CHAPTER II

AGRARIAN MOVEMENTS IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW
India has predominantly an agrarian economy. More than 70 percent of its population depends on primary sector. In local parlance they are known as 'kisan', 'peasant' in English. The term peasant is used differently by different authors. Eric Wolf applied three criteria to define this term [Wolf, 1955, 1966 and 1970]. In 1955 he used 'ownership of land' and in 1966 'ownership of land and exploited surpluses', as critical criteria to define peasants. Finally in 1970 he defined peasants as: “populations that are existentially involved in cultivation and make autonomous decisions regarding the process of cultivation.” According to Daniel Thorner [1980], peasants include all those who depend on land, including agriculturists with small holding operated by family labour, landless labourers, and supervisory agriculturists. Andre Beteille [1974] feels that the term 'peasantry' is misleading in the Indian context. However, relationship between agricultural labourer and master has undergone a change during pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial period. Further due to development of Capitalist Mode of Production in certain parts of India, majority of agricultural labourers are now free wage labourers. This led to change in the Patron-Client relationship, which used to govern the conditions of their work and life [kannan, 1988]. Therefore, putting peasantry and agricultural labourers in one category raises some conceptual problems. However for convenience sake, the term 'peasantry' will be used in a broad sense in the ensuing discussion.

Studies in peasant movements in India has recent origin. The glorious Chinese revolution, series of agrarian movements in Latin American countries, and the Maoist movements in mid 1960s in India, attracted Indian scholars in this field. Most of the studies of Indian peasant movements started after the mid-seventies. Barrington Moore Jr. [1967] questions the revolutionary potential of the Indian peasantry. He argues that the Indian peasants are traditionally 'docile', and 'passive', due to peculiar village structure, caste system, Hindu religion, power alignment and class alliances. Moore's proposition has been challenged by Kathleen Gough [1974], A.R. Desai [1979], D.N. Dhanagare [1983], Ranjit Guha [1983] and others. All these authors maintain that
Indian agrarian society was rocked by protests, revolts and large scale militant struggles throughout the British rule. Even in independent India, peasants exhibit their revolutionary potential under the leadership of CPI, CPM, CPI (ML), MCC, PWG and other organisations. Although, achievement of Indian peasant movements vis-a-vis Chinese and European peasants, are not satisfactory. But this question needs extensive imperial research and indepth analysis.

1. Classification

Indian peasant movements can be divided into three major periods: pre-British, Colonial and post-Colonial era. Some scholars divide post-Independence period into: pre-Naxalbari and post-Naxalbari periods, or pre and post-Green Revolution periods [Desai, A.R., 1986]. The latter period is further divided into pre and post-Emergency [Balgopal, K., 1988]. According to T.K. Oommen [1985], there are certain movements which started during the pre-independence period and continuing till today, albeit their goals have been changed.

However after independence, the Indian State initiated various measures which brought about perceptable changes in socio-economic and political structure of agrarian India. These changes affected the nature and type of agrarian struggles in post-colonial era.

Let us quickly, glean through some of the salient features of the agrarian struggles during the British period, which are no longer significant now.

First, in the ryotwari area, struggles were between entire peasantry, including rich and middle, and the British rules. Where as in the zamindari area, the main struggles were between the zamindars and the tenants and sub-tenants. But, after the abolition of zamindari system, nature and content of the struggles have
changed. Secondly, after the merger of around six hundred princely states, and emergence of independent India, the kind of agrarian struggle in and against the princely states no longer exists in its original form. Thirdly, most of the tribal revolts were targeted against the British forest laws and penetration of moneytary economy, which had serious repercussion on the tribal's traditional socio-economic and ethical identity. Fourth, in pre-independent India, autonomous peasant movements existed, but they also operated as tributaries to the national liberation movement against colonialism [Oommen, T.K., 1985 :7]. But, in modern India the peasant struggle is pitted against the internal enemy for a just distribution of the national resources. Finally, movements launched by the agrarian proletariat were often ignored and subordinated to anti-zamindari struggles in the colonial period [Omvedt, G., in Desai, A.R., (ed.), 1986: 168]. But these movements have become the dominant form of rural class conflict in independent India, with changed demands and objectives.

Although, some common features can be located in the agrarian struggles of pre and post-colonial era. But, demands and objectives of the struggles have significantly changed due to the emergence of different agrarian classes and different types of state machinery, with different aims and objectives.

The Indian state, after the partition, accepted capitalist postulates as the axis of economic development and modernization [for detail see, Desai, A.R., 1984 & 1961]. The central aim was to strengthen and expand the industrial, commercial and agrarian proprietary class, who could produce for market and profit. Through planning mechanism, infrastructural and other facilities were provided to stimulate these classes. On the other hand, vast body of legal, financial, institutional and cultural devices were framed to prevent those classes which obstructed the endeavour to develop on the capitalist path. These measures resulted in many basic changes in the content and nature of the agrarian struggles, with marked departure from the struggles during the British period.
Although, scope of this section will be confined to mainly those agrarian movements which started in the post-independence period. However, we will glean through those agrarian struggles which started during colonial era and continued even after, and those which have important bearing on the post-colonial agrarian struggles. In doing so, the entire agrarian movements will be divided into two broader categories. First, those movements which sought change within the institutional framework. Second, those beyond the institutional framework. Further, it will be divided into All India Landscape, to assess their impact on the Bihar peasant movements in general and the Maoist movement in Bihar in particular, and its probable effects on the formation of ‘Senas’. Then attention will be focused on the Regional (Bihar) context. But, first we will dwell upon the agrarian situation in India, very briefly, which provided fertile ground for such struggles.

2. The Agrarian Situation in Independent India

Withdrawal of the colonial power brought about far-reaching changes for the Indian Society in general, and in the agrarian areas in particular. Modern Indian State became more uniform and cohesive, both politically and administratively. The Central and State Governments implemented multi-pronged measures to transform agrarian society. Introduction of adult franchise and Panchayat Raj tried to transform the political life of rural people. Whereas, Land Reform Measures, National Extension Services and Community Development Programmes, assistance to small-scale and cottage industries, legislative measures to eliminate feudal mode of exploitations, and development of agriculture on capitalist line, all were

1. However, recent form of 'agrarian struggle' - movement for higher prices for sugarcane, onions wheat, etc., and low prices or concessions for inputs; will not be dealt with because they are not really struggles within the agrarian sector but rather struggle between a rising kulak class and the industrial bourgeoisie.
directed to change the economic structure of rural India [for detail see, Desai, A.R., 1986:16-19]. These measures not only changed the agrarian class relations, but also influenced the caste configurations in the country side.

The zamindari abolition and related government policies created two contradictory trends in Indian agrarian structure. As per the government rule, the tenants could secure ownership of land by paying compensation to the concerned landlords, which was often beyond the capacity of the poor tenants. Therefore, majority of the poor tenants denied ownership, lost tenurial security and became non-owning proletariat. On the other side, rich tenants acquired bulk of the ownership rights and adopted capitalist mode of production. Thus, the government measures created an expanding strata of capitalist landowners. On the other hand, started the process of proletarianization of poor tenants and sub-tenants, thereby converting them into a new kinds of bonded labour rooted in the capitalist mode of production. This in turn, sharply changed the agrarian class relations.

Roughly speaking, modern Indian agrarian classes can be divided into four major categories [Desai, A.R., 1986:22]:

1) Rich farmers and landlords constitute 7 percent of the population possess 50 percent of total land, owning 15 acres and more.

2) Middle farmers possess 30 per cent of total land, constitute 19 per cent of the population, owning between 5 and 15 acres.

3) Poor farmers owning between 1 to 5 acres constitute 30 per cent of the population, possess 17 per cent of the total land.

4) Agricultural labour owning less than one acre possess 2 per cent of the total land, constitute 44 per cent of the rural population.
Above figures show that just 7 per cent of the dominant population possess 50 per cent of the total cultivable land, as against 74 per cent of the lower population possess a meagre 19 per cent of the total land. Still, this figure does not provide clear picture of horrifying agrarian situation, which should be viewed in terms of the quality of lands, dry and wet, together with other factors. However, it is this rural class configuration that played decisive role in shaping the social profile of rural India.

Further, government policies not only changed the class structures, but also changed the caste equation in rural India. In capitalist development, achievement rather than ascription is the critical criterion of mobility. This transformed castes into competing associations. Now caste is undergoing adaptive change to suite the new pattern of economy and polity emerging in the country.

Due to planned capitalist development, the position of erstwhile dominant castes is weakening and intermediate castes have consolidated their strength. However, polarisation within the intermediate castes is taking place. Only small number of them became prosperous, while majority of them are pauperized and proletarianized. Although, process of pauperization is true for all castes. It is more acute in the case of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, backward castes and communities.

However, the above scenario is true for central - Bihar as well. Here, erstwhile tenants of intermediate castes (Yadav, Kurmi and Koiri) have consolidated their economic position and emerged as powerful Kulaks of the area. On the other hand, economic status of upper castes has declined considerably in the rural areas of the region. But majority of the backward castes, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes have been relegated to the level of poor peasants and landless labourers, due to modern market mechanism and market oriented agrarian economy.
Government measures have created complicated and contradictory trends in rural India. On the one hand, the lower castes, having lower economic status, are regrouping themselves for upward mobility in socio-economic and political ladder. On the other hand, there is a realignment of socio-economic and political power among upper and intermediate castes. These emerging proprietary classes play upon caste sentiments, which has dual effects. Through caste sentiments and false hopes, they prevent their pauperized caste-fellows from uniting with other castes having similar situation. Secondly, emerging modern capitalist classes utilise their caste associations and caste sentiments to achieve their non-caste, socio-economic and political objectives. Thus, modern Indian rural society is witnessing a peculiar dialectical process. Caste as competing association has become a powerful ideological weapon of the proprietary classes to carry on competition among themselves and to divide the proletarianized classes in rural society. Thereby, became a stumbling-block in the unity of toiling and exploited masses, in the struggle against exploitation under the emerging ‘capitalist politico-economic social order’ [Desai, A.R., 1986:27].

However, this dialectical process is much sharper in agrarian structure of central-Bihar. It is important to note here that central-Bihar is better placed in terms of agricultural production and use of modern inputs, amidst the general stagnant economy of Bihar. This region has relatively high propensity of mechanisation of agriculture, use of fertilizers, greater market-orientation and wider use of wage labour, increased production, etc.

It is interesting to note that, it is in central-Bihar region that not only the radical agrarian movement has got propitious ground for continuation for over 23 years and still it is continuing. But also for the first time, in this region, landed gentry launched their private Senas in the entire history of Naxalite movements in India, so far. These Senas are mobilised mostly on caste lines, by the landed gentry,
largely to maintain their hegemonic position in socio-economic and political realms of rural Bihar. This endeavour has serious effect on the unity effort of the toiling masses by the different Naxalite groups in this region. The newly emerging proprietary intermediate castes (Yadav, Kurmi, etc.,) together with dominant upper castes try to suppress the revolutionary tide through their respective caste Senas. But contradiction among these dominant castes get sharper when question of socio-economic and political domination comes to the fore. This has direct repercussion on the strength of above Senas and imposes serious limitations on them.

However, with increasing number of agrarian proletariat and deepening hardship, they became more and more desperate. Under the impact of new politico-economic and other forces, the lower strata are becoming aware of the true nature of their problems. This led to sharpening conflicts among and between the newly emerging proprietary classes and the pauperized and proletarianized toiling masses. This in turn, resulted in various types of agrarian struggles. These struggles can be, broadly, divided into two distinct categories. The movements launched by the newly emerged proprietary classes together with prosperous middle peasant and streamlined landlords. Second, the movement launched by the agrarian poor in which the agrarian proletariat acquired central place [Omvedt, G., in Desai, A.R.,(ed.), 1986].

The main aim of the movements launched by the newly emerged agrarian proprietary classes is to secure more concessions, assistance and facilities from the political authorities. These movements work as pressure groups to benefit from various types of developmental measures. It is important to note that they collaborate with non-agrarian proprietary classes to exploite and oppress the rural poor. Quite often, they support the state for this purpose. They not only organised many organisations, but also form various types of Senas, or semi-military armed
bands. They actively collaborate with the State apparatus to crush the movements of the rural poor, thereby intensify their exploitation and oppression.

The second category of movements launched by the agrarian poor, are directed against proprietary classes and various forms of exploitation, sexual and cultural oppression, and political repression, terror and violence. It is vital to note that, these movements are qualitatively different from the movements of the first category. Struggles launched by the rural poor not only question the efficacy and morality of the modern socio-economic framework, but also expose the inability of the developmental measures to mitigate their vulnerable conditions. These movements exhibit the desirability of radical social change and transfer of power from the dominant classes to the proletariat and toiling masses.

Having said all this, now let us dwell upon the movements that sought change within the institutional framework.

Conflict Within the Institutional Framework

In colonial India, the dominant form of agrarian struggle was launched by the Kisan Sabha. The organisation was first formed in the ‘Shri Sita Ram Ashram’ at Bihta in West Patna district in 1927. It acquired all-Bihar status in 1929 (B.P.K.S) and all-India body by 1936 (A.I.K.S). Swami Sahajanand Saraswati emerged as an undisputed leader of the Sabha. The permanent settlement and its consequences created fertile ground, and the tenants provided explosive man power which was channelised by the Kisan Sabha.

The ideological basis of the permanent settlement was highly capitalist of the laissez faire sort [Guha, R., 1963]. This created contradiction when it came in contact with primitive agrarian social structure. This gave rise to numerous
agrarian movements in Bihar from the very beginning of colonial rule [Sengupta, N., in Das, A. N., (ed.), 1982: 15]. But these movements were largely unorganised and sporadic [Das, A.N.,1983: 94]. With the formation of the Kisan Sabha, these movements got crystallised into an organised formidable mass movement. Before we dwell upon the movement, let us quickly glean through the then agrarian situation of Bihar.

1. The Agrarian Scenario

The primary aim of the permanent settlement was to extract maximum public revenue through zamindars. Until the first half of the nineteenth century, no attention was paid to mitigate the deteriorating condition of actual cultivators. Each successive government regulations strengthen the zamindars to realise their demands on the tenants [Ray, S.C., 1915]. The Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 recognised for the first time some rights of tenants. However, mere declaration of the Act annoyed the zamindars and raised the expectations of the tenants. This sharply increased the agrarian tensions [Sengupta, N., op. cit. : 18].

Although, big zamindars were relatively few in Bihar except states like Darbhanga, Bettiah, Banaili, Dumraon, etc. But the zamindars maintained elaborate establishment which was an added burden on the tenants. With growing indebtedness of the average landlords, they frequently resorted to extract more and more from the tenants, through their tyrant amlas (Serviceholders), or transfer their proprietary rights to scruples money-lenders and usurers.

With the increasing land values and the increasing pressure of population on land, the zamindars started evicting tenants from their occupancy holding on some pretext or other. No attention was paid to develop or maintain minor irrigation facilities in central Bihar during nineteenth century [ Chaudhuri, B.B., 1976 ].
zamindars were reluctant to spend any thing, even to maintain indigenous irrigation works. This led to large-scale decay of the irrigation facilities [Gupta, R.L., 1934: 81]. In such a situation, the tenants were unable to produce enough to meet the rent. As a result, they lost large parts of their holdings in rent-decree sales [Sengupta, N., op. cit. : 19]. The situation was compounded by the Great Depression of 1930's. This caused a catastrophic fall in prices of agricultural products, which in turn, caused difficulty in the disposal of stocks and so payment of rent and cess [Mansfield, P.T., 1932 : 14]. On the other hand, the rent-price discrepancy was enormous. The zamindars had no mercy in collecting the rents and were quite regular in paying the revenue [Ibid.:81]. Natural calamities added fuel to the fire. Floods in 1934-35 [Solomon, S., 1937 : 17], and drought in 1935-36 [Narayan, K., 1938 : 21] wiped out crops. The great earthquake of 1934 [Wilcock, J.S., 1935 : 5] further aggravated the situation.

