress, cannot advance in the direction of socialism without completing the national democratic revolution; in short, India needs a revolution.

On the stage of the revolution, i.e. that it is the national democratic stage and not the socialist stage, there is no difference between the CPI and the various groups who are generically termed Naxalites. They, too, believe that in India the new democratic (or people's democratic or national democratic) stage of the revolution has to be completed before we can go on to the socialist stage of the revolution.

The difference is first on what constitutes a revolution. This has been dealt with in the preceding section. They equate revolution with individual acts of violence carried out by individuals or squads against individuals. And since the CPI repudiates this viewpoint they slander it as having ceased to be revolutionary.

It needs to be stressed here that Marxism-Leninism is fundamentally opposed to the philosophy and practice of individual terrorism. This is nothing new but what was put forward by Blanqui, Bakunin and their followers long ago. Marx, Engels and Lenin long ago refuted these views.

Engels defined the Blanquist concept of revolution in the following words:

“...believing that if a small well-organised minority should attempt to effect a revolutionary uprising at the right moment, it may, after scoring a few initial successes, carry the mass of the people and thus accomplish a victorious revolution” (Marx-Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, Moscow, 1969, p. 381).

Marx, Engels and Lenin sharply differed from the view of revolution as a conspiracy and a coup. They regarded the revolutionary uprising as an action of the revolutionary class as a whole, or at least, its majority.

Engels, therefore, concluded: “Obviously, Blanqui is a revolutionary of the old generation. These views on the course of revolutionary events are long since obsolescent, at least as far as the German Workers' Party is concerned and in France, too, they can meet the approval of the less mature or more impatient workers” (*Ibid*).

It is no accident that even in those days the advocates of the conspiratorial concept of revolution did not rely on the workers and their organisations, but on the lumpen proletariat, thieves, vagabonds, pimps and others.

Engels warned about this long ago: “The *lumpenproletariat*, this scum of depraved elements from all classes, with headquarters in the big cities, is the worst of all possible allies. This rabble is absolutely venal and absolutely brazen. If the French workers, in every revolution, inscribed on the houses: *Mort aux voleurs!* Death to thieves! and even shot some, they did not do it out of reverence for property, but because they rightly considered it necessary, above all, to get rid of that gang. Every leader of the workers who uses these scoundrels as guards or relies on them for support proves himself by this action alone a traitor to the movement” (*Ibid*, p. 163).

Engels, one of the founders of Marxism-Leninism, also came out sharply against political murders, arson and senseless brutality. He said: “...what a lack of critical attitude is needed to declare the Commune impeccable and infallible and to assert that every time a house was burned down or a hostage shot, this was a case of retributive justice... Is this not tantamount

to asserting that during the week in May the people shot exactly those persons, and no more, than was necessary to shoot, that exactly those buildings were burned down, and no more, than had to be burned down. . . . Such childish patter results when essentially quite good-natured people give in to the urge to appear savagely brutal" (*Ibid*, p. 385-86).

Lenin also condemned political assassinations, robbery, etc. as the form of struggle "adopted as the preferable and even *exclusive* form of social struggle by the vagabond elements of the population, the *lumpenproletariat* and anarchist elements" (*Marx-Engels-Marxism*, Moscow, 1965, p. 158).

It is significant that Lenin thought it necessary to propose a draft resolution on terrorism at the Second Congress of the RSDLP in 1903, which reads:

"The congress decisively rejects terrorism, i.e. the system of individual assassinations, as being a method of political struggle which is most inexpedient at the present time, diverting the best forces from the urgent and imperatively necessary work of organisation and agitation, destroying contact between the revolutionaries and the masses of the revolutionary classes of the population, and spreading both among the revolutionaries themselves and the population in general utterly distorted ideas of the aims and methods of struggle against the autocracy" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 6, p. 474).