While peasants were pushed against the wall by economic and natural forces, the zamindars continued their depredations [Wilcock, 1935: 88, and Solomon, 1937 : 117]. They continued with forced labour (begari), illegal payments (abwabs) under one pretext or the other, illegal cesses (salami) and rackrenting [Sengupta, N., 1980]. Tenants were left with no choice but to organise themselves and launch agrarian movement. This gave rise to the famous Bakasht Movement under the banner of the Kisan Sabha [ for detail see, Sankrityayana, R., 1943 & 1950]

Alongwith economic exploitation, the zamindars perpetrated various types of extra-economic coercion. Cruality of the zamindars in central Bihar was unheard of. The zamindar of Rewra in Gaya District sent his retainers to milk lactating tenant women of lower caste, due to shortage of Cow's milk [Sankrityayana, R., 1943:140]. Even for the higher caste tenants, sale of their daughters was one of the major source of livelihood [Ibid.]. Further, restrictions were imposed on the lower caste
tenants on ritual observances, by the higher caste zamindars. This caused serious discontent among the tenants of lower castes.

Soon, movements developed among relatively affluent lower castes for higher ritual status and to oppose social oppression. Yadavas and Bhumihars were on the forefront.

Cultivations and animals husbandry are two major sources of income of the Yadavas in Bihar. In recent past, they consolidated their economic position due to capitalist development and fast rising demands for dairy products in towns. Being backward caste tenants, they were subjected to social humiliation and economic exploitation. In 1920s they started socio-religious movement. Soon the movement took up economic issue and sporadic unrest followed [Das, A.N., 1983: 70]. But the movement remained largely unorganised.

The caste movement among the Bhumihars was different in significance from the Yadavas. The Bhumihars are agriculturist caste, but differentiation among them is much greater than the Yadavas. Some Bhumihars were big zamindars while majority of them were tenants. The Bhumihars were denied ritual status of Brahmins, as they were cultivators. Their social discontent got channelised into socio-religious movement under Bhumihar Brahmin Mahasabha [for detail see, Sahajanand, 1952: 159-295]. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati provided the leadership. But in 1925-26 the Mahasabha got divided into the 'moderates' and the 'extremists', or between the landlords and British loyalists, and the non-landlord and enlightened section. Sahajanand sided with the latter group and set up an Ashram in Bihta, to teach Sanskrit to the tenant's wards [Ibid.:285-95]. Later this Ashram became the focal point of peasant movement with Sahajanand as the

2. Even today 'Yadavs' are classified as "Backward Castes" in Bihar, for detail see, Banerjee, Naresh, "All the backwards", Sunday, Special issue, 9 April 1978, Calcutta.
moving force. Thus, caste based socio-religious-cultural movement quickly
developed into peasant movement to fight against social and economic exploitation
and oppression.

In the course of its struggle, the kisan Sabha passed through different stages. The process of its fission and fusion with different political parties was constantly continued. This provided dynamism and change in the Kisan Sabha movement. Let us quickly fillip through the pages of the history.

2. The Interface of the Kisan Sabha and other Political Parties

From the very beginning, Sahajanand tried to keep the Kisan Sabha out of party politics [for detail see, Sahajanand, 1952: 555-8]. His main aim was the resolution of peasant distress. But inspite of his best efforts, the Kisan Sabha not only got 'politicised' but Sahajanand also came to be identified with different political parties at different times. The Kisan Sabha started out as an organic part of the national movement, led by the Indian National Congress. Initially, the kisan Sabha was dominated by the large number of Congressmen. But, within few years the landed interest of many Congress leaders came in conflict with the Kisan Sabha's policy and programmes [Das, A.N., 1975]. On the other hand, radicalised section of the young Congressmen formed the Congress Socialist Party in 1930s, and came closer to the Kisan Sabha. They formed the All India Kisan Sabha [Sahajanand,—, ]. But this association could not last longer. During the Second World War, Gandhi came in confrontation with the radical nationalists led by Subhash Chandra Bose, who later formed the Forward Block [Limaye, M.,1952 and Masani, M.R., 1954]. The Congress Socialist Leaders sided with Gandhi, and Sahajanand came closer to the Forward Block. He helped Bose to organise an Anti-Compromise Conference at the Ram Garh Venue of the Congress Session in 1940 [Das, A.N., 1983: 100].
After the formation of the Indian National Army by Bose with the support of Japan, Sahajanand came increasingly closer to the Communists, took for a while the pro-Soviet 'People War' line [Sahajanand, 1942 : 128-29]. Soon after the War, even the Communists and Sahajanand started falling apart. After independence, Sahajanand formed an 'independent' Kisan Sabha [Rai, A., et.al., 1946]. Thus, by the end of 1940s, the mighty and united peasant organisation in Bihar was split up by the Congressmen, Socialists, Ranga-ites, Forward Bloc-ists, the "Swami-ites" and finally by the Communists. However, the zamindar - peasant struggle was continued, and peasants kept resisting landlord's violence in almost every part of the province.

3. The Movements

Historically, agrarian movements are not a recent phenomenon in Bihar. There were isolated cases of peasant uprisings, such as the Santhal insurrection of 1855-56, the Munda uprising of 1899-1901 and the Indigo riots of 1867, 1877 and 1907 [for detail see, Sinha, L.P., 1956]. By the end of 1920s, the peasantry of Bihar were not only getting aware of their right on land, but also becoming integral part of the anti-colonial struggle. It was more so because peasant's land question was inextricably linked with nationalist movement [Johnson, C., 1962]. Furthermore, "in the ultimate analysis the national question is a peasant question" [Piao, Lin, 1970]. Mahatama Gandhi was aware about this vital reality that, the peasant nationalism could be used to eliminate British colonialism. It was due to this fact that, Gandhi launched the first Non-Cooperation Movement in 1921, after two successful experiments with the peasant question — Champaran Satyagraha [Prasad, R., 1949 : 24] and Kaira, Gujarat [Hardiman, D., in Low, D.A., (ed.), 1977: 72]. Although, Gandhi withdrew the Non-Cooperation Movement after Chauri Chaura incident in U.P. But the movement exposed the revolutionary potential of the Indian peasantry. This attracted the peasant leader Swami Sahajanand.
He wrote: "... if peasant could fight out the British lion, ... they could successfully challenge the mice like landlords, Sahukars and Capitalists..." [Sahajanand,—, :60].

However, during the nineteenth century, the peasant movements were largely isolated, sporadic, spontaneous and unsystematic [Ranga, N.G., 1976:5]. It was in the twentieth century that such resistance articulated itself in the form of organised and sustained movement under the modern leadership.

The first of the series of ‘new’ agrarian movements in Bihar was the celebrated “Champaran Satyagraha” of 1917 [for detail see, Prasad, R., 1949, and Mishra, G., 1968]. This marked the beginning of the process whereby, the ‘traditional’ peasantry was drawn into the vortex of contemporary agitation under the ‘modern’ leadership [Das, A.N., 1983: 57]. But in this movement, the local peasant elites played a major role and the majority of peasantry remained passive. The movement itself was an attempt by the rich peasantry to remove hurdles which had been imposed on them by the English planters. However, the very nature of the leadership placed limitations on the movement. It remained directed against the European planters and did not touch the local exploitative elements, neither it could take the poor peasantry into its fold. But in the rest of Bihar agrarian tension was brewing over in a wider sphere, which was channelised by the Kisan Sabha.

In Bihar, the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha from its inception was deeply involved in mass movements. Its very foundation in 1929 was marked by the dropping of the proposed tenancy amendment, which proved to be a tremendous morale-booster for tenants. From the very beginning, Sahajanand and his associates not only tried to raise consciousness of the tenants [Solomon, S., 1973: 116], but also always urged them to resist zamindari oppression and fight for their rights.
As a result, there were numerous demonstrations, rallies, satyagrahas, and other struggles. Some of the famous struggles of the BPKS, during this period, were the agitation it launched against the Tenancy Bill in 1933, the joint peasant worker action it undertook against the Dalmia Sugar Factory at Bihta in 1938-39, the Bakasht movement in Barahiya tal, Rewra, Majiawana and Amwari during 1936-38 [see, Sankrityayana, R., 1950]. In addition to these, some serious struggles were waged at Bargaon and Darigaon in Sahabad district, Chhitauli and Parsadi in Saran district, Beldarichak and Jalpura in Patna district and in several other places in Champaran and Bhagalpur districts [for detail see, Sahajanand, 1952]. The most legendary peasant struggle in Bihar under the leadership of the BPKS was the ‘Bakasht Movement’ and ‘Dalmia Sugar Mill Movement’ at Bihta [for detail of these two movements, see Das, A.N., 1983:131-6]. If the former movement gave evidence of the class action by different sections of the Bihar peasantry, then the latter struggle was the symbol of worker-peasant unity, which opened the eyes of Sahajanand and his associates to the need for worker-peasant unity [Sahajanand, 1952:455]. It gave an ideological direction to the hitherto spontaneous and sporadic character of peasant movements.

Agrarian struggles, under the Kisan sabha, were at its peak in the couple of years before and after 1947. Some old issues together with new ones were taken up. Bakasht struggle, anti-eviction movement, taccavi loans issue, minimum wage struggle, canal rent, were some of the issues which rocked the post-independence agrarian society. Meanwhile, CPI was banned due to its engagement in Telengana struggle. Other parties came under the perview of the Public Safety Act imposed in 1947. However, there was absolute confusion about the character of ‘Independence’ [Sengupta, N., in Das, A.N.,( ed.), 1982:22].

3. Due to Bakasht rent tenants were losing their land in lieu of the rent arrears to the Zamindars, because of increasing rent burden. thus the process of depeasantisation was on, for detail see, Bihar Legislative Assembly Progs., Vol. IV. Part 1. 16 January-15 March 1939.
In 1952, the government decided to increase water rates drastically in canal irrigated areas. This move coupled with consecutive drought years caused great tension in the concerned areas. Protests by the peasantry were spontaneous. 'Canal-rate anti-enhancement movement' followed. The movement continued till 1955. In the course of the movement, different peasant organisations came within a single struggle committee — United Kisan Sabha (U.K.S). The unity move was started by the CPI. Meanwhile, Sahajanand passed away on 26 June 1950 [Das, A.N., 1983:101]. Gradually, a polarisation of forces surfaced with the Congress at one end and the Communists, the Socialists, Swami-ites, Forward Bloc-ists and parts of Congress Kisan Workers at the other end [Sengupta,]. The united groups gave a call to start a new Freedom Movement in the 12th session of the AIKS on 3 October 1954 at Moga. It was one step forward, but only to be followed by two steps back [for detail see, Das, A.N., 1983: 165-8].

Meanwhile, political climate of India was changing very fast. The CPI came over ground to participate in the First General Election in 1952. The Socialist posture of Nehru, visits of Chou En Lai and Khruschev, shift in line of the International Communist Movement, hastened a shift of CPI policy to a more conformist line. Zamindari abolition, impending land reforms and planned economic development offered new opportunities. Jay Prakash Narayan and his associates left politics and engaged in bhoodan and sarvodaya types of social upliftment efforts. Lohiaites retained their militant posture, but only in electoral politics. Most of the militant agrarian movements came to an end after 1955. The rank-and-file of the AIKS and the UKS withdrew from the field and appeared only during elections. The agrarian poors were helplessly beaten by the landlords and the police. Although, the membership of the AIKS had nearly doubled between 1954-55. But, within two years it came down drastically from more than a hundred thousand to mere five thousand in 1957 [Sengupta, N., in Das, A. N., (ed.), 1982:23]. The peasants were completely demoralised..., "their condition was
one of apparent apathy, as if they were devoid of feelings concerning the forces acting upon them" [Jannuzi, F.T., 1974:131].

However, due to widespread agrarian unrest, the Congress Government enacted several laws promising to improve the condition of the agrarian classes. Zamindari Abolition Bill was moved in 1947, Privileged persons Homestead Tenancy Act was enacted in 1947, Minimum Wage Act was passed in 1948. Legislations were passed to improve the conditions of sharecroppers, and to fix a ceiling on the size of landholdings. Measures were taken to speed up economic development of rural sector. However, the Zamindari Abolition Bill was finally adopted in 1952 after much dilution. The Homestead Tenancy Act had no significant impact. Ceiling Act had lots of loopholes. In short, the entire legislative measures proved to be fiasco [see, India, 1973].

Due to this great betrayal two trends developed in the agrarian scene. The peasantry has been thoroughly pauperised, and tenant-zamindar tension sharply increased. Impending zamindari abolition and land ceiling act encouraged resumption of land by proprietors for ‘own cultivation’. This led to large scale land alienation from peasants. By 1953, evictions occurred from more than 1 million acres of land in Bihar, affecting 7 million people [CPI, 1954]. In 1962, the year Ceiling Act was enacted, the state recovered over 0.7 million transfers of raiyatwari holdings [Ojha,—, : 123-126]. The post-independence developmental measures resulted in sharp polarisation of agrarian forces. The agrarian class contradiction has changed. In place of Kisan, there emerged two great classes — the bataidars (sharecroppers) and the agricultural labourers. During zamindari period, bataidars were occupancy tenants. Non-occupancy under-ryots


5. See, Bihar Agriculture Land (Ceiling and Management) Bill, 1955
were rare. Now in modern Bihar, occupancy tenants are almost an extinct category. Part of the dispossessed peasantry, due to large scale land alienation, turned into agricultural labourers and rest were emerged as the bataidars. Thus, old bakasht movement of occupancy tenants transformed into the bataidari movement of the same tenants to assert possession of the same lands [Sengupta, N.,—.].

Till 1950, the AIKS was active in defending the rights of the bataidars in Purnea, Madhubani, Bhagalpur etc. In some parts the socialists began to form ‘bataidar organisations’ [Sengupta, N., in Das, A.N., (ed.), 1982: 25-6]. Even Congress revitalised Harijan Sewak Sangh, but for its own political end. Jagjiwan Ram formed Bihar Provincial Khet Mazdoor Sabha in 1937 [Hauser, W., 1961:20]. This put the Kisan Sabha in an awkward position. Rahul Sankrityayana [1937:71] suggested Jagjiwan Ram to stop taking up issues relating to agricultural labourers as a whole. Instead he should set up downtrodden caste organisations to carry out social and educational reforms. Even Jadunandan Sharma tried to defend the policy of the Kisan Sabha vis-a-vis agricultural labourers [AIKS, 1939]. However, there was not much of a difference between the policy of the Kisan Sabha and Jagjiwan Ram’s organisation, so far question of agricultural labourers was concerned. Later Ram’s organisation became defunct under the pressure of the nationalist movement activities of Congress.

Movement of agricultural labourers sharply increased in the post-war period. From 1946 onwards, CPI waged many struggles of agricultural labourers, encompassing wage demands and the issue of homestead tenancy. In the thirteenth conference of the AIKS in 1953, a call was issued to establish firm unity between Khet Mazdoors and the Kisans. By uniting local organisations, Bihar State Khet Mazdoor Sabha (later renamed the Bihar Rajya Khet Mazdoor Union) was formed in 1956 by the CPI. In 1958, the National Council of the CPI adopted a resolution to
separate agricultural labourers from the Kisans and form an organisation separate from the AIKS. The Socialists also formed Khet Mazdoor Panchayat. Congress formed an All India Khetihar Mazdoor Sangha [see, Sengupta, N., in Das, A.N., (ed.), 1982 : 27-28].

The struggle of the agricultural labourers got fillip after the formation of the Khet Mazdoor Union by the CPI. Struggles waged against social oppression and for higher wages. By 1957, struggles had spread through out Gaya District under the able leadership of Karyanand Sharma. In few places wages had been enhanced. But the movement slackened after 1958 when the CPI changed its policy. Further, drought condition had already set in by 1965 and Karyanand Sharma, the moving spirit of the movement, died in the same year [Sengupta,--,-]. This movement could last only for a short time.

By the middle of the 1960s, situation took a new turn. Due to enactment of various legislations and number of rights and privileges to the rural poor, expectation of the agricultural labourers was rising higher. But in actuality, neither the minimum wage legislation nor the Homestead Tenancy Act served any purpose. This further heightened the tension of the agrarian proletariat. On the other hand, landlords were becoming more apprehensive and aggressive. To suppress the rising demands of the downtrodden, they acted much in excess of the ‘crime’. Vengeance of the landlords was unheard of even during Zamindari Rule. Between 1972-77, the landlords in Nalanda district killed 142 landless labourers and perpetrated innumerable cases of assault, torture, fine, eviction, molestation and rape of women [Sinha, 1977]. In Rupaspur - Chandwa village of Purnea district, the local landlord alongwith his hundreds of hooligans burnt down all huts of Adivasi bataidars, shot dead every one including women and children. The landlord was a stalwart of the Congress Party. In yet another incident, landlord of Madhuban village of Monghyr district paraded six harijan women naked and marked their private parts with red hot irons. The ghastly crime was
committed in broad day light and in front of villagers, just to teach the agricultural labourers a lesson [Sengupta, N., in Das, A.N., (ed.), 1982 : 31-32].

However, prices began to rise sharply after the War with China in 1962. Situation further deteriorated due to severe drought of 1966 in which 13 out of 17 districts of Bihar were officially declared under famine. This further sharpened the agrarian contradiction. The agrarian poor started sporadic struggles. Their apathy and passivity turned into activism. The most striking feature of this phase of the movement, particularly of the 1960s and 1970s, was that the main participants were the lower orders of the peasantry — the poor peasants, sharecroppers, and agricultural labourers belonging mainly to the Harijan-Adivasi section [Joshi, Link, 5 June, 1977]. They were fighting not absentee landlordism as in the zamindari period, but the new rich peasantry [Sinha, A., Frontier, 13 August, 1977]. Zamindari abolition had made the erstwhile upper sections of the tenantry the new exploiters. Many parties were formed to guard the interest of the agrarian poor. Left Parties played significant role, yet they failed to redress the basic economic hardship of the agrarian proletariat. This in turn, prepared ground for rise and development of ultra left parties in rural India. Let us dwell up on the role of the left parties in the agrarian structure.

3.1. The Role played by the Left Parties in Agrarian Movements

A number of upsurges erupted in the country in the thirties and particularly after the second world war. The Tebhaga and Bakasht struggles, the anti-feudal struggles in the princely states, the armed revolt among the Royal Navy ratings, the rebellions in the Air Force and in the Army, the Police Revolt in Bihar, were some of the significant uprisings during that period. The Communist Party played a role in most of these movements but could not effectively utilize them to bring changes in the prevailing social structure
of the country. Till the CPI(M-L) emerged, the Communists after 1950s, had practically abandoned the notion of 'armed struggle'. Even the CPI(M) which broke away in 1964 from the CPI, clarified in its 1967 Resolution in Madurai that it was opposed to armed struggle. Since, the late 1960s, there has been a strong wave of spontaneous, sporadic and largely unorganised agrarian movements of the poor and landless peasants [Das, A.N., 1983 : 230]. In the process they came under the 'political' or 'ideological' guidance of one faction or the other of the Maoist groups as in Musahari, Purnea, Bhojpur, etc.

Since the rise of Naxalbari movement in the spring of 1967, the Naxalite activities also started taking place in Bihar. The first Naxalite activity was reported in July 1967 in an area called Thakurganj in Purnea district of Bihar, which borders the Naxalbari sub-division of West Bengal. Soon this followed in other parts of the State [see, The Indian Nation, July 1 and 6, 1969, and The Searchlight, August 16, 1967 and June 1, 2 and July 1969]. The spread of radical movement forced the left political parties, especially the S.S.P. and CPI, to steal the revolutionary thunder from the Naxalites on the problem of land distribution [Brass, Paul R., 1973 : 391]. The CPI and the SSP tried to utilise the growing discontent of the people and channelise the 'revolutionary' spirit of the rural masses. The CPI, towards this end, adopted a non-violent method of occupying surplus lands held by large landlords and big estates, and fallow lands by the government. The 'land-grab movement' was launched in 1969 by various left parties in which the CPI took the lead. In the first phase, the movement was directed against government waste lands and it succeeded in occupying 9,950 acres in the first month of its operation, i.e. from 1 to 31 July, 1969 [Sinha, Mainstream,

6. This name of the movement was given by the landlords and their newspapers. Participants call it the 'Land Liberation Movement', 'Land to the Tiller Movement', etc.
10.10.1969:10]. The second phase started in August 1969, and this time the target was some selected top landlords who had already been identified. They were served with notices that they held lands exceeding the legal ceiling set by the government. But this time the movement met with an abrupt end, for the CPI quite suddenly suspended its movement on August 18, 1969. Karpoori Thakur, the then Chairman of the All India S.S.P. alleged that the CPI's land movement was a fraud on the people, for its leaders could never dream of leading a public struggle against the Congress (R) [The Searchlight, 7.10.1970]. At that time Congress (R) led a coalition government in Bihar and the CPI was a partner in that coalition.

The S.S.P. launched its land movement on August 9, 1969 in the north Bihar districts of Purnea, Saharsa and Champaran. The Party intensified the agitation in the Champaran district, focussing on fallow lands held by the government and by the Bettiah Raj Estate [see, The Searchlight, October 22, 1969, and The Indian Nation, October 2, 6 and 7, 1969]. The CPI expressed its support for this movement The Searchlight, October 10, 1969]. But the agitation in Champaran came to a close at the end of October with the assurance that the fallow lands held by the government would be distributed among the landless people within two months [The ndian Nation, November 7, 1969]. Although, later this assurance proved deceptive in the usual fashion. Similar land movements were launched by the S.S.P. and the P.S.P., but they concentrated on government held lands and avoided as far as possible, agitations against privately held lands. Further, from the very beginning the S.S.P. and the P.S.P. were confined to smaller areas of the State. On the other hand, the CPI, the then dominant left party in Bihar, was quite reluctant to stretch the movement too far because of its political calculation. Bhola Prasad Singh, a S.S.P. leader, alleged that the CPI had suspended the movement "to appease the disgruntled elements of the ruling Congress"
Whatever might be the reasons for the CPI's withdrawal from the movement, this step cast a demoralising effect on the 'land liberation movement' as a whole. Although, the above mentioned movements could not achieve anything substantial, notwithstanding they had some impact:

1) The poor rural masses could no longer be taken for granted on agrarian issues, what they need is only the class consciousness and effective leadership.

2) The Bhoodan and Gramdan movements tried to solve the problem of landlessness in peaceful and non-violent way, but without much success. The left parties also believed in peaceful democratic means to solve the agrarian problems, but sometimes they resorted to agitations. Their agitational methods to achieve agrarian reforms in 1969 and 1970, accelerated the pace of agrarian reforms in Bihar, led to the amendment of the Tenancy Act in 1970. Through this amendment an effective ban was imposed on the eviction of sharecroppers and protecting ownership. The Bihar Privileged Persons Homestead Tenancy Act was also passed in 1970, conferring full tenancy rights on landless labourers and poor peasants over their homestead land. One might also add that an ordinance banning the transfer of surplus land by landlords was promulgated in September, 1970. Although the degree of implementation of these measures is debatable, yet it is very clear that under the pressure of radical movements some steps were taken by the government in a positive and ameliorative direction.

4. The Weaknesses

The Kisan Sabha has passed through different stages in the course of its struggle from spontaneous, sporadic and unorganised peasant movement to well organised
and ideologically oriented movement. During its initial stage, its approach was sort of "Class Collaborationist" [see, Sahajanand, 1952:75]. Soon this line of thinking got changed when the Kisan Sabha came in direct confrontation with the landlords. Sahajanand wrote: "....now I seriously began to think in terms of class struggle as the only method to liberate the oppressed masses from the many-folded slavery and subjugation" [Sahajanand, —, : 80]. However, there were confusions about the definition of 'peasants'. The earliest constitutional document of the Kisan Sabha defined the 'peasant' as any one whose primary source of lively-hood was agriculture. Even the constitution of the BPKS upheld the same view [BPKS, 1936]. Later it was realised by Sahajanand that the agrarian problem could not be solved without solving the problems of the agricultural labourers. He asserted that due to depeasantization it was difficult to draw a line between the poor peasants and the agricultural labourers. Thus, it was proper to regard agricultural labourers as Kisan too so that both may struggle together. But confusion persisted among its leaders. Even leaders like Rahul Sankrityayana argued, "even if agricultural labourers remain labourers, their wage will only go up if the income of the Kisan increases...I feel that it will be a serious mistake on their part if they enter into quarrel with the Kisans just now" [Sankrityayana, R., 1957:70-3]. Later it was realised by Sahajanand that the Kisan Sabha was being used by the middle and big cultivators for their own selfish ends [Sahajanand, 1944:14-15]. However the Kisan Sabha, by and large, did not take note of the contradiction that existed between kisans (Shudra peasants) and Mazdurs (Dalit field servants). The movement was essentially centered around Kisan's anti-zamindari struggle. Demand was 'land to the tenants' rather than 'land to the tiller'[for detail see, Omvedt, G., in Desai, A.R.,(ed.), 1986]. This limitation was not properly recognised by the Kisan Sabha leaders. They assumed that 'anti-zamindari' was equivalent to 'land to the tiller'. However, there were 'tillers', i.e. Mazdurs, who were not tenants. They did not stand to benefit from the abolition of zamindari [Rasul, 1974:57-9]. There was neither any significant struggle to
give land to all the tillers, nor struggle to abolish the system which maintained a class of agricultural labourers in permanent existence.

However, due to its narrow end and partial demand, the Kisan Sabha sank into stagnation after zamindari abolition. AIKS sessions were marked by 'poor attendance' and the Sabha became 'tame or inert in a number of states after 1966' [see, Rasul, 1974: 180,212,219].

Although, many parties were formed to guard the interest of the rural poor, beginning from the Kisan Sabha, to the Khet Mazdoor Union led by the CPI, the Bihar Provincial Khet Mazdoor Sabha by Jagjiwan Ram, the Khet Mazdoor Panchayat by the Socialists, All India Khetihar Mazdoor Sangha by the Congress, Sarvodaya movement, etc. And yet they all failed to redress the basis economic hardships of the agrarian poor. However, Vinoba Bhave's Bhoodan was to be the Sarvodaya answer to the Communist challenge on the land problem and was meant to achieve what legislative action was not expected to do. Although, Bhoodan-Gramdan movement generated a social awareness about agrarian issues in India, but in terms of its announced aims the movement was an abortive experiment [see, Oommen, T.K., 1972]. Even the Indian Communists rarely accorded sufficient weight to the poor peasants and landless labourers in their organisational strategy and revolutionary mobilization. A.K. Gopalan, veteran peasant leader of CPM, emphasised: "We have to make the landless labourers the hub of our activities. Reluctance to take up their specific demands, fearing that this will drive the rich and middle peasants away from us, will have to be given up..." [Gopalan, A.K., 1968 : 5, emphasis mine]. The CPI also emphasised some what similar unity strategy [see, Indian Communist Party documents1967:220]. Thus all political parties — Congress, Socialist, Communists; shared a common predilection, i.e.making the widest possible social constituency. This may be the logical corollary of involvement in electoral politics, where political
expediency is the primary motive rather than the ideological commitment [see, Oommen, T.K., 1985:10].

However, since 1966-67 the struggle of the Dalit labourers (*Mazdur*) have intensified throughout India, which are different from earlier *Kisan’s* anti-zamindari struggle. The demands of this new struggle are those that have been the demands of the *Mazdur* movement from the beginning— demands for wages, end of forced labour and all the forms of *Vethbegar*, for excess land, cultivable waste and forest land. The minuscular peasant revolt in Naxalbari (1967) was a pointer to that, neither the Sarvodaya approach, nor the legislative process (in which Communists had begun participating after abandoning the tactic of armed struggle) had solved the agrarian problem in India. There have been many Naxalbari since. It is because of this violent reality of the country side that the ‘Naxalite’ ideology and movement found propitious grounds in late sixties and early seventies [Sengupta, N., in Das, A.N., (ed.), 1982: 33]. These revolutionary struggles not only reject the Parliamentary System, but also use extra-legal and extra-constitutional means to achieve the People’s Democratic Revolution through People’s War linked to an agrarian programme. In short, it seeks change beyond the institutional framework.

Now let us focus upon the Maoist agrarian movements in India. First we will discuss All India land scape and then the Bihar context.

**Conflict Beyond the Institutional Framework: All India Context**

The Revolutionary Struggles cannot be eliminated, so long as acute exploitations and contradictions are continued. Many Indian states, e.g. Bihar, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, etc., have been unable to implement even the most moderate and
desirable agrarian programme—land reforms, etc; even after 48 years of independence. Hence, the prospect of the Maoist activities is bright even today. The radical movement may be suppressed, for the time being, through brutal state forces, and due to organisational and strategical weaknesses. But, the radical ideology is difficult to be extinguished, so long as the environment is not changed fundamentally.

However, the Maoist perspective in the Indian Communist movement began with the Telangana struggle. The real significance of the Telangana movement lies in the fact that, it was the first application of the Maoist revolutionary model outside China even before the Chinese revolution had triumphed fully and China had proclaimed itself a people's Republic. Over 20 years later, the re-emergence of the Maoist trend in the 'Naxalbari', albeit in changed context, marks the return of the "Telangana line". Naxalbari was followed by Srikakulam, Srikakulam by Debra-Gopiballavpur, it was by Birbhum, Birbhum by Bhojpur, so on and so forth. Let us discuss the Maoist revolutionary struggles in India, one by one.
The Telangana Liberation Struggle (1946-51)

The peasant struggle in Telangana began in 1946. It was directed against forced labour, illegal exactions, evictions by landlords and oppression by village Patels. Later the agrarian liberation struggle developed into revolt against Nizam’s feudal autocracy, as well. The struggle continued even after Nizam’s surrender in 1948. From elementary self defence with lathis and slings, the movement evolved into a full-scale armed revolt against the Nizam and later against the offensive of the Indian army.

Before detail discussion of the movement, let us understand the socio-economic and political factors of the state, which provided the seed-bed for the Telangana struggle.

1. Socio-economic profile

Geographically, Andhra Pradesh can be divided into three regions: The Coastal Andhra, The Rayalaseema and The Telangana Area.

Telangana was part of the trizonia state of Hyderabad: Telangana area, Marthawad region and Kannada area. Telugu, Marathi and Kannada were dominant languages of the respective region. Telangana area with nine districts occupied 50 percent of the total area. According to 1951 census, 50 percent of the population was Telugu speaking, whereas Marathi, Kannada and Urdu speaking population was 25, 11 and 12 percent respectively [Sundarayya, P., 1972 : 77]. Urdu, although in minority, was widely used at all levels. Other languages and cultures were consciously suppressed by Nizam, which later became one of the focal issues of the struggle.

1.1 The Feudal Exploitations

Socio-economic life of the people under Nizam autocracy was reeling under acute feudal oppressions that continues till the beginning of the Telangana
armed struggle. Out of total area of the Hyderabad princely state, 60 percent was under governmental land revenue system (Diwani or Khalsa area), 30 percent under the Jagirdari system, and 10 percent under the Sarf Khas system, i.e. the Nizam’s own direct estate [Khusro, A.M., 1958].

The peasants in the Sarf Khas area were treated as bonded slaves or total Serfs. In Jagir area, various kinds of illegal exactions and forced labour were common features. Some of the big landlords had their own police, revenue, civil and criminal systems. They were sub-feudatory states under the Nizam’s state, which inturn was a stooge native state under the British autocracy in India.

The feudal landlords acquired vast Khalsa area and land of ordinary people by all foul means during the first survey settlement. Even left out lands were occupied by the landlords during the economic crisis of 1920-22 and 1930-33. The land concentration in Telangana region was tremendous. According to the Administrative Report of 1950-51, in three districts--Nalgonda, Mahbubnagar and Warangal; the number of Pattadars (landlords) owning more than 500 acres were 550, controlling almost 60-70 percent of the total cultivable land [Sundarayya, P., 1972 : 11-15].

These landlords were not only deshmukhs, but also village chiefs—Patel, Patwari; with hereditary rights. Each one used to get five to ten villages under him as Vatan. These village chiefs had full control over their vatan and their subjects.

Vetti system or forced labour and exactions was an all-pervasive social phenomenon affecting all classes of people in Telangana region. Backward castes were forced to carry Palkis, barbers to massage body and feet,
...hrijans to watch village Chavadi, artisans to supply goods free of cost, and rest of the peasantry coerced to pay fixed annuities in grain and other agricultural products. Mass levying of Vetti was on wedding or building of a home by the landlord [Reddy, R.N., 1975:4]. People who were unable to give anything were subjected to torture and to various indignities.

The worst of all exploitations was the tradition of keeping girls as 'slaves' in landlords' houses. When daughter of a landlord was married these girls were sent along to serve them in their new home. Quite often these slave girls were used as ‘concubines’ by the landlords.

Political scenario of the state was autocratic. There was no elected bodies at any level. Nizam had his own nominated advisory council and Chief Minister. He appointed Nazims, departmental secretaries. Nazim's firmanas had the same effect as that of legislation and executive order. Civil liberties were completely absent in the region. It was the autocratic rule of officers from top to bottom. Further, with his Mulki rules [Gour, R.B., 1972] and large number of police force, Nizam made contacts with the progressive forces in India, outside his own dominion, impossible.