It should also be remembered here that never in all its history of over a century has the communist movement ever resorted to the killing of the cadres and leaders of other political parties as a part of its revolutionary struggle. Lenin was shot at by an anarchist revolutionary, but never did the Bolsheviks ever kill any of the leaders of the Mensheviks, Socialist-Revolutionaries or even of the bourgeois parties. Can anybody imagine Lenin calling for the physical extermination of Kautsky or Bernstein or Martov or Plekhanov? Can anybody cite a single statement of Lenin asking that his followers should use pistols and knives and bombs to kill the representatives and followers of the revisionists, social-chauvinists and even outright imperialist parties? On the contrary, even during the days of the cruel civil war in Soviet Russia, the prisoners of

the counter-revolutionary armies used to be treated well and attempts made to win them over. The idea was to fight ideologically and politically at the individual level and not to indulge in assassination and terrorism.

All this is quite contrary to the practice of the Naxalites.

Here we would like to remind the Naxalites of certain episodes in our history. It is a most unfortunate fact that the CPI has not brought out a short history dealing with some of its most basic experiences. However, certain episodes are well known enough and non-controversial though not known to most of the youth who have turned to Naxalism.

As early as 1929-30 there was a controversy between the CPI and the followers of Bhagat Singh who had formed themselves into the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association with its armed wing the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army. There was agreement on the programme and on the fact that to end British imperialist rule an armed revolution was necessary. The disagreement was on how this revolution was to be accomplished and what was to be its character. The CPI was of the view that the revolution had to be an armed revolution conducted by the masses. And to bring the masses to this realisation, ideological-political work had to be conducted among them, their struggles had to be conducted, their organisations had to be built and the CPI itself had to get entrenched among the toiling people so that it could lead them to higher and higher forms of struggle culminating in the mass armed revolution. The CPI also emphasised that a true revolutionary would be one who would work, first and foremost, among the workers and the peasants. Not that the students were to be neglected but they could not be given priority over the workers and peasants. Bhagat Singh and his colleagues thought differently. They were of the view that the way to begin was by bomb attacks and shooting of hated British police officers. And they believed that the students, since they were educated and young, should be the first to be approached for this kind of revolutionary work. Each went along its own path and each had respect for the other. But in the end the surviving members of Bhagat Singh's Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, almost to

a man, joined the CPI after agonising rethinking. One of them, the late Ajoy Ghosh, rose to the highest post in the party dying in 1962 as the General Secretary of the CPI. History, evidently, settled the controversy in favour of the CPI.

Nor was this an isolated case. The same process was repeated in the case of the famous Chittagong Armoury Raid participants and so many other anarchist revolutionaries who in the Andamans and other jails rethought their positions. And they came to the conclusion that revolutionising the masses, organising them, leading their struggles and patiently building the party might seem humdrum and be less exciting than conspiratorial meetings, planning the next raid or the next assassination but it was more revolutionary work.

There is another experience of the CPI to which the attention of the Naxalites needs to be drawn. And that is the Telengana armed struggle of 1946-51. It began not with armed action but with intense mass work and sweeping mass movements headed and organised by the Andhra Mahasabha and the Communist Party. These had an anti-feudal and anti-imperialist edge directed as it was against the autocratic rule of the Nizam, for an Andhra state, for civil liberties, for radical land reforms. Step by step the militancy of the masses rose and they took to more and more advanced forms of struggle. All this was taking place against the all-India crisis of British imperialist rule, in the wake of the defeat of fascism and the worldwide postwar revolutionary upsurge, especially in the Asian continent. Thus it was that, led by the communists, the down-trodden peasants took to arms and regular squads were formed of armed peasants who seized the land from the jagirdars and deshmukhs. And they liberated as many as 2,000 villages and distributed as much as 10 lakh acres of land. When the troops of the Nizam wanted to reach the liberated region, the peasants themselves tore up 80 miles of railway tracks.

The whole situation changed when the Nehru government sent in its armed units. This action had a dual purpose. One was to scotch the conspiracy of the Nizam to establish an "independent" Hyderabad which would serve as an important base for the British imperialists. The other was to smash the

Telengana liberated area and destroy the armed struggle. At that time, however, the majority of the peasants and other democratic sections in the Hyderabad state believed that the armed units of the Nehru government came as liberators, as the representatives of independent India which wanted to do away with the Nizam's autocracy. Hence, they did not respond as before to the appeals of the communists to conduct armed struggles as previously, but this time against the armed units of the Nehru government as well as the Nizam. For a long time, however, the majority of the communist leadership refused to understand the changed situation and the shift in the mass mood. Willy-nilly they persisted in armed struggle with ever-decreasing mass support. Deeds of heroism were performed as in the past but this did not end the isolation from the masses. Eventually the armed squads were reduced to roaming in the forests escaping from the enemy and only bothered about where the next meal would come from and where next they would be able to have their drink of water. And isolated from the people many were caught and killed by the enemy and the communist movement lost about four thousand of most dedicated cadres and talented revolutionary organisers.

It is quite true that the communist movement can never win without heroic sacrifices but it is equally true that mistakes leading to the loss of precious lives which need not have been lost is a terribly costly affair. After all, dedicated communists and talented mass organisers take years to train and are hard to come by.

It is only after this costly experience and when the entire party self-critically reviewed its "left" adventurist line that the armed struggle was called off in 1951. It is time that a complete review of this whole period be made but there are no two opinions in the CPI about the cost of the delay in calling off the armed struggle when the masses were no longer for it. Indeed, that is the central lesson both of the glory and of the mistakes of the Telengana armed struggle—that armed struggle requires leadership but is essentially a matter of the masses themselves. There can be no substitution for the masses.

At this stage the argument can be raised that this is all very well but the CPI believes in peaceful transition and therefore has no right to be counted as being in the revolutionary ranks. Let us deal with this argument. As has been related above Lenin also believed in the possibility of peaceful transition in Russia from February to June 1917. Is he also to be placed outside the revolutionary ranks? It should be remembered that both Marx and Engels also stated that in England and Holland at any rate there was the possibility of a peaceful transition to socialism. As Pratap Mitra has pointed out even Mao Tse-tung thought that in China after the anti-Japanese war there was this possibility. Are they to be consigned to the non-revolutionary or anti-revolutionary dustbins? The CPI is in quite good company—the company of the founders of Marxism-Leninism when it states that peaceful transition is one of the possible forms of the Indian revolution.

But the stand of the CPI should neither be misunderstood nor distorted. Nowhere has the CPI said that peaceful transition is the only possibility or the more likely possibility; the CPI has categorically stated that there is equally the possibility of the Indian national democratic revolution taking the form of insurrection and civil war. Nor is this all. The CPI does not equate striving for the realisation of the possibility of peaceful transition with the parliamentary path. It certainly does not equate the possibility of peaceful transition with winning electoral victories in state assemblies or even in Parliament. Peaceful transition as one of the possible forms of the Indian national democratic revolution means, in the main, the unleashing of powerful, militant mass movements and actions, the building of strong mass organisations, the formation of a broadbased national democratic front. The CPI certainly does not rule out the use of violence and of armed action in certain places at certain times to rebuff the attacks of the enemies of the national democratic revolution. It is the development of all these forms of struggle and the resulting growth of the CPI into a nationwide mass revolutionary party that will simultaneously increase the possibility of peaceful transition and also prepare the necessary force to meet the

challenge of insurrection and civil war should this become necessary.

The following passage from the CPI programme puts the whole thing very clearly: "The Communist Party of India strives to achieve the establishment of national democracy and create conditions for the advance to the goal of establishment of socialism by peaceful means. By developing a powerful mass revolutionary movement, by winning a stable majority in Parliament, backed by such a movement, the working class and its allies will strive their utmost to overcome the resistance of the forces of reaction and transform Parliament from an instrument serving the bourgeoisie into a genuine instrument of the people's will for effecting fundamental transformation in the economic, social and state structure.

"The rallying and the cohesion of the revolutionary forces of the working class and all working people and the expansion of mass revolutionary action is of decisive importance for winning a stable parliamentary majority, for the victory of the revolution.

"The form of transition depends on the international situation and on specific internal conditions, mainly on the latter. The Communist Party and the working class work for creating and strengthening necessary conditions for the peaceful path to socialism by developing broadbased popular struggles for the strengthening and extension of democracy; by curbing the power of the monopolistic big bourgeoisie and reactionaries and by isolating them; by giving a resolute rebuff to the opportunist elements; by ceaselessly developing class struggles of the workers, peasants and other democratic sections of the people against the forces of reaction.

"It needs to be always borne in mind that the ruling classes will not relinquish their power voluntarily. Experience shows that they defy the will of the people, and seek to suppress it by lawless and violent methods. It is therefore necessary for the revolutionary forces to so orient themselves and their work that they can face up to all contingencies, to any twists and turns in the political life of the country."