The socio-economic and political life of the Telangana people was of utter degradation and of abject serfdom. It was in this explosive background that the Telangana movement became fairly widespread.

2. The Andhra Mahasabha

Influenced by the development of the Indian national movement, intellectuals and liberals organised themselves into the Andhra Mahasabha (AMS) in the Telangana region; and Maharashtra Parishad and Kannada Parishad in other two regions,
against Nizam's autocratic regime. The AMS started as liberal organisation to promote cultural and political interest of the masses. Form 1944, under the leadership of the CPI, the AMS was waging militant struggles against landlordism and Nizam's rule.

The AMS was organised in 1928 under the leadership of Madapati Hanumantha Rao. In its first conference in Jogipeta in 1930, the AMS demanded the administrative reforms, certain civil liberties, more schools and concessions for the landed gentry. Later the AMS was radicalised by the active militant elements within the organisation. By 1940-42 they joined the Communist movement and transformed the AMS from a liberal organisation into a radical nationalist organisation. It attempted to organise around campaigns like 'Detenu Day', 'Education Week', 'Anti-forced-labour weeks', etc. [Reddy, R.N., 1975:19].

By 1941 the AMS reached to the masses and attracted their attention. It crossed the tradition of merely passing resolutions, and went ahead to rouse and rally the people around these resolutions. The moderates opposed this militant posture. In the eleventh session at Bhongir in 1944, there was split in the AMS. The moderates formed a rival AMS [Reddy, R.N., 1973:21]. Within two years they merged with the state congress. The majority of the AMS remained with CPI and assumed the mass character. They recruited over 1,00,000 members in the rural areas. Between 8,000 to 10,000 CPI members were at Bhongir rally [Pavier, B., 1981 : 86]. The twelfth and last session of the AMS was held in Khammam in 1945, where it gave a call for the overthrow of the Nizam's autocratic regime and the feudal Jagirdari system [Lalita, K., et.al., 1989 : 12].

Thus the famous Telangana movement started over certain partial economic demands and finally culminated into an armed liberation struggle to overthrow the Nizam rule in Hyderabad state.
Let us take glimpse of different phases of the movement.

3. First Phase of the Movement.

From the beginning of 1944, the AMS together with the CPI conducted many militant struggles against Vetti System, illegal exactions and evictions of cultivators. The increasing tensions also raised the political consciousness of peasants, and everywhere there was a new awakening. In the post-second world war period peasant militancy got further fillip. Many militant mass struggles were conducted in Mundari, Errapadu, Betavolu, Nasikallu, Allipuram, Villages and so on. Telangana movement got real ignition and became popular during the struggle for 'Ailamma's land' in December 1945 [see, Pavier, B., 1981: 95].

Ailamma, a widow washer-woman, was an active supporter of the Sangham, as the AMS popularly known. Visnur Rama Chandra Reddy, all powerful local deshmukh, tried to seize Ailamma's harvest. The sangham leaders and volunteers foiled the attempt successfully. Even the police force did not dare to touch the grain at Ailamma's house. That incident roused the spirit of the people and became a part of the folk-lore of the Telangana struggle, which had very powerful impact on the womenfolk.

The Visnur deshmukh could not take on the biggest humiliating defeat of his life. He planned to kill Sangham leaders with the help of police. On July 4, 1946 his goondas fired on Sangham demonstration that was on the way to the deshmukh's house. The famous Sangham leader Doddi Komarayya was killed [for detail see, Sundarayya, P., 1985:27-28]. Komarayya's murder triggered the mass militant struggle in the region. The movement spread within a few weeks to about 300 to 400 villages in Nalgonda, Warangal and Khammam districts. For the first
time, the problem of land eviction, Vetti and forcible grain levies were organically linked with the Zamindari abolition.

Due to mass movement, the government could not collect the levey grain, Vetti was brought to an end, and deshmukhs either left the villages or remained silent. However, policy of CPI was zig-zags during the second world war. The party not only supported the British war effort but also was reluctant to support the demand for transfer of power. Consequently, the Hyderabad state unit was not permitted to demand for the end of Nizam's rule, the abolition of Zamindari and the implementation of radical agrarian programme [Ram, Mohan, 1973: 10-25]. However, the post-war people's upsurge forced the CPI to shift its policy and to take on radical and militant posture.

Seeing the post-war upsurge the Central Committee of CPI decided to shift its policy from reformism to development of the militant mass struggles. By 1945, the party had trained volunteer corps capable of effectively using the lathi, in organised squad fight. However, the peasant squads were not trained to take-up fire arms. Although, masses responded enthusiastically and developed newer forms of resistance on their own. But the party leadership refrained from armed struggle. "The mood and preparedness of the masses to take up a militant form of struggle could not be gauged by their readiness to avoid arrests and face the consequences" [Sundarrayya, P., 1985 : 30].

Meanwhile, the CPI was banned in November 1946. Most of the rank-and-file left the Hyderabad city and went across the border to Vijayawada [Reddy, R.N., 1973 : 46]. The police and the military raids were conducted extensively. The whole region was handed over to the military. The raids went on for days and nights. The people's upsurge was temporarily disrupted by December 1946.
In the first half of 1947, majority of the party's rank-and-file were either under detention or were underground. On 15 August 1947 all of them were released or came out in open. But the agenda of militant mass struggles was relegated in the background. The party was involved in the controversy as to whether all-out support should be extended to the Nehru Government or not.

Furthermore, in the post-British era the pace of the militant movement was slowed down due to two reasons. First, the people were expecting big changes from Nehru Government. Second, the party was unable to lead the masses due to its weakness and isolation from the rest of the democratic parties and groups.

Inspite of the party's failure to grasp the revolutionary thunder, the people's discontent and anxiety was so deep that it burst into spontaneous activities [Sundarayya, P., 1972 : 41-42]. The AMS under the guidance of the CPI launched anti-feudal and anti-Nizam struggle from 1940 to 1946. It not only popularised the idea of 'Vishal Andhra', but also successfully resisted Nizam's attack in the coastal area. Soon the coastal districts of Andhra emerged as epi-centre of the people's struggle in the post-independence period. Within a few weeks the movement spread out to hundreds of villages. Due to these activities, the party was once again banned on January 30, 1948.

During this period, the party reorganised and reoriented itself on proper lines. On the one hand, the CPI supported the Indian state on question of merger of Hyderabad State in the Indian Union. On the other, it developed the anti-feudal agrarian struggle. This later developed into liberation struggle against the Nizam's rule. Still later against the Indian military terror regime.

1. The CPI had been campaigning for a united state of coastal districts and the nine Telugu-speaking districts of Telanagana inside the Hyderabad state.
3.1. The Anti-Nizam Liberation Phase

At the time of liberation struggle, the entire Telangana region was reeling under intense feudal exploitation and inhuman Nizam's autocratic regime. Widespread discontent was prevalent against the Nizam. Hence Anti-Nizam struggle followed. By mid 1946, the movement acquired the form of a national liberation struggle to free the masses from Nizam's rule and the feudal order. Soon the anti-Nizam struggle became widespread people's movement. *Guttapalu Sangham* (the lathi sangham) was on the march with lathis and fire arms. Thus the movement got transformed from 'Chitty Sangham' to 'Gutapa Sangham'. They mobilised defence squads and move from village to village gathering forces [Pavier, B., 1981 : 95]. Village squads with 10,000 members and regular guerrilla squads with 2,000 members were formed. The district, zonal (taluka) and village squads were properly coordinated. After the formation of guerrilla squads, the party work was divided into two branches--political and military. This provided strategical strength to the movement. Many heroic armed struggles were carried on during this phase of the movement [for detail see, Sundarayya, P., 1972 : 68 -- 89]. Nearly 2,000 militants laid their lives, but took a heavy toll of Nizams' force, police and landlords' goondas. As many as 3,000 villages, nearly one-third of the Telangana area and 3 million population of Nalgonda, Khammam and Warangal districts, were liberated and *Gram Raj* were established.

In retaliation, the Nizam organised *Razakar* force and started terror regime in the villages [for detail see, Sundarayya, P., 1985 : 38-39, also Gour, R.B., et.al., 1973 : 34-47]. Looting, arson, torture, murder and rape stalked

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2. 'Chitty' is a Telugu word, refers to petitions and memoranda.
the land. But the Nizam's entire state was shaken to its foundation. The people's movement was spreading to more areas of Telangana region and beyond. At this critical juncture, the Indian Government decided to intervene with twin objectives—to force the Nizam to accede to the Indian union, and to suppress the Telangana peasant struggle. Deputy Prime Minister of India, Sardar Patel, openly declared the above twin objectives. Even Rajaji, the then Governor-General, opined the same view [Sundarayya, P., 1985 : 65]

The Nizam's Razakars were in vulnerable condition due to multi-dimensional attacks. The Indian bourgeoisie, landlords and rich peasantry wanted end of the Nizam's autocratic rule due to their own economic and political development. Peasantry and workers were trying to free themselves from feudal exploitation. Hindus were against feudal Muslim Nawabs. Progressive Muslims also joined the movement. Thus all progressive currents joined in this anti-Nizam struggle [Gour, R.B., 1947 : 43-51]. Further, the Nizam's refusal to join Indian union placed him in direct contradiction to the new Indian state. With the entry of the Indian army on 13 September 1948, the Nizam surrendered within five days of the 'military-police action', on September 18, 1948.

4. **Second Phase : The Indian Military Terror Regime of 1948-51**

Post-Nizam Hyderabad state was entirely a different state with different correlation of class forces. It was difficult to convert anti-Nizam liberation struggle into liberation struggle against the India state [Sundarayya, P., 1972 : 119-20]. On the one hand, people were expecting changes from the Nehru Government. On the other, squads were not a match to the well-equipped and well-trained huge Indian army. However, the CPI was sharply divided into two hostile political trends, from top to bottom.
Ravi Narayan Reddy, Ella Reddy and large number of area leaders were for withdrawal of the armed struggle and for adoption of open and legal forms of struggle [Reddy, R.N., 1973]. They denounced the Telangana movement as individual terrorism, murder and loot. However, Raj Bahadur Gour, Mahendra and other leaders were for continuation of the armed struggle. The Central Committee (C.C.) of the CPI adopted a resolution on December 13, 1950 and advocated for the continuation of the liberation struggle and to defend the gains of the Telangana peasantry against the deshmukhs and landlords onslaught. The Andra Provincial Committee of the party held the same view.

However, within two weeks of the entry of the Indian army, the Communist became the main target. The Indian army launched massive offensive against the Communist in Nalgonda, Warangal, Khammam and the neighbouring areas. The brutal attack reached its full intensity by the end of December 1948. About 50,000 to 60,000 strong force of armed personnel was deployed. The Indian Government was spending on an average Rs. 10 crores to Rs. 15 crores per year [Sundarayya, P., 1985 : 91-92].

The Indian military started 'encirclement raids'. They moved in lorries and surrounded five or six villages at a time. Later these raids grew in number and intensity. At times 20 to 30 villages were encircled at a time. Any squads caught in this circle rarely escaped. Women were the worst victim. Rapes by the Indian soldiers were widespread. Even pregnant and ten year old girls were not spared. Babies were killed in front of their mothers. More than 1000 women raped in the first year, and few thousand during the whole period. More than 100 women died due to rape by a number of brutes in a row [Ibid. : 71].

Sadistic murders and tortures were resorted to by the Indian Militant. Large number of communists lost their lives. In 2,000 villages of Nalgonda, Warangal,
Khammam, Karimnagar and Hyderabad districts, 300,000 people were severely tortured, about 200,000 arrested and imprisoned [Sundarayya, P., 1972 : 200-2, 354-90]. About 4,000 communist leaders and cadre became the victim of calculated murder and physical annihilation. Thousands of Koya tribe died of cholera in concentration camps and 300 were murdered by the police, military and landlord goondas [Sundarayya, P., 1985 : 81-82].

However, with the active support of the Indian army and police, the landlords and deshmukhs returned and settled down in their villages. Oppressions and exploitations were all set in motion once again. People got disillusioned with the new democratic set-up very soon. There were urgent need to start armed struggle and actions against the landlords and police informers. Many squads were reorganised by the end of 1949.

Now picture was changing very fast. People were coming into their own once again. By the end of June 1950, the whole Amarabad area was in the grip of the people's movement. The movement was linked with Kolhapur taluka of Mahboobnagar district, covering 100 miles. Later the squads established their area of operation in Guntur and Kurnool districts and converted the whole Nallamala forest region into their guerilla base. By the end of 1950, the movement was extended upto the Vikarabad area, bordering the Karnataka region.

The movement was spreading very fast in the Godavari forest region as well. The movement was extended to the whole of the forest area, Palvancha, East Illendu and the whole of Madhira taluka, covering around 200 miles. The party recruited 400 new members from about 100 villages. Six women groups were also formed [Sundarayya, P., 1972 : 249-50]. Women's participation in the movement was unprecedented. Their sufferings were twice than that of their male counterparts. Apart from cultural and intellectual subjugations, they were treated as private property of the Nizam and landlords. Sexual molestation of
women was the right of the ruling elites of the region. Therefore, women were anxious to loosen the grip of the feudal ideology and patriarchal norms, and to establish their own identify. With these twin objectives, women were drawn into the vortex of the movement [for detail see, Lalita, K., et. al., 1989].

However, forest areas were the main base in the re-newed phase of the movement. The most interesting feature of this phase was the overwhelming support of the tribal people. The Chenchu tribes in the Nallamalai forests, the Gond in Adilabad districts, and the Koya tribe in Godavari forest area, supported the movement enthusiastically [Sundarayya, P., 1972: 250-51, 251-66]. 200 young tribals joined the CPI, 1000 Koya joined the village squads and village committee.

The impact of the armed struggle was tremendous in the tribal area. Not only Patels and Patwaris lessened their oppression, but even government could not stop people from occupying forest and waste lands. In 1948, a visiting journalist estimated that parallel administration had been set-up over an area of 13,000 square miles, covering 2,000 villages and 20,00,000 people [Romesh, T., 1948: 28]. Due to rising intensity of the movement, military and police intensified their operation. In Proddutur area with only 300 villages, there were 21 camps with 15 persons in each. In four talukas of this area, 100 such camps were established with an estimated 7,000 military and police personnels [Sundarayya, P., 1985: 80].

In forest areas as well similar exercises were started, together with the 'Briggs Plan' of Malaya type. It was a part of the plan to isolate the guerrilla squads from the tribal population. The police started burning village after village in the forest areas. Not even a single hut was allowed to remain unrazed. Around 15 to 20 people were shot dead in a small village with 10 to 15 huts. Similar was their fate in the plain areas. Between 1949 to 1950, about 10,000 Koya tribes
alone died out of Cholera in different concentration camps. By the end of 1949, majority of the Communists were thrown behind the bars, some retreated to the forests, while others reached the towns. Very few remained in their own areas. There was tremendous dislocation of the party organisation.

However, apart from above problems, the party itself was divided into two hostile camps about continuing the armed struggle [Sundarayya, P., 1972 : 392]. Infact, the CPI owns the responsibility upto this point. According to the party, the armed struggle should have been called off when the Nizam's rule ended [for detail see Rao, C. Rajeshwara, 1972 : 31-33, also Gour, R.B., et. al., 1973]. However, the situation within the party had deteriorated very much. This weakened the camp of the progressive forces. On the other hand, the new congress government tied over the post-war crisis and the mass upheavals, with new promises. The mass participation during anti-Nizam phase had definately receded in late 1949 and early 1950. Even among the guerrilla squads and central organisers desertations began.

Finally, the Central Committee of the Party took decision for 'unconditional withdrawal' of the Telangana armed struggle [Sundarayya, P., 1972 : 426-30]. The news was released to the public and press on October 21, 1951.