Thus, there is ample scope for the members, sympathisers

and supporters of the CPI to display to the full all their revolutionary idealism, energy, tenacity and wisdom. A grand revolutionary perspective is open before them. Hard but absorbing, creative and fulfilling work lies ahead to act as the vanguard and the pioneers of all the workers, the toilers and the downtrodden of this poor but great country of ours. But the CPI cannot make any promise of immediate results of sensational activity and of forms of action that bring the participants headlines in the papers at least for some time.

At this point one must point out that in adopting this flexible approach to the possible forms of the Indian national democratic revolution, the CPI bases itself on the firm Marxist-Leninist methodological principles in dealing with this question.

Lenin had stated:

“Our ‘left’ communists, however, who are also fond of calling themselves ‘proletarian’ communists, because there is very little that is proletarian about them and very much that is petty-bourgeois, are incapable of giving thought to the balance of forces, to calculating them. This is the main point of Marxism and Marxist tactics, but they disdainfully brush aside the ‘main point’ with ‘proud’ phrases...”

“Marx did not commit himself, or the future leaders of the socialist revolution, to matters of form, to ways and means of bringing about the revolution. He understood perfectly well that a vast number of new problems would arise, that the whole situation would change in the course of the revolution, and that the situation would change *radically* and *often* in the course of revolution” (*Selected Works*, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1964, pp. 739 and 753).

Lenin had also stated:

“What are the fundamental demands which every Marxist should make of an examination of the question of forms of struggle? In the first place, Marxism differs from all primitive forms of socialism by not binding the movement to any one particular form of struggle. It recognises the most varied forms of struggle; and it does not ‘concoct’ them, but only genera-

lises, organises, gives conscious expression to those forms of struggle of the revolutionary classes which arise of themselves in the course of the movement... In this respect Marxism *learns*, if we may so express it, from mass practice, and makes no claim whatever to *teach* the masses forms of struggle invented by ‘systematisers’ in the seclusion of their studies...

“In the second place, Marxism demands an absolutely *historical* examination of the question of the forms of struggle. To treat this question apart from the concrete historical situation betrays a failure to understand the rudiments of dialectical materialism. At different stages of economic evolution, depending on differences in political, national-cultural, living and other conditions, different forms of struggle come to the fore and become the principal forms of struggle; and in connection with this, the secondary auxiliary forms of struggles undergo change in their turn. To attempt to answer yes or no to the question whether any particular means of struggle should be used, without making a detailed examination of the concrete situation of the given moment at the given stage of its development, means completely to abandon the Marxist position.

“These are the two principal theoretical propositions by which we must be guided” (*Marx-Engels-Marxism*, Moscow, 1968, pp. 157-58).

Which of the Naxalite leaders, to say nothing of their youthful followers, chose to be guided by these very precise injunctions of Lenin when they decided upon the specific form of armed struggle to be adopted in India as the only form of struggle? Can the Naxalite leaders and their youthful followers deny that in deciding upon the form of struggle they were guided wholly and solely by the desire to apply capsuled Maoism as made available in the Red Book? Neither an examination of the experience of the masses and their struggles nor an examination of the concrete situation in India, as well as of the world, was made by them before they launched upon their course and chose to send so many fine young men to their futile deaths.

What is even worse is that in very many cases a regular cult of violence and blood was indulged in. It became a part of so-

called training to make the youth agree to become blindly obedient followers of China's chairman who was also their chairman and his Indian plenipotentiary, Charu Majumdar. The more blindly obedient the better, since vacant minds resemble white pieces of paper on which Mao and his representatives could write whatever they pleased. Another aspect of this so-called training came to be called declassing—some of it quite healthy like learning to talk the language of the masses and learning to live the same hard lives as the masses and being ready to sacrifice everything for the masses. This attracted the idealism and sense of self-sacrifice, evoked the romanticism which is to be found in the best of our students and youth. But to this was added a deliberate course in cruelty and sadism which only the reactionary classes teach to their mercenary killers. An atmosphere of mysticism and some kind of blood brotherhood feeling was built up which is appropriate for gangs but singularly out of place in the ranks of Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries.