5.1 Weaknesses of the First Phase

Due to lack of better training, awareness and political consciousness, guerrilla forces suffered tremendous losses. The biggest weakness of this phase was lack of proper military tactics, training and use of fire arms. There was no proper coordination among various guerrilla squads. Till the intervention of the Indian Army, the party was unable to capture or occupy worthwhile modern arms. That is why, inspite of unprecedented people's response and
enthusiasm, the Communist Party could not face the well-trained and well-equipped Indian Army. Further, due to incorrect political strategy, i.e. to treat the Telangana armed struggle as liberation struggle against the Indian State, and not as a partisan peasant's struggle for land, the movement suffered tremendous losses [See, Sundarayya, P., 1972:135]. The Telangana movement was essentially a peasant partisan movement. It could not be developed into a real united worker-peasant onslaught on the enemy inspite of its tremendous revolutionary potentials [Ibid., 215-31]. Due to sectarian policies of the Party, no real solidarity actions in support of the Telangana movement could be organised, which led to the movement to extinction. During this phase, the official position of the CPI was to cooperate with the Indian Government and to make the Government operate the laws honestly. On the other hand, land distribution and other militant actions were carried out by the peasants themselves. This meant an inevitable conflict with the State. Thus, contradiction between people's upsurge and the CPI's position further isolated the party from the masses and caused irreparable damage to the movement [Pavier, B., 1981:97-8]. P. Sundarayya who was a member of the Provincial Committee of coastal Andhra, wrote: "If the party would have correct revolutionary grasp of the situation..., we should have trained our cadre and people for launching a vigorous attack on the whole feudal system..., we would have trained our cadre and militant not only with lathi defence but even for armed defence. We would not have hesitated for such a long time..., which resulted in total dislocation and disruption of the first upsurge" [Sundarayya, P., 1972:54].

5.2 The Second Awakening

However, inspite of above weaknesses, the people's revolutionary zeal could not be suppressed. People's discontent and tension, often, burst into spontaneous activities. As the revolutionary waves kept on spreading, the
Indian armed forces turned towards communists to suppress the Telangana revolt.

By the end of September 1948, the communists became the main target of attack. Massive armed forces were deployed and numerous military and police camps were established in the area. The military - police, with the help of landlords and their goondas, started extensive combing operation on an unprecedented scale. 'Encirclement raids' became order of the days, sadistic murder and mass butchery were part of daily routine. Within a period of 3-4 years, 4000 peasant militants were shot dead, 10,000 Communists were thrown behind the bars, thousands of villagers were subjected to cruel torture, and women suffered all sorts of humiliation and indignities. But the revolutionary flame could not be extinguished. Movement kept on spreading like wild-fire. Entire forest area of Nallamala, Amarabad and Godavari region was under the grip of the armed struggle. Forest area became the epi-centre of the renewed onslaught. The most interesting feature of this phase was overwhelming support of tribal people of the area.

Gauging the intensity and potential of movement, the Indian military and police intensified their operation. The tribal huts were burnt and thousands of Koya tribes and the communists were thrown in concentration camps. Together with these problems, the political scenario of India changed very fast. The Indian ruling class was able to tide over the post-war revolutionary upsurge and established itself. New democratic hopes were promised to the people. The Communist Party itself was sharply divided into two hostile camps. The intense struggle between ‘two lines’--Soviet Union and China; and role played by these two world Communist blocks, further aggravated the situation [for detail see, Ram, Mohan, 1973]. Party organisation was completely disorganised and rank - and - file were totally confused. Wrong
and sectarian policies pursued by the all-India leadership, further weakened and disunited the Party. One of the main weaknesses of the movement was the weakness of the party and the division in the camp of the progressive forces...."we did not Function on the basis of a real revolutionary party structure" [for detail see, Sundarayya, P., 1972: 415, 1985: 126, also Rao, D.V., 1973: 4-6]. Furthermore, according to Barry Pavier, the CPI could not comprehend the true nature of Hyderabad's economy, the social basis of the state, and hence could not undertake the correct course of the armed struggle [Pavier, B., 1974]. In fact, the CPI was incapable of fulfilling the role of the revolutionary Party. "The root of the debacle lies not in a single act of betrayal, but in the politics of the CPI...." [Pavier, B., 1981: 168].

However, in spite of overwhelming enthusiasm and participation, the people could neither be politically and ideologically socialised, nor they could be trained in military tactics and use of fire-arms. But the biggest weakness of this phase was the wrong assessment of the situation and adoption of incorrect tactical line. It was equally unfortunate that the Telangana armed partisan struggle could not be defended and continued. The Party could not secure any suitable terms of withdrawal and thus could not defend the gains of the armed struggle. The movement was 'unconditionally withdrawn' in late 1951.

It is alleged that the CPI abandoned the perspective of armed struggle, because the Party settled for peaceful constitutionalism, and eventually opted for peaceful transition to socialism. According to present day Maoists, the withdrawal was an act of betrayal by "revisionists" who wanted to take the Party into the vortex of Parliamentary politics by entering the 1952 general elections [Ram, M., 1973: 1030].
However, the Telangana armed struggle was withdrawn by the Party and not defeated. It was the first armed revolution of the Indian communists which established liberated zone of about 16,000 square miles covering 3,000 villages. For 12 to 18 months the entire administration in liberated zone was in the hands of Village Panchayat Committees. The Village Committees implemented the agrarian programme. About 3 million acres of land was redistributed, forced labour was abolished, illegal exactions and feudal oppressions of various types were ended. The struggle pushed the question of agrarian revolution to the fore front. Thus compelled the congress leaders to embark upon various agrarian reforms. According to P. Sundarayya, the Telangana struggle brought to the fore ... "almost all the basic theoretical and ideological questions concerning the strategy and tactics of the Indian People's Democratic Revolution for correct and scientific answers, and realistic and practical solutions" [Sundarayya, P., 1972 : 4].

Although, the Telangana movement came to an early end, but it exposed the people to the revolutionary ideology. The movement not only exposed the elitist nature of Indian democracy but also opened the floodgates for future revolutionary movements. Very soon, the simmering discontent of the peasantry burst into the Maoist movement in 'Srikakulam'. Here tribals were the vanguards of the movement. We will come to this topic in the ensuing section. However, first let us glean through the 'Tebhaga movement' in undivided Bengal, which provided raison d' etre of the 'Naxalbari movement' in West Bengal in mid 1960s.
Comprehensive Chart of the Telangana Liberation Struggle

<table>
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<th>Name of the Movement</th>
<th>Phases</th>
<th>Time Period</th>
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<th>Vanguards / Social Base</th>
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<tr>
<td>Telangana Liberation Struggle</td>
<td>First Phase</td>
<td>1946-48</td>
<td>Approximately 3,000 villages, with 3 million population, spread over Nalgonda, Khammam and Warangal districts, covering one-third of the Telangana region.</td>
<td>Absent Saridom and acute feudal exploitations by Nizam autocracy; Deshmukh, Patelt, Patward, etc. Perpetuated by 'Diveni', 'Jagirdari' and 'Sarfikhas' systems. At social front vortex (forced labour) system was all pervasive phenomenon together with keeping concubines by landlords, and other forms of social oppressions. No political freedom, lack of civil liberties, autocratic governance through Mutki rules from top to bottom.</td>
<td>Nizam's autocratic regime, administrative reforms and political freedom, civil liberties, formation of Vishal Andhra, merger of Hyderabad state into the Indian Union Abolition of landlordism, illegal exactions, eviction of tenants, Vettl system.</td>
<td>Middle and poor peasants, landless labourers, urban middle and lower classes.</td>
<td>Nizam and his functionaries: Razakars, Jagirdars, etc. And Deshmukh, Patels, etc. at village level</td>
<td>AMS to promote cultural and political interest of the common masses through petition, resolutions and other peaceful means. From 1944-45 militant struggles against Nizam's autocratic regime and feudal Jagirdari system.</td>
<td>All out effort by Razakar force of Nizam, and extensive use of Lathis and goonds by landlords to ruthlessly suppress the movement</td>
<td>Chinese and Indian State and its armed forces together with landlords and Deshmukhs.</td>
<td>Full support to Indian armed forces by landlords, together with blatant use of lathis and goonds.</td>
<td>Massive combing operations by police, military and para-military forces. Banishing of CPI in November 1946.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telangana Liberation Struggle</td>
<td>Second Phase</td>
<td>1948-51</td>
<td>Entire tribal belt of Telangana area comprising Nallamala forest region of Guntur and Kurnool districts, from Amarabad forest area to Mehabobnagar along Krishna river covering 100 miles, Godavari forest region covering 200 miles.</td>
<td>Overwhelming support of tribals-Koya, Chenchu, Gont; substantial support of rural women folk.</td>
<td>Indian State and its armed forces together with landlords and Deshmukhs</td>
<td>From 1948 - 51 armed struggles against Indian state and landlords.</td>
<td>Large-scale military police operations.</td>
<td>CPI again banned on January 30, 1948</td>
<td></td>
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Tebhaga Movement (1946-47)

The Tebhaga movement was an agrarian struggle in undivided Bengal, during 1946-47. The vanguard of the movement was the share cropper, who rose in revolt against Jotedars\(^1\) to retain their share of the produce from one-half to two-third. At no point of time ‘land to the tiller’ or distribution of landlord’s land could become the focal issue of the Tebhaga struggle [Sen, S., 1972: V]

‘Barga or Bataidari\(^2\) system was the backbone of the feudal land relations of agrarian Bengal. Under this system, sharecroppers (bargadars) bear the entire cost of cultivation, had no right in land, and had to give 50 per cent of the produce as rent to the land owners (Jotedars) who paid revenue to the state. The share-croppers were known as adhiyars on North Bengal, bargadars in West Bengal, etc.

Now let us dwell up on class character, structural setting and social origins of the Tebhaga movement.

1. **The Agrarian Structure and the Bargadari System.**

With the introduction of the zamindari system in Bengal in 1793, the Jotedari system developed in agrarian Bengal, which reduced the actual tillers to the status of tenants [Baden- Powell, 1892: 389-442, 501-661].

Historical roots of the bargadari system could be traced in the reclamation of waste lands and jungles. Landowning classes engaged unpaid peasants to reclaim the waste lands and jungles. Once the work was done, the peasants were quickly

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\(^1\) Jotedars were a class of rich farmers who had superior right in land

\(^2\) The iniquitous system of produce rent was known as barga in West Bengal, adhi in North Bengal, tanka in Mymensingh, etc.
disposed and lands were leased out to highest cash rent payers, known as lotdars [Mitra, A., 1951: 235, 445, 448]. The lotdars, in turn gave out the land to the bargadars, the original reclaimers, on produce-rents on 50:50 basis.

However, moneylenders (Mahajans) were the only source of credit in rural areas. The rate of interest was ranging between 25 to 280 per cent per annum [Govt. of Bengal, 1930, I: 74-75, 89-94, 194]. Cultivators were forced to pay the interest during harvesting season, obviously at low price. Later they bought the food grains at higher prices for self consumption [Gangulee, N., 1935: 20-23]. This resulted in tremendous usury. Small peasants, unable to pay debt, were reduced to the level of bargadars and their lands were seized by landlords and moneylenders. As a result, there was marked increase of moneylenders-cum-landlords through land alienation and market usury, during 1901-30 [Govt. of Bengal, 1930, I: 194-96, also Mitra, A., 1953a: 95]. There were 150,000 adhiyars in Dinajpur district only [Sinha, N.K., 1962: 177-78].

However, increasing population, saturation of cultivable lands by 1875 [Hunter, W., 1875: 390-92], disintegration of rural and cottage industries and ever increasing unemployment problem [Dutt, R.C., 1963: 176-200] further accentuated the demand for cultivable land. On the other hand, British started ‘Subinfeudation’ which gave rise to number of tenures-intermediate between the zamindars and the actual cultivators [Dhanagare, D.N., 1976: 361]. This opened the floodgates for the urban Bhadralok--Brahmins, Baidyas and Kayasthas; to become Jotedars and under-raiyats. Expansion of transport and communications opened the urban markets for agrarian products [Mukherjee, R., 1957: 41-48]. The bhadralok preferred bargadari cultivation, because of twin objectives--to secure crops for marketing purposes and to continue with their urban pre-occupations [Mukherjee, R.K., 1933: 101-03]. Later investment on land became a prestige symbol for the bhadralok. That is why, majority of the bhadralok became Jotedars by the end of

1.1. The Great Depression and Aftermath

Land alienation accelerated during the year of Great Depression, when prices of primary commodities sharply fell and cash income of the small and middle peasants got adversely affected. This put them under pressure to part with their land. On the other hand, the Bengal Tenancy (Amendment) Act 1938 removed the restrictions on the rights of transfer to non-cultivating classes. Consequently, majority of owner-cultivators got relegated to the status of bargadars on their own lands [Govt. of Bengal, 1940, I:38-39]. *The Report of the Land Revenue Commission* (1940), appointed by the Fazlul Huq Ministry, observed that the rapid increase of bargadars is one of the most disquieting features of then agrarian Bengal. The Commission recommended that the bargadars be treated as ‘protected tenants’ and ‘the share of the jotedars be reduced from one-half to one-third of the produce’ [Ibid., 1940, Vol. 2 : 120]. This recommendation provided the ignition to the battle cry for ‘Tebhaga’.

However, there were phenomenal rise of share-croppers in Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Malda and Midnapur districts. Interestingly, these districts were the epicentres of the Tebhaga struggle in 1946-47. On the one hand, the severe famine of 1943 and rapid rise of prices made bargadars very soft targets of exploitation. On the other, their structural dependance on the landed upper classes made them more and more vulnerable to extortions. The share-croppers were left with two alternatives—either to be slaves or to rise in
rebellion and destroy their oppressors [see, Mitra, A., 1951, Vol.6: 235, 445, 448]. Although grievances of bargadars were vocalised as early as 1920s. But it got crystallised and radicalised after 1935 under the banner of the Kisan Sabha.

The inception of the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) opened a new vista of peasant movement in India. Branches of the AIKS were opened in many provinces. In Bengal the Communists played the leading role. The Bengal Provincial Kisan Committee was dominated by urban middle class and intellectuals, in the beginning. It is surprising to note that there was not a single peasant in the committee [Sen, S., 1972: 20]. The Kisan Sabha consolidated its base among the poor, as well. Its membership rose from 11,080 in 1937 to 50,000 in 1938-39, and 177,629 in 1944 [Ibid., : 20-24]. An overwhelming majority came from Rajbansis, Tribals and Scheduled Castes [Mitra, A., 1953b: 70-81]. Thus from 1937 to 1940 the Bengal Kisan Sabha gradually drifted towards poor peasants and bargadars, albeit rich and middle peasants continued to operate within the Kisan Sabha [Dhanagare, D.N., 1983: 300-01]. But, by 1945 the Kisan Sabha became predominantly a poor peasant organisation [Ibid.: 300-05]. By the same time, with the exit of the Swami Sahajanand from the AIKS, effective control of the AIKS passed on to the CPI [Sen, S., 1972: 31].

However, Bengal faced severe natural calamities between 1942 to 1943. Midnapur was devasted by cyclone in October 1942. The great famine of 1943 left 1.5 million people dead and shook the very foundation of agrarian Bengal [Census of India, 1951, Vol.6 : 80]. The flooding of the Damodar river in July 1943 further aggravated the already acute famine situation. The condition of bargadars went on worsening. Despite natural disasters the share-croppers obligation to surrender half of their produce to jotedars remained unchanged [Dhanagare, D.N., 1976 : 368].
At the time of the natural disasters the Kisan Sabha and the Communists remained with the people. They not only organised relief committees and grain cooperatives, but also managed 700 relief kitchens which fed 117,000 odd destitutes every day [Bose, A and Rai, K., 1945 : 9-21,40]. This provided golden opportunity to the communists to consolidate their base. By 1945 the Kisan Sabha had 255,000 odd members and a thousand full-time functionaries [People's War, 15 April 1945]. The Communists were on the verge of launching the Tebhaga struggle, which was formally launched in September 1946.

2. “TEBHAGA CHAI”

In September 1946, the Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha [BPKS] gave a battle cry ‘Inquilab Zindabad’!, ‘Tebhaga chai’ (we want Tebhaga)! , ‘Nij Kholane Dhan Tolo’! (stack paddy in your Khamar) [Sen, S., 1972 : 36]. The first clash between peasants and police took place at Atwari Police Station in Dinajpur district in the harvesting season. Here many bargadars cut the paddy crop and stored at their khamar (thrashing - floor) instead of jotedar’s khamar. A violent peasant -police clashes followed. To evade mass arrests, the rank-and-file of Kisan Sabha went underground. From their hideouts the leaders contacted several villages and tried to give direction to the developing movement. The bargadar’s response was overwhelming and spontaneous. Within a fortnight the movement proliferated to 22 out of 30 police stations of Dinajpur district [Ibid. : 38]. The movement was intense in Thakurgaon sub-division of the district. Major participants were Rajbansi and Muslim. Carrying of Red Flag and lathis became integral part of the movement, which in turn gave them courage and became a symbol of solidarity among volunteers. Undisputed leaders like Avaran Singh, Bhaben Singh, Kamparam Sing, Doma Singh and Pastaram Singh provided fillip to the movement in the area. Pastaram Singh’s wife Jaymani emerged as strong leader of Rajbansi women of the sub-division [Ibid. : 39].
Soon the movement spread to Rajbansi villages in adjoining Rangpur and Jalpaiguri districts. In Jalpaiguri district the movement was confined to Debiganj, Boda and Pachagarh police stations. Here Rajbansi women participated bravely in the movement. Charu Mazumdar, Dulal Ghosh, Biren Pal, Samar Ganguli provided leadership and direction to the movement [People’s Age, 22 December 1946].