Another extraordinary fact needs to be recorded. And that is the astounding ignorance about India among the student Naxalites who, at least, cannot put forward the alibi that hard conditions of life made such knowledge impossible. Nor can they claim that they had no time for study since their heads are stuffed with all sorts of odds and ends of knowledge about China. Certainly it can be said about them that if they have any knowledge about any country then that country is China. About their own country they have no knowledge beyond what is put forward in certain editorials and articles in the *Peking People's Daily* and *Red Flag*.

For example, it is the claim of the Naxalites that India never won freedom since there never was any struggle for freedom, consequently India is a neocolonial state where US imperialism is gradually supplanting and taking over (some would say has already taken over) from the British imperialists. And in this nefarious game the western imperialists collaborate with the Soviet social-imperialists (about the Naxalites' anti-Sovietism we would like to say something a little bit later). In the countryside of India feudalism and semi-feudalism reign

supreme. The Indian bourgeoisie as a whole is a comprador bourgeoisie but a national bourgeoisie will emerge when the Maoist revolution is nearing its culmination! But the whole beautiful scheme falls to the ground when it is asked whether the conclusions were arrived at after study of the situation of India. No such study has been made. The student Naxalites are blissfully unaware of any statistics about the relative positions and rate of growth of Indian monopolies, Indian capital as a whole, and British and US capital investments. They imagine that the size of India's working class in 1970 is about the same as China's in 1927. The railway mileage in India in 1970 being many times larger than that in China in the 1920s is also something they know nothing about. India is the same as China was when the revolution began there because "China's Chairman who is also our Chairman has said so"! And that is the end of all argument as well as of any factual studies.

Unthinking imitation of China is carried to such absurd lengths as when Charu Majumdar grandiloquently announced that some time in the summer of 1971 India would witness its Long March. The route was undecided for some time and then eventually it was said it would be from Midnapore to Purulia. Up to date this particular Long March has not materialised but that is not the main point. The main point is that the cadres, if not the leaders, seemed not to know that the Long March in China was a strategic retreat which the Chinese communists had to undertake since "left" adventurism had led to the smashing of their bases in the south and they were retreating to the north where Kao Kang had established a base with Yen-an as its centre and which had the Soviet Union as its rear.

Here, too, the Naxalites were only imitating the absolutely wrong methodology that was followed by the dominant leadership in the CPI from 1948-51. With B. T. Ranadive at the helm, serious ideological debate, full of quotations, took place as to whether India in 1948 was where Russia was in February 1917 or whether it was closer to where Russia was in October 1917. The entire analysis of the Indian economy and politics was done in terms of the "Russian model" so as to prove that India's revolution would be identical with that of Russia. As against

this another section of the CPI leadership, located mainly in Andhra, argued that what was wrong with the Ranadive line was that it did not recognise that the Indian path of revolution would be the Chinese path since India in 1949-50 was like China in 1927. And they backed up their line with an equal deluge of quotations and also studies of India *a la* the "Chinese model".

Ever since 1951 and more particularly since 1956 the CPI has been making serious efforts to break with this pernicious methodology which has nothing to do with Marxism-Leninism. Learning from the mistakes inevitably committed by following this "imitation" method, the CPI has been trying, and with ever greater success, to apply the universal truths of Marxism-Leninism, the general laws of revolution to the specific conditions of India. Naturally, any such effort necessitates learning from the experience of the fraternal parties, more particularly the experience of the CPSU. Such effort also involves fully participating in, benefiting from and contributing to the discussions and conferences of the international communist movement. Creative application of the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism to the Indian situation and revolutionary practice and their development cannot be done in isolation from the international communist movement. The CPI certainly does not equate the process of the independent analysis of the problem of India and the elaboration of the general line of the Indian revolution with any kind of *Indianisation* of Marxism-Leninism. It is no accident that the period when the CPI has been endeavouring to creatively apply the general principles of Marxism-Leninism to the Indian situation and revolutionary practice is precisely the period when the CPI has also deepened and broadened its ties with the international communist movement.

A specific feature of the Naxalite imitation of Maoism is the denigration of the role of the working class. As a matter of fact, this attitude brings their positions very close to the theories of Marcuse who also preached that the working class had become an "integrated" element in the advanced capitalist countries and that, therefore, it could not be considered revolutionary. He

placed his reliance upon the new "barbarians"—the thieves, prostitutes and the unemployable lumpen elements—and upon the students—who were yet to be employed and therefore "non-integrated". Even as he was propounding these theses in Paris, ten million French workers went on their magnificent general strike in May 1968, occupied the factories and declared their sympathy with the student revolt. Marcuse had to acknowledge that Marx was right after all and that he would have to reconsider his views!

There were some ultra-"lefts" among the students like Cohn-Bendit and others who also sneered at the workers and sniped at communists. They derided the idea that workers who, according to them, were "routinised" by life and the communists who believed in "organisation" could ever play a leading role, or any prominent part, in such a "spontaneous adventure" as revolution. They declared themselves against "obsolete communism" and proposed a "left-wing alternative". And this "alternative" was nothing but a rehash of the old anarchist ideas of Bakunin which Marx had demolished a century ago—all the old ideas of the "passive mob" to be galvanised into action by an elite of "young heroes", about revolution which would "find its own path" and should not be "imposed upon" by any party.

It is interesting to note that the French monopoly press and the radio and television played up these ultra-"left" demagogues while blacking out the news of the magnificent actions of the workers and blackening the French communists. The monopolists and their political representatives tried their utmost to provoke the French communists to make some adventurist move so that an Indonesia could be repeated in France. De Gaulle who knew best the class interests of the monopolists declared that the communists were his enemy No. one! And he rallied a vast number by depicting the Cohn-Bendits and their ilk as the "real communists with their masks off"!

All this happened in the middle of 1968, only some three years ago. What remains of the Cohn-Bendits and their theories of "obsolete" communism? Who even remembers them these days? And at the same time the great French Communist Party

grows, fights and steers its course towards the establishment of an advanced democracy as the transition to a socialist France.

Round about the same time another Frenchman called Régis Debray claimed to be the "true" interpreter of the Cuban revolution and put forward "novel" revolutionary theories under the signboard of a "revolution within the revolution". His "novelty" was that he felt that revolutionary work had to begin with armed struggle. He declared that it was the "small motor" of the armed struggle that would set in motion the "large motor" of the mass struggle. According to him conditions in Latin America were such that armed bands of youth, mainly students, would have to get into the countryside, hide themselves from everybody including the peasants and go about killing policemen, soldiers and landlords. Such actions would gradually win over the masses, lead to the setting up of guerilla "foco" and this would lead to the building of the party, etc. Not only power but the communist party, too, would emerge from the barrel of a gun! Debray declared that to work in the city was to commit suicide or to go over to revisionism. He also stated that the working class would, since it was tied to the city and was by its very existence tied to the productive mechanism, play a very auxiliary role in the revolution—at best sending a few organisers to the villages to carry out sporadic armed actions. Debray went on to declare that the majority of communist parties in Latin America had betrayed the revolution, become revisionist and had surrendered their independence of action to the Soviet Union and the compulsions of its foreign policy! Hence the first act of the "revolution within the revolution", according to this theory, is to split, disrupt and destroy the existing communist parties. It will not be missed that this objective, whatever may be the intentions of the persons pursuing it, is exactly the same as that of the imperialists.

For some time this theoretical scheme of Debray had attracted a great deal of attention, publicised as it also was by the mass media of the imperialists. Many brave and noble persons were attracted by it especially as it came to be associated with the name of that great revolutionary and internationalist Che Guevara. The exemplary courage, sacrifice and heroism of

Che Guevara seemed to give some sanction to the theoretical scheme.