In Rangpur district, the movement was intense in Nilphamari sub-division, where overwhelming bargadars were Rajbansi and Muslim. Within a month the movement spread to six police stations. In the second week of January 1946 a clash took place at Dimla between bargadars and some Muslim jotedars. Jotedars along with their goondas, armed with guns, raided the house of a bargadar to snatch away the crop from his khamar. Bargadars resisted the attack under the leadership of Bachcha Muhammed and Tatnarayan Ray. In ensuing firing Tatnarayan was killed and Bachcha was severely wounded. The news of Tatnarayan’s death spread like wild fire and about 3,000 peasants assembled in the village. Later the jotedars fled the village [Sen, S., 1972 : 40].

The Tebhaga struggle spread to Mymensingh and Midnapur districts of East Bengal. Although, the base of Kisan Sabha was relatively weak in Midnapur district. But in December 1946 the bargadars responded to the call of the Kisan Sabha, who were mostly Scheduled Caste, Tribal and Mahisya. Here the movement was spontaneous and spread rapidly in Mahisadal, Sutahata and Nandigram. Women joined the movement in large numbers under the leadership of Bimala Mandal. Bhupal Panda, Ananta Maji and Ranjit Sukul popularised the Tebhaga demand. Every where the pattern of the struggle was the same. By the middle of December 1946 the movement had gathered momentum and spread to eleven districts and lakhs of bargadars had carried the crop to their khamar. Over 1,000 Kisan Sabha workers and peasant volunteers had been arrested [People’s Age, 22 December 1946, also Sen, S., 1972 : 37-39, 44].
Mymensingh district in East Bengal was another stronghold of the movement. The struggle was intense in Kishoreganj sub-division. Majority of the sharecroppers were Muslim and Tribals. The zamindars, talukdars and big jotedars were mostly Hindus and few of them were Muslims. Here Hindu and Muslim peasants exhibited remarkable solidarity and fought against Hindu and Muslim zamindars and jotedars. In Rasidabad, Karimganj and Neamatpur peasants fought against Muslim jotedars. Hindu jotedars, Lalit Bagchi and Fatik Bagchi of chatla helped the police to suppress the struggle. By the last week of November 1946 repression began and about 300 Kisan Sabha workers were served with warrants. On December 6, 1946 two prominent district leaders, Pulin Bakshi and Maulavi Fazal Ali were arrested. Majority of the district leaders went underground. In January 1947 a tribal peasant, Sarbeswar Dalu, was killed by landlord’s lathials [People's Age, 22 December 1946].

2.1 The Tanka Struggle

Almost simultaneously the Tanka movement started in the northern Susang region of the district. Here the Hajong tribals turned tenants paid tanka (fixed quantity of the crop) as rent to their landlords. Like the bargadars the tanka tenants bore the entire cost of cultivation and had no tenancy right. On 8 December 5,000 Hajongs held a demonstration demanding reduction of tanka rent and its conversion into money-rent. Hence the agrarian movement in Mymensingh district was a mixture of the Tanka and Tebhaga struggles. However, agrarian unrest in this district was different in terms of cause and extent from Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri and Rangpur districts. In these three districts the impact of the movement was confined to the ‘pockets of Communist stronghold’, whereas in Mymensingh district, the struggle was fairly widespread, throughout the 50 miles long, ten miles wide belt south of the Garo hills. The Susang region was a 'partially protected area' bordering
Assam. This provided an ideal geographical setting for guerrilla activities. The Communists could strike there successfully.

The Hajong tribals held a war-like tradition and were once a ruling people of Assam. Due to this cultural tradition, it was relatively easier to mobilise Hajongs on quasi-military lines. As stated earlier, on 8 December 1946 around 5,000 Hajong peasants, Tanka tenants and sharecroppers staged a massive demonstration for reduction of tanka rent and its conversion into a fair and equitable system of cash and money rents. They cut the crops and carried the stacks to their khamar instead of to those of the landlords and jotedars, whom they socially boycotted [Sen, S., 1972 : 41-43].

In the entire northern Mymensingh comprising Netrokona, Sadar and Jamalpur sub-division, the Tanka movement spread very fast. Under the leadership of Moni Singh, in January 1947, over 1000 Hajongs conducted a march procession in Susang, attacked post offices and police stations, seized zamindar's Katchery when the first peasant-police clashes occurred. The Hajong peasants, armed with guns, bows and arrows, raised the banner of revolt which inspired the peasants of adjoining areas. In their clashes with the police there were some fatal casualties, but not many. This shows that peasant struggle in Susang was of low magnitude, peasant organisation was weak and the ‘Jacquerie’ elements were predominant [Dhanagare, D.N., 1976 : 370].

There was a temporary lull in Mymensingh, but the movement gathered momentum in Dinajpur and Jalpaiguri districts. On 4 January 1947 a violent clash took place between sharecroppers and the police in Talpukur village in Chirirbanda sub-division in Dinajpur district. The police opened fire.
Two landless peasants, Sibram and Samiruddin, were killed on the spot [Amrit Bazar Patrika, 22 January 1947]. Here, bargadars, Rajbansi, Santal and Muslim constituted the base of the Kisan Sabha. From Chirirbanda the movement spread to Parbatipur and Nababganj. By first week of February 1947 the movement became widespread in the adjoining villages of Patiram where the peasants removed the paddy from the khamar of a rich jotedar Gobinda Sinha. This incident culminated into the Khanpur armed clash [Sen, S., 1972 : 51 - 57]. In Jalpaiguri district the Tebhana struggle was equally effective. Santal and Oraon tribals constituted the base of the Kisan Sabha. The movement was so intense that the jotedars fled to safety. In this district some of the plantation labourers joined the bargadars and thus strengthened the Tebhaga struggle [Sen, S., 1972 : 52-53].

2.2 The Second Phase

But the first phase of the struggle came to an early end. Now the struggle entered a new phase, popularly known as 'Kholan bhanga' in which bargadars began removing the paddy from jotedar's stacks to their khamar. This was done quite successfully without much resistance from the jotedars. But the form of struggle was such that it did not really weaken the power of jotedars. The peasant-police encounters, attack on landlords and jotedars' houses and on government buildings were very few. The main interest of bargadars was 'tebhaga' (two-third share of the produce). Once it seemed feasible, they did not think it necessary to launch onslaught on the very system of bargadari, adhiari or tanka cultivation. Although, these systems were the backbone of the domination of jotedars and landlords. Hence, although the Tebhaga or Tanka movement was a resistance movement carried on by militant poor peasants, it could not develop into radical agrarian struggle to change the very exploitative system of bargadari.
The sustained Tebhaga struggle drew attention of the Government. The Bengal Government realised the urgency of the peasant's demand and gazetted the 'Bengal Bargadars Temporary Regulation Bill'. It was published in the Calcutta Gazette on 22 January 1947 [The Calcutta Gazette Extraordinary, 22 January 1947]. The provisions of the Bargadars Bill may be summarised as: it provided tenurial security for bargadars and two-third and one-third crop shares for bargadars and jotedars respectively. However, the Bill reserved the right of a jotedar to resume land for personal cultivation and to evict his bargadars on account of 'misuse of land, failure to cultivate or to deliver the due share of the produce to the landlord' [Gupta, S., 1947]. However, the Bill was never actually introduced in the legislature and so it never became an Act.

Yet the Bargadars Bill provided an impetus and gave fairly an objective background to the Tebhaga struggle. The Bill gave legal sanction to tebhaga demand and provided dynamism to those bargadars who remained neutral, passive and hesitant. Soon the movement proliferated to new areas with renewed vigour and many new leaders jumped into the struggle. One of the immediate effects of the Bill was the swing of Muslim peasants to the movement in Dinajpur district.

The movement reached a crucial stage. On the one hand, the government was not sincere in passing the Bill. On the other, severe repression was started. In the face of police repression the peasants were showing signs of vacillation. Only Santals and Hajongs remained militant, but they formed small section of the rural population. By third week of February police repression started in full swing. Armed police were brought from Calcutta, and police camps were set up in Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri and Rangpur. The struggle was resumed, but this time not by choice but by compulsion. Severe
repression forced the sharecroppers either to surrender or resist. On 20 February 1947, severe police-peasant clash took place in Khanpur village in Balurghat sub-division in Dinajpur district, when the police party came there to arrest six Kisan Sabha leaders. Anticipating police repression, over 1,000 peasants and Kisan Sabha volunteers cut a ditch in the middle of the road, and the truck carrying the police party fell into it. Panic-stricken police started shooting. In fighting that followed twenty peasants were killed on the spot and several others were injured [Sen, S., 1972 : 63, also The Statesman, 1 March 1947]. On the subsequent day, 21 February, another police-peasant clash took place at Thumnia in Baliadingi, a Rajbansi village in Dinajpur district. Here Kisan Sabha had very strong base. Police entered into the village to arrest Doma Singh, a local Kisan leader. The peasants clashed with the police and in retaliation police opened fire in which four peasants died of bullet injuries [The Statesman, 1 March 1947]. On 25 February 1947, several thousand peasants held a peaceful demonstration in Thakurgaon town against Khanpur and Thumnia police firing with familiar slogan, "Tebhaga Chai". The police fired at the peaceful demonstrators, six peasants were killed and many wounded [Amrit Bazar Patrika, 26 February 1947]. Similar incidents occurred at Kajapur (Meherpur, Nadia district) and Mahabari (Meteli, Jalpaiguri district) [The Statesman, 6 April 1947, 7 and 22 May 1947]. But the spontaneous phase of the movement was over. Intensity and magnitude of the struggle was much reduced. Infact, the movement started petering out after March 1947.

3. An Assessment

The Tebhaga movement was a partial struggle centered around the demand of the 'two-third' share of the produce for bargadars. 'zamindari abolition' and 'land to the tiller' remained remote ideals of the movement. For the Kisan Sabha,
progenitor of the movement, preservation of peasant unity was the main focus of the interest. Concept of ‘United Front’ was relegated in the background. However, ‘United Front’ is one of the most important elements of revolutionary movement. According to Mao-Tsetung, it is one of the three magic weapons of the people’s democratic revolution. The other two are ‘Armed struggle’ and ‘Party building’ [Mao-tsetung, 1965, Vol. IV : 422]. Therefore, inspite of potential of a massive peasant revolt, the Tebhaga movement could not develop beyond a partial struggle. Let us focus up on the factors which reduced the potential revolutionary movement to a resistance movement.

Leaders of the Tebhaga movement failed to understand the agrarian classes and could not make distinction between small and big jotedars [Alavi, H., 1965 : 267]. Therefore, class conflicts remained at two levels during entire phase of the movement. At one level, between big landlords and talukdars on the one hand, and rich peasants, jotedars, raiyats and under-raiyats, on the other. At another level, conflict remained between jotedars and bargadars. Since the Tebhaga struggle was centered around the conflict between jotedars and bargadars, it could not effectively mobilise the other agrarian classes. Magnitude of the movement could be gauged from the fact that during the entire phase of the movement, total number of peasants killed in police firing did not exceed fifty. It is also important to note that “not a single jotedar was killed, not a single jotedar’s house was burnt down” [Sen, S., 1972 : 73]. Bargadars were more concerned with their immediate issue ‘tebhaga’. Broader issue like zamindari abolition could not have evoked mass participation of bargadars. Even battle cry ‘tebhaga chai’ had mixed class character. Furthermore, the leadership of the Kisan Sabha was dominated by urban middle class. Even at village level, committees of the party were dominated by middle peasants - petty jotedars and under-raiyats. Many of them got their land cultivated through bargadars. The tebhaga demand affected these middle peasants as much as it did rich peasants and big jotedars. This further imposed limitation on the movement [Bannerjee, S., 1984 : 18].
However, very nature of the tebhaga issue scuttle the scope of the revolt. ‘Tebhaga’ was the central issue. The legitimacy of the produce-rent system or the zamindari system was not questioned. Thus, once the bargadars removed paddy to their khamars, the struggle started petering out. During the peak of the struggle, many jotedars fled their villages. But the Kisan Sabha leaders neither attempted to seize lands, nor tried to set-up parallel administration or government. On the contrary, bargadars were willing to give a one-third share to jotedars. Thus, the class conflict highlighted by Tebhaga struggle did not give scope to large scale peasant revolt. Further, mere gezette announcement of the ‘Bargadar's Bill’ cool off the rank-and-file of the movement [Ibid.]

The growing influence of the Muslim League in Muslim majority province like Bengal, further limited the scope of the Tebhaga struggle. Partition of India and transfer of power was in the air from 1940 onwards. The Muslim League was hostile towards the CPI and the Kisan Sabha to win over the Muslim peasantry. Although, the league was dominated by Muslim landlords, upper and middle classes, but its appeal for a separate nation unified the Muslim politically, cutting across the class lines. Bengal witnessed the worst communal riots in August 1946, prior to the beginning of the Tebhaga struggle. Thus, growing communal politics further dampened the Tebhaga struggle.

In the light of the above facts, one can conclude that general political development in India in 1940s and communal politics in the Bengal province had decisive impact on the Tebhaga movement. The very nature of the ‘Tebhaga’ issue circumscribed the scope of the massive struggle. Further, contradiction within the Kisan Sabha-- between cadres (mostly middle peasants) and ranks (bargadar poor peasants); weakened the movement. Although, socio-economic and political crisis in Bengal province was conducive for massive peasant revolt, but, wrong politicisation of peasantry weakened their rebellious impulse.
However, the simmering discontent and grievances of the poor peasants could not be ignored for long. This burst into action in mid 1970s and provided *raison d' etre* to the agrarian radicalism, popularly known as 'Naxalism' in India. We will return to this topic later.