But time and experience soon showed that this was a false trail. In Latin America itself those groups who tried to implement these ideas landed in disaster. More and more voices critical of Debray began to be heard even among those revolutionaries who were not communists. New experiences also accumulated. Chile showed that given unity of the left and the anti-imperialist forces generally, given powerful mass campaigns and struggles, revolutionary social transformations can be accomplished without insurrection and civil war. Of course, it is not to be ruled out that in Chile, too, the counter-revolutionary forces may force a civil war with bitter armed clash. Still, the path to power in Chile has been quite different from that envisaged by the ultra-"left" who based themselves on Debray. In Peru and in Bolivia military governments came to power which not only adopted anti-US policies but carried through nationalisation measures against US capital as well as radical agrarian reforms. Both these governments increasingly turned to the working class, the peasantry and their mass organisations, including the communist parties, for help and alliance. Here, too none will deny that many zigzags and ups and downs are possible (as has been the case in Bolivia where a counter-revolutionary coup has overthrown the earlier government) but certainly these developments go contrary to the dogmas of Debray. It may be mentioned that Debray himself after being released from jail in Bolivia has gone to Chile and so far as one knows has not been pushing his previous theories there. It is still more significant that he is no longer the favourite of the imperialist mass media as before.

The crux of the matter is that the ultra-"left" whether adhering to Maoist or to Marcusean or to Debrayan positions negate the historic role of the working class and have the oddest ideas as to why the working class has this historic role.

Marx, Engels and Lenin never considered that the working class would be the leading force in the revolution of our times because it was the poorest class or even the most oppressed. They, or rather history, assigned this role to the working class

because of its intrinsic quality, its place in production and its position in the totality of the capitalist system. The working class is a class which owns no means of production—not a class which has no personal property like clothes, fan, books, furniture, radio etc. It is a class without property in the sense that it does not own the means of production not in the sense that it owns nothing at all. The working class is a class which by its very work is exploited daily and hourly by the capitalist class and without whose exploitation (the extraction of surplus value) the capitalist class could not exist as a class. The working class is a class whose numbers are constantly being increased by the very expansion of capitalism itself. The working class is a class whose very work links it to the most advanced methods of production. The working class is a class whose very work teaches it discipline and organisation. It is these objective facts, quite independently of anybody's feelings or desires, that make the working class the most revolutionary class of our times, the leading force in the world-wide transition from capitalism to socialism.

But, in particular, as Lenin pointed out, the working class cannot fulfil its role unless socialist consciousness is brought to it from outside of its day-to-day struggles for economic demands. Unless this is done the working class will remain a class-in-itself and not become a class-for-itself. The working class cannot spontaneously and on the basis of its economic struggles alone acquire consciousness of its historic role, i.e. socialist ideology. Hence, it is that the working class in order to realise its potential has to be headed by a vanguard party, a Marxist-Leninist party, which acts as the bridge between the spontaneous mass movement and socialist consciousness. Hence, it is that the leading role of the working class and the vanguard role of the Marxist-Leninist party form one dialectical whole.

Two wrong ideas have to be cleared up here. One is about the role of economic struggles. To confine the actions of the working class and work among it to economic struggles is economism. But to engage in economic struggles is not economism! The Naxalites, and many others, often confuse these

two separate phenomena. Marx, Engels and Lenin, however, never did this. They always insisted that there are three forms of class struggle—economic, theoretical and political. They always stressed that the three forms should be combined and simultaneously waged. They always stressed that if the worker would not fight for a decent wage and a higher living standard he could not be expected to fight for political power. But they also stressed that the worker's movement must inscribe on its banners not the slogan of fair day's wage for a fair day's work but the abolition of the wages system. They stressed that the worker must always realise that to get better wages under capitalism was simply to be a better paid slave. Hence, they stressed that to wage economic struggles was necessary but to combat the ideology of economism was also essential.

The second wrong idea in this context is a misunderstanding about the introduction of socialist consciousness from outside of the day-to-day struggles of the working class. Lenin stated that here the members of the intelligentsia would have to play a special role. But this did not mean that the intelligentsia would lead the working class. He stressed that only those members of the intelligentsia who acquired the standpoint of scientific socialism, i.e. the standpoint of the working class, could do this essential work. He also stressed that this essential work had to be done, above all and in the first place, among the working class. Further, he also stressed that those would be best equipped to do this work who came from the working class itself, i.e. the intellectuals who were themselves workers—what Gramsci called the organic intellectuals of the working class. There was no question of Lenin ever encouraging the intelligentsia to acquire a superiority complex vis-a-vis the working class. There was also no question of Lenin ever advocating that the ideology of scientific socialism could be equally well propagated among any section of the toilers or the oppressed and the poor in general. Lenin not for an instant abandoned the class stand and class positions.