However, first let us dwell up on the Maoist movement in ‘Srikakulam’, also known as ‘Girijan movement’ of mid 1970s, due to overwhelming support of the tribal people.
### Comprehensive Chart of the Tebhaga Movement

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name of the Movement</th>
<th>Phases</th>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Area of operation</th>
<th>Agrarian Scenario</th>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Vanguards / Social Base</th>
<th>Against whom</th>
<th>Mode of operation</th>
<th>Rolling Class of the Area</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Failures</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tebhaga Movement</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Rangpur, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri districts of North Bengal, Midnapur, Maldah and Mymensingh districts in East Bengal. Most intense in Thakurgaon sub-division, covering 22 out of 30 police stations of Dinajpur district; 6 police stations of Nalhati sub-division of Rangpur district; three police stations of Jalpaiguri; 11 police stations of Midnapur; and Kishoreganj sub-division of Mymensingh districts.</td>
<td>Bangdarist system was the fountainhead of feudal land relation where actual tillers were reduced to the level of Bargadars (share-croppers) without tenurial rights and on unequal basis of produce distribution. High rate of land alienation, severe market pressure, tremendous rise of subsistence, the Great Depression and subsequent terrible famine in 1942, disintegration of cottage and village industries, high rate of growth of population and unemployment. Lack of capital investment and progressive concentration of land among non-enterprising privileged few, led to phenomenal rise of bargadars.</td>
<td>To increase the share of the bargadars from one-half of two-thirds of the produce, i.e. 'Tebhaga'. Against hat tol levy, reduction of interest rates for paddy loans, and right to market paddy in their (bargadars) Khamar.</td>
<td>Bargadars and poor peasants—Muslims, Rajbanshis, Scheduled Castes, Tribals, Mahiyas and women of lower caste(s) and class.</td>
<td>L a n d l o r d s, 'Jotedars', 'Lotlers', Merchants.</td>
<td>Mostly protest struggles within the legal framework. Occasional armed actions of low intensity. Massive response of poor peasants and landless labourers.</td>
<td>Jotedars unleashed terror and suppression with the help of their goondas and police, looted Bargadars' houses and killed them.</td>
<td>Warrants were issued and many Communists were arrested. The government sided with Jotedars to suppress the movements and killed prominent Communist leaders of the area.</td>
<td>'Tebhaga' was the central issue. 'Land to the tiller', 'Zamindari abolition', etc. were in the background. So other agrarian classes, except share-croppers, could not be mobilized, neither 'United Front' could be formed. The Kisan Sabha leadership was dominated by middle peasants, they were equally affected by 'Tebhaga' issue. Therefore, contradiction between the rent-and-fite of the Kisan Sabhas weakened the movement. Growing communal politics of the Muslim League, when partition was in the air, further dampened the struggle.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Rangpur and Nadia districts. More intense in Thakurgaon sub-division of Dinajpur district</td>
<td>Kholan Bhangar, i.e., to remove paddy taken by Jotedars as Kholan Bhangar.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Oraon Santhals, Muslims, SCs, STs, some plantation labourers.</td>
<td>'Jotedars', Landlords police force.</td>
<td>Militant protest movement against Jotedars and Sakkaras.</td>
<td>Landlords organised lathis and started ruthless repression, supported by state armed forces.</td>
<td>Government passed Bargadar regulation bill, but on paper only. On the other hand, opened many new police camps and brought armed police in the area. Communists were thrown behind bars.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tanka Struggle</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>1946-47</td>
<td>Mymensingh district. Most vigorous in Sisign region, Northern part of the district and South of the Garo hills.</td>
<td>Reduction of 'tanka rent', i.e., fixed quantity of crop as rent, and to convert it into equitable system of money-rent. To stack the produce in their Khamar. Hence a mixture of tanka and tebhaga issues.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mostly Hajon tribes of Sisign region of Mymensingh districts.</td>
<td>Landlords, Jotedar, Police force and government officials.</td>
<td>Militant actions by Hajon tribes against local exploitative elements, but armed struggle was in the background.</td>
<td>Same mode of suppression and repression was carried here as well.</td>
<td>Governments reaction was still more violent in that area due to higher intensity of a militant actions by Hajon tribes.</td>
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MAP II: Map of Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh, showing CPI(M-L) bases in the district, and in neighbouring Koraput, Orissa, during 1969 and 1970.
The Maoist Movement in Srikakulam (1967-70)

The Srikakulam movement is popularly known as 'Girijan' (hill people) movement due to massive participation of tribal people. Widespread discontent among tribals of 'Agency Area' was due to prohibition of traditional podu cultivation, steady erosion of their lands into the hands of sahukars, severe exploitation by merchants, money-lenders, etc. It was in the agency area that the movement got sustenance and could survive for an effective period of time. The Srikakulam movement acquired militant character during mid-1970s and engulfed seven to eight hundred square miles of declared 'Agency Area' [see Liberation, vol.2, No.2, December 1968:33]. But the movement came to an end by 1970.

However before going into details of the Srikakulam movement, let us briefly discuss the socio-economic profile of the district.

1. Socio-economic Scenario of Srikakulam

Geographically Srikakulam can be divided into two regions--hilly terrain, known as 'agency area', and plain area. The population density of the district, 602 persons per square mile, is higher than the state average of 339 [District Census Handbook, 1961:XXXIX]. Both area and population wise, Srikakulam is third largest district of Andhra Pradesh [Ibid.].

The Scheduled Caste constitute 9.43 per cent of the total district population. 15 per cent of them are literate, 61.77 per cent work as agricultural labourers [Census of India, Andhra Pradesh, 1961: XIVI-XIVII]. However, literacy rate of the district

1. The hilly region of East Ghat which constitutes parts of the Parvathipuram, Palankonda and Salur taluks, dominated by the tribal population was marked as 'Agency' Area' by the Government for developmental activities.
is only 15.71 per cent. Srikakulam district has predominantly agrarian economy, indistrialisation is quite insignificant here [see, District Census Handbook, 1961]. The entire district lacks basic infrastructural facilities [Ibid., 1961 and 1971]. There is acute crisis of basic civic facilities.

Total forest area of the district is 16 per cent of the total land area. The Scheduled Tribes live mostly in 'agency area'. They constitute 8.21 per cent of the total population, which is higher than the state average of 3.68 per cent. According to the Census, "their educational achievements are hardly worth mentioning" [District Census Handbook, 1961: XIVIII]. Their socio-economic and working conditions are no better than the Scheduled Caste [Ibid.]. The average holding of a tribal cultivator is uneconomical, which is 0.82 acre. Source of irrigation is practically non-existent, there is scarcity of even drinking water, which is often very unhygienic.

The tribal life in this area is characterised by abysmal poverty and hunger. Their staple diet is gruel made out of tamarind seed powder. The extent of hunger is such that normally they do not eat continuously for four to five days [Banerjee, T.K., in Desai, A.R.,(ed.), 1986:214]. Before invasion from outside, tribals constituted an autonomous entity and were not integrated completely into the outside market economy [Nair, V.M., The Statesman, 11 April 1968, also Nagi Reddy, T.,1978 : 344].

1.1. Invasion From Outside.

In the tribal area, Britishers introduced monetary economy with two-fold motives-- first, to pour out the coffee of the state by raising revenues, and second, to use forest produce [Banerjee, T.K, op. cit. : 215]. This not only disturbed the tribal life, but also intensified their exploitation by the government officials, plainsmen, landlords, etc. The British used the existing
zamindars as their agents to collect revenue, and other lands were leased out to the dominant ryots on joint rents [Srikakulam District Gazetteers, 1971: 6-7]. On the other hand, landlords started the Mustajari system. Mustajars kept fertile lands for themselves, and leased out inferior lands to the tribals, who could be evicted anytime by Mustajar. Sahukars and non-tribals penetrated in the area through Zamindars and Mustajars by purchasing land from them. Thus, most of the productive land in the agency area was controlled by non-tribals. The British also introduced "Abkari Revenue". Drinking being a part of tribal's socio-cultural life, this measure further intensified exploitation by corrupt revenue collectors [Francis, W., 1970: 186].

The above measures created two trends in the agency area. It accelerated the process of severe exploitation and further pauperisation. Second, it attracted non-tribals in this lucrative field of exploitation. Two types of merchants penetrated in the area:

1. The liquor merchants, and
2. The merchants selling daily necessities like salt, kerosene, etc. In turn, tribals gave them tamarind and other minor forest produces, their crops and finally their land [Ibid. : 189]. This exchange was often unequal and exploitative. In the process these merchants captured most of the tribals lands and pushed them to the level of bonded labourer [Ibid. : 109].

In the post-independence period, Government of India started many developmental measures in the agency area. But most of the fruits of development were cornered by the non-tribal population. For example, in

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2. Under this system, the right to collect rents from the agency area was being auctioned to highest bidder, known as 'Mustajar'. They often collected exorbitant rents which led to rack-renting. The burden of this unscrupulous revenue collection had to bear by the ryots.
the afforestation programme, most of the tribals either worked as labourers, or went deep into the forests to carry on with shifting cultivation [Note For Study Team on Tribal Development Programme, 1970 : 56]. Irrigation projects could not make significant headway. Even little success could not accrue any benefit to the tribals, as most of their lands had been alienated. Little industrialisation opened new venue of exploitation by private industrialists, to exploit both natural and local resources. Further, development of infrastructure threw “the flood gate open to the rising tides of tribal exploitation and expropriation” [Mukherjee, R.K., 1975 : 13].

However, due to above forms of exploitation, tribals caught in the acute misery and severe crisis in their socio-economic existence. The situation came a boiling point due to severe economic crisis that gripped the whole country during 1965-67. Even government measures could not mitigate their misery. Failing to find a solution to their problems “within the existing democratic framework, the Girijans were open to any movement promising to solve their problems outside the legal frame-work of the country” [Sinha, S., 1976 : 173].

2. Initial Phase of the Militant Movement.

Tribals of the agency area has a ‘tradition of militancy’. They rebelled against British rule between 1922 to 1924 [see, Banerjee, S., 1984 : 129-30]. They have experienced prolonged political campaigns [Ranga, N.G., 1949]. ‘Agency Area’ remained the epi-centre of anti-Nizam struggle during Telangana movement [for detail see, Sundarayya,P., 1972].

However, in post-independence period, the first Communist movement in the area was started by Master Palle Ramulu. He along with the another dynamic leader
Vempatapa Satyanarayana started organising Girijan Sanghamas (Hill People’s Association). Numerous cultural and militant activities were organised to expose submissive tribals to the revolutionary culture. Night schools were held by Sangham workers. Besides basic education, tribals were taught their political rights and duties, superstition and supernatural beliefs were debunked. Sangham organised people’s court and asked people not to approach government court [Liberation, vol. 2, No.7, May 1969 : 83-84]. The response was so tremendous that between 1962 to 1965, only one tribal peasant approached government civil court [Liberation, vol. 2, No. 8, June 1969 : 12-13]. Thus, the seeds of extra-constitutionalism were soon. However, the first conference of the Sangham was held in 1961. With the split of CPI in 1964, V.Satyanarayana, A.Kailasam and other important leaders joined CPI(M) [Banerjee,S.,1984 : 130].

The first popular struggle in the agency area was against vetti (a form of bonded labour) in 1959. The response was tremendous in the entire ‘Girijan villages’ within a radius of 30 miles [for detail see, Sinha, S., 1976 : 211-177]. Encouraged by vetti response, Sangham started movement against corrupt forest officials, moneylenders, etc. Subsequently moneylenders not only forgo the debt but also returned mortgaged tribal lands [Nair, V.M., The Statesman, 12 April 1968]. Similar struggles were launched for forest produce and forest lands. As a result, tribals occupied 4,000 areas of forest land. Girijan Cooperative Corporation, established to save tribals from moneylenders and corrupt forest officials, proved to be another corrupt agency [Sinha, S., 1976 : 202-05]. Sangham organised agitations and put an end to the corrupt practices [Ibid. : 208].

In a very short span of time, Sangham became extremely popular and established firm roots among the local population. It strength was such that even government

3. For detail of these legendary heroes see, Sumanata Banerjee, 1984 : 130 - 31, also Liberation, Vol. 2, No.11, September 1969 : 68-69
officials did not dare to enter into agency area ... "the police did little to interfere with the Communists, indeed some Communist leaders used to be saluted by policemen" [Nair, V.M., *The Statesman*, 12 April 1968].

Between 1960-67, a series of struggles were launched against low wage and illegal occupation of tribal landlords. In November 1960, the Sangham gave a call to seize harvests in Gujjavaisivada and Peddagothili villages. 300 tribals were ready to defy even police. The local police was not in a position to control the situation. Soon a big police camp was established, raids were conducted and many cases were booked [Satyam, V., 1962 : 22]. *Farm servants strike on wage in 1960* was another important agitation by Sangham. The Sangham not only kept local servants away from landlords' land, but also successfully stopped workers from outside to harvest landlords' produce. Pushed hard in the peak harvest season, landlords not only conceded to all the demands but also withdraw the cases, and got the police camps removed from the area [Ramalingachari, V., op.cit. : 45].

However, the lorry stopping incident became a turning point of the Sangham struggle [for detail see, Sinha, S., 1976 : 227-29]. Soon police started strengthening itself. Many police posts were opened, and special Armed Police camps were set-up during harvesting time [Ibid. : 229]. Many leaders were arrested and cases were framed. The organisational activities of Sangham came to a standstill because of the pressure of looking after the cases [Ramalingachari, V., op.cit. : 40].

However, during this phase, Sangham's activities were localised and it was organisationally weak. Armed struggle to captur power was somehow very subdued [see, *Liberation*, Vol. 2, No. 2, December 1968 : 36-37]. However, rank-

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and-file were looking for an alternative which could bring them out from this
dead end. They first joined CPI(M) in 1964, then T. Naggi Reddy in 1967 and
finally Charu Mazumdar in 1968.

2.1. Towards Armed Struggle

The Srikakulam movement got fillip in July 1967, when Sangham presented a
charter of demands and started agitation [for detail see, Singh, S., 1976 : 234].
On the other hand, landlords, moneylenders and contractors launched Ryot
Sangham and decided to throttle even moderate tribal demands [People's
Democracy, 19 November 1967 : 10-11]. Subsequently, many Sangham activists
were severely beaten by landlords in Levidi village. When Sangham arrived at
Levidi for explanation, they were fired upon by "prominent Congress landlords
Two prominent Sangham workers were killed in the firing.

However, later in the Levidi case judgement on September 1968, the Court
acquitted those accused of Girijans killing [Banerjee, S., 1984 : 132]. This action
together with severe police oppression shocked the local tribals. Sangham
decided to form squads to fight against Government-landlords alliance.

Intervention of the All-India Co-ordination Committee of Communist
Revolutionaries (AICCCR) of Charu Mazumdar group changed the whole
scenario. AICCCR remarked that Andhra Maoists were conducting the Srikakulam
Movement as a "Democratic Struggle" and not as a "Revolutionary Struggle"
[Liberation, Vol. 2, No. 5, June 1968 : 32]. They accused the Andhra Committee
as 'Neo-revisionists'. In the second week of June, AICCCR contacted leaders
of Naxalbari Solidarity Committee (NSC) of Andhra Pradesh, and explained to
them the ideological and tactical differences with Andhra Pradesh Revolutionary
Communist Committee (APRCC).
By September third week, pro-AICCCR group leaders of Srikakulam passed two resolutions. In first they declared their merger with AICCCR. The second resolution on armed struggle was unanimously passed. They expressed the opinion that by immediately starting armed struggle they could develop a revolutionary struggle for seizure of power. In October 1968 a meeting of Srikakulam leaders was held. Twelve member District Coordination Committee was elected to give a decisive majority to pro-AICCCR group [Sinha, S., 1976 : 244]. This followed by preparation for armed actions. The existing propaganda squads were converted into armed guerrilla squads and 86 militants were formed into squads. The local people were given training in laying traps, ambusing, using firearms, etc. [Proletarian Path, No.1, 1969 : 40]. Many young and dynamic leaders from outside came to Srikakulam to guide and support the armed struggle. Thus, ground for armed action was ready.

3. Phase of Violent Radicalism

Pro-AICCCR groups decision to start armed struggle immediately, renewed the people's enthusiasm and broken the apathy of the movement. The movement started with a mass phase in which thousands of people participated. Later the movement turned first into limited guerrilla actions, and later still to individual annihilation combined with mere squadism. Let us, briefly discuss different stages of the movement in this renewed phase.

3.1. The Mass Phase.

Soon Srikakulam District Committee worked out a comprehensive Programme to attack landlords at different places simultaneously. Efforts were made to get the maximum people's participation. On 24 November 1968, V. Satyam along with 400 tribals attacked the landlord Theegala Narasimhulu of
Pedagothili village. Next day, moneylender Ramurti of Doddukallu village was attacked. Property worth Rs.27,000 was seized [Liberation, Vol.2, No.7, May 1969 : 61]. This followed by attacks on Dandusura and many other villages.

Poor, self-educated radical leader Tamada Ganapati, organised peasants in the villages around Boddapadu in Sompeta taluq. Soon many villages of plain area became 'red fortresses'. The only high school of the area at Boddapadu became a breeding ground for Communist revolutionaries. Baddapadu emerged as an epi-centre of Maoist onslaught in the entire Srikakulam district.

Bobbili taluq was another strong area of Communist revolutionary movement. Here A.Kailasam was fighting for the peasants from 1954 onwards. He organised Ryotu Sanghams (Peasant Association) in fifty odd villages in the area.

After 20 November 1968 decision(discussed earlier), Kailasam organised many squads and formed committees to propagate revolutionary politics. He was joined by M.V. Ramanamurthy (MVR as he was popularly known) the President of Bobbili Teachers Union. Revolutionaries started seizing crops of landlords, occupying temple lands, and effectively intervened in the power and functions of Panchayat. One of the important features of this phase was high rate of people's participation in each action led by the Maoists.

As usual, police started operations and arrested many activists from Communist strongholds. Warrants were issued against rank-and-file. As a result, many leaders left their areas and took shelter in Parvatipuram forest area. Even District Committee advised Kailasam, MVR and others to spread the struggle to non-struggle areas [Sinha, S., 1976 : 261-62]. The activities
in the Bobbili area came to a standstill and leaders were hiding in the agency forest area.

After successful operation in plain area, police turned towards agency area which was the base of Maoist activities. Nine platoons of Special Armed Police were operating in Srikakulam district with the Cooperation of the Orissa Government [The Hindu, 19 December 1968]. They launched search operations in tribal villages and hamlets in search of Maoists. They often faced tough resistance from local population, some times spontanous [see, The Hindu, 14 December 1968], and sometimes organised [see, Sinha, S., 1976 : 263-64].

During the peak period of mass movement, Charu Mazumdar visited Srikakulam on 21 January 1969. Pro- AICCCR leaders of Andhra presented a very rosy picture of prospects of the movement. During Charu's second visit in the second week of February, it was decided to intensify and extend the armed struggle from the agency area to plain area and other districts of Andhra Pradesh [Liberation, Vol. 2, No. 5, March 1969 : 66-69]. State Coordination Committee was formed with C.Tejeswar Rao as Convenor. Guerrilla squads were organised each with 7 or 8 members. Srikakulam district was divided into four areas for guerrilla action:

1. Bobbili area,
2. Parvatipuram area covering forest,
3. Chandanagiri area comprising forest tracts, and
4. Sompeta area

With this, phase of guerrilla actions started.
3.2. Beginning of Guerrilla Actions.

Activities in plain area started on February 15, 1969. Boddapadu squad led by H. Panigrahi attacked merchant and police informer, T. Dharmaraju [Ibid.: 268]. This followed by more attacks on merchants and police informers. In a famous "Bathapuram incident" squad seized Rs.40,000 from a rich landlord Varanasi Nityanandam. Charu compared this incidence with the peasant rebellion of Hunan, which was the starting point of the Chinese revolution [Srikakulam Zilla Committee CPI (ML) Report, April 1969]. Another incident, which boosted the morale of the Maoist, took place near Pathakota village. Here the squad ambushed the police party led by local Circle Inspector. This left four dead and an Inspector survived with a hand lost [The Deccan Chronicle, 8 April 1969].

The Movement proliferated in other plain areas, i.e. the Bobbili area. The cadres who were hiding in agency area, after the December events, came down to Bobbili plain under strong leadership of V. Satyanarayana. On March 7, 1969 they forcibly fished in the Gowripuram village ponds. Approximately 400 people participated [The Hindu, 8 March 1969]. In Badevalasa they attacked and looted the houses of there local landlords. Maoists burnt promisory notes worth Rs.70,000 [The Times of India, 13 March 1969].

However, police intensified their raids and arrests. Due to mounting police presure, the Maoist action squads got disorganised and dispersed. Important leaders like MVR, retreated into the mountains. Kailasam and Reddy Appalaswamy were killed, the others arrested by the police [The Times of India, 23 March 1969]. Once again Maoist's activities in plain areas were foiled by the police like December 1968. Now, the Communist revolutionaries
were forced to think of readopting their tactics, according to the changed conditions.

3.3. Annihilation Strategy

In the Calcutta plenum from 19-22 April 1969, AICCCCR decided to form a new Party, the CPI(ML). On their return from Calcutta, Andhra leaders met at Visakhapatnam between 14-16 May 1969. In that meeting, the old State Coordination Committee was converted into the Organising Committee for the newly formed CPI(ML) [Sinha, S., 1976 : 274]. *Four point* immediate programme was worked out:

(i) Seizure of landlords property,


(iii) Organising guerrilla squads, and

(iv) Annihilation of landlords, police personnel and informers.

This meeting proved to be a turning point in the history of Srikakulam movement. On the one hand, organisationally there was shift from mass activity to guerrilla squads. On the other hand, programmatically annihilation overshadowed all other activities [Banerjee, T.K., in Desai, A.R., (ed.): 231].

Now, Maoists renewed their activity in plain area. First incident took place at Borivanka on 19 May 1969. Squads led by Panchadi Krishnamurti killed local landlord Balleda Krishnamurthy and his brother, property worth Rs. one lakh was seized and promissory notes worth Rs. three lakhs were burnt [*The Hindu*, 21 May 1969]. Hundreds of local people participated in that incident.
A prominent revolutionary and District Secretary of the Party, Panchadi Krishnamurthi along with other militant cadres were killed on 24th May 1969 by the police. This incident shattered the morale of rank-and-file of the Party.

In order to reorganise themselves, a meeting of organisers of Sompeta area was held in the second week of June. Squads were reorganised and new areas were demarcated for the operation of squads. On 19 June 1969, squad along with four hundred villagers annihilated local landlord Konchada Bhuchandra Rao and ransacked general stores shop of K.D. Ramudu of Akkupalli village. This followed by several annihilations at Govinda Puram and Konaka villages [for detail see, Sinha, S., 1976 : 275-78].

This new strategy helped to regain the sagging morale of Maoists and provided new impetus to the movement. Even CPI(ML) felt that annihilation was a way of propagating the revolutionary ideas and spreading the movement to new areas [Liberation, Vol. 2, No. 9, July 1969]. In the period between November 1968 to February 1969, Girijan peasant fighters looted property of landlords and moneylenders in Parvatipuram and Pathapatnam. These peasants closely followed the teachings of Mao-Tse-Tung and were 'learning warfare through warfare' [Liberation, Vol. 2, No. 4, February 1969]. However, in areas where the CPI(ML) gained base by this kind of activities, their sympathisers and supporters deserted them at the very first sign of strong police action [Sinha, S., 1976 : 276]. But the CPI(ML) retained its hold in their traditionally strong areas and forced many landlords to leave the place.

The May 14-16, 1969 decision was simultaneously implemented in agency area as well. Here annihilation was often accompanied with mass participation. Therefore here, annihilation as tactic was used to terrorise landlords and police informers, rather than a propaganda mechanism, as was the case in plain areas.
The first incident under the new tactic, in agency area, took place in Thumbali village. Here landlord Gudla Siddhanti was annihilated and houses of three other landlords were ransacked and promissory notes burnt. About a thousand tribals participated in it [The Hindu, 17 May 1969]. Approximately two thousand tribals led by Vempatapu and C. Tejeswar Rao annihilated a local landlord Anguru Induvada Naidu and houses of six others were ransacked on 26 May 1969 [The Times of India, 27 May 1969]. Another major incident took place in Palakonda village. Local landlord Samburu Naidu was attacked by seven hundred tribals led by Vempatapu. Rs. 10,000 was looted and 10 acres of his land was seized by the Party [The Hindu, 4 June 1969]. Many raids by Maoists were conducted against local moneylenders, police informers, as well.

However, seeing the intensity of the movement, Andhra Pradesh Government declared entire agency area as disturbed in June 1969. Police were issued orders to shoot at sight, and assembling of more than five people was prohibited. More CRPF was reinforced and intensive combing operations were launched. Due to mounting pressure Maoists stopped mass participation and heavily banked upon squad organisation and squadism.

Trapped in the new situation, Maoists decided to reorganise themselves on a squad basis, "Village defence squad" as pivot organisation was created. These squads were supervised and coordinated by "Zonal Committee". This Committee was instrumental in recruitment and formation of "guerrilla squads" from the village defence squads. The agency area was divided into fifteen zones, each under the charge of an organiser [Sinha, S., 1976 : 283-85].

“Mobile warfare” as tactic was adopted, each had 5-7 squads. The Maoists decided on mobile warfare and annihilation of class enemy as dominant means to achieve revolutionary goal. The Maoist leaders asked the guerrilla squads to prepare for war with the police, since it signified a direct confrontation with the State for the sake of political power [see, Liberation, Vol. 2, No. 9, 1969 : 19]. It was also decided that the priority must be shifted from attacks on landlords to attack on police [Ibid. : 22, emphasis added].

To implement the above policy, squads stuck with lack of modern arms and ammunition. Although, they snatched some fire arms from the police and some experts were called to make bombs. But, by and large guerrillas fought with traditional weapons [Sinha, S., 1976 : 290-91]. The guerrilla squads had some initial successes. They conducted raids and ambushed on police parties. In Podi area guerrillas raided the Andhra Pradesh S.P. Camp twice, 4th Battalion of A.P.S.P. was attacked, they also killed eight policemen in the Arivi hills in ambushes. The months of May, June and early July witnessed many clashes between the Maoists and the police [for detail see, Ibid. : 291-92].

However, poorly trained and ill-equipped guerrillas could not match the equipped and battle-trained police parties. The Police was strengthened by the addition of two battalions of CRPF in mid-July 1969. The State force not only stopped supply of food in agency area but also disturbed agricultural activities in the region. Due to deteriorating economic condition coupled with mounting state pressure, guerrillas pushed to the receiving end. In the first major success, police force shot dead six guerrillas in Parvatipuram agency area [The Indian Express, 20 July 1969]. In Elwinpet encounter guerrilla leader Biddika Addai was killed. Another important leader Kurangi Sundari and Addakula Chiranjeevulu were killed at Palakonda [The Deccan
The CRPF continued its operations of combing the Maoists with ruthless thoroughness. Innumerable arrests were made and even small hamlets were burnt. Along with these repressive measures, the government implemented various ameliorative and pacificatory programmes [for detail see, “The Healing Touch”, Free Press Journal, 26 December 1970].

The above government measures weakened the CPI(ML) and reduced the intensity of the movement. The Party acknowledged that there was “stagnation” in the movement, and the cadre were losing enthusiasm [Rao, C. Subba, op.cit.]. In fact, except the central squad with hardcore members, other squads became ineffective. Even the central squad could not undertake any major activity after July 1969. Remaining hardcore Maoists shifted to mountainous regions by January 1970.

By last week of July 1970 the Srikakulam movement was hardly left with any old and important leaders. Prominent leaders like Mallikarjunudu, Dummu Appalaswamy and Urlam Malleswara Rao were killed in Uddanam area on 30th July 1970. Nagabhushanam Patnaik and Appalasuri were arrested at Calcutta in third week of July 1970 [Sinha, S., 1976: 313-14]. The Maoists with 8,000 rank-and-file during their peak time, now reduced to 20 or 30 people.

State force was present in full strength in Srikakulam district. There were twenty-two D.S.P.'s (as against one before), two CRPF battalions, eight companies of Andhra Pradesh State Police and six platoons of District Armed Reserve Police were stationed in the district to suppress the Maoist movement. Three new Police Stations were opened in Maoists strong areas-- Sitampet, Nilakantapuram and Donubai [Haubold, Erhard, 1971].
4. An Assessment

The Srikakulam movement passed through many stages, each with different strategy and programmes. The movement which started with mass participation and mass organisation, finally culminated into squadism and individual annihilation. Period between November 1968 to April 1969 saw massive movement on economic issues with mass participation. But this phase of the movement came to an early end due to massive police crack-down. Soon, the leaders of the movement propounded the theory of "National Upsurge" and "Immediate Revolution" [Liberation, Vol. 3, No. 4, February 1970, also Mazumdar, Charu, 1972]. The period of 1969-1970 witnessed the emergence of guerrilla actions and individual annihilations. Based on Lin Piao's assessment, Maoist leaders advocated that "guerrilla warfare alone can unleash the initiative and rouse the creative genius of the Indian people...guerrilla warfare alone can expand the small base of armed struggle to large extensive areas" [Liberation, Vol. 3, No. 3, 1970, emphasis mine]. They equated individual annihilation with that of the class struggle, and viewed annihilation as a necessary pre-condition for guerrilla struggle [Liberation, Vol. 3, No. 2, December 1969].

In the programme of the CPI(ML) adopted in May 1970 there was hardly any place for united front, mass organisation or struggle on economic issues [for details see, Political and Organisational Report, CPI(ML), May 1970, in Liberation, Vol. III, No. 7-9, May-July 1970]. On the question of "United Front" the Party said, "Ours is a country of peasant masses, and principal contradiction is between feudalism and broad masses of the Indian people" [Programme of the CPI(ML), May 1970, in Liberation, Vol. III, No. 7-9, May-July 1970]. The Party held the view that "United Front" can only be built up when worker-peasant unity is achieved in the course of armed struggle and after red political power is established at least in some parts of the country" [Ibid., emphasis added]. Implication of such formulation was to concentrate on rural areas only. On the question of "Mass
Organisation" CPI(ML) held the same view. Tripura Committee of CPI(ML) stated, “We do not set-up open mass organisation unless it is in liberated area. Military activity is the chief method for bringing about revolutionary upheaval” [Liberation, Vol. 2, No. 12, October 1969]. So, mass movement which unite several classes and several class ideas are unnecessary and harmful. Further, the Party did not link class struggle with economic demands. “To think that workers, poor and landless labourers can be united on economic issues is a wrong idea. It weakens our work...of seizure of power, and building revolutionary base areas” [Liberation, Vol. 2, No. 11, September 1969]. According to Sumanta Banerjee, “Srikakulam movement between 1968-69 was more resounding short-lived thunder of Naxalbari. While Naxalbari branded the words 'armed agrarian revolution' on the sign-post of the Indian revolution, Srikakulam engraved on it the sign-'guerrilla warfare' to indicate the turn of the road” [Banerjee, S., 1984 : 154].

However, excessive dependence on annihilation was easy to implement, even two people could do it. But no mass base could be created through this. Hence, due to above strategical mistakes and naked state repression the Girijan movement came to its shattering point by the middle of 1970 [Sen Gupta, Bhabani, 1978 : 340]. There were hardly any significant public response. By mid 1970, all the Maoist cadre were flushed out of its regular rural areas of operation by police operations. According to Government sources, by 18 May 1970 the police operations had broken the mass base of the ‘Naxalites’ and brought them under control [The Times of India, 18 June 1970].

By January 1970 thirteen important leaders of Srikakulam movement were killed by the police [Liberation, Vol. 3, No. 5, March 1970 : 43]. Two top most leaders V. Satyanarayana and A. Kailasam were shot dead by 10 July 1970. With their death, the Andhra Pradesh government declared that now ‘rebellion’ had been almost liquidated [Sen Gupta, Bhabani, op.cit. : 341-42]. As per official version, out of sixty-odd dalams (bands) during the peak of the movement, only two dalams
were alive under tribal leadership. Even they were ready to surrender. Thus, remaining rank-and-file left the revolutionary actions and returned to middle class life [Ibid.: 342].

As stated earlier, the ‘Tebhaga Movement’ had provided fertile ground for radical agrarian movement in West Bengal and became prelude to the ‘spring thunder’ in mid 1960s. The ever suffering peasants rediscovered their traditional militancy. From 1967-72 the peasants’ discontent and tension boiled over in jacqueries against the privileged feudal elite. The term ‘Naxalite’ (from Naxalbari) symbolised any assault upon the assumptions and institutions that support the established order in India. The term ‘Naxalite’ has become part of the vocabulary of world revolution [Banerjee, S., 1984].

Now let us focus upon the Naxalite movement of West Bengal.
## Comprehensive Chart of the Srikakulam Movement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Movement</th>
<th>Phases</th>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Area of operation</th>
<th>Agrarian Scenario</th>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Vanguards / Social Base</th>
<th>Against whom</th>
<th>Mode of operation</th>
<th>Rolling Class of the Area</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Failures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Srikakulam or Girijan Movements</td>
<td>First Phase</td>
<td>1959-67</td>
<td>Entire Girijan Villages of ‘Agency Area’ within a radius of 20 miles</td>
<td>Abysmal poverty and acute hunger were general syndrome of the area. Penetration of monetary economy encouraged Moneylenders, Sahukars, Mistyfiers, and contractors, plunder in the region. They not only destroyed tribal's traditional socio-economic institutions, but also accelerated the process of vigorous exploitations, and pushed them to the level of bonded slaves and landless labourers.</td>
<td>Illegal land occupation by <em>landlords, moneylenders, etc. Low wage, caste system, social dignity and self-identity, exploitation by forest officials, contractors, unjust forest rules, corruption in Forest Corporation.</em></td>
<td>Mostly tribals of the agency are.</td>
<td><em>Landlords, moneylenders, corrupt forest officials and corporations.</em></td>
<td>Initially concession and compromise by landlords and moneylenders. But soon brutal oppression and court cases against communist revolutionaries by them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Renewed Phase</td>
<td>1968-70</td>
<td>Sompeta and Bobbili forest region covering 800 square miles of the agency area mostly inhabited by the tribals.</td>
<td>Re-occupation of Girijan lands, distribution of fallow and temple lands, use of forest products. Debt bondage, fair price for market products. Agency area as an autonomous region, etc., together with old issues.</td>
<td>Poor peasants and landless labourers. But overwhelming and sustained support of tribals in the agency area.</td>
<td><em>Zamindars, Sahukars, police force, forest officials.</em></td>
<td>Immediate armed struggle for seizure of power. To convert propaganda squads into armed guerrillas, to train rank-and-file, in firearms, ambush and lying traps. The movement passed from mass militant phase to guerrilla actions to individual annihilation coupled with squelaming.</td>
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The movements was organizationally weak and faced with organisational crisis—caught in the paradox to legality and illegality. Its influence was localised and there was lack of propaganda machinery and mechanism to carry on armed struggle.

The Srikakulam armed struggle started with mass participation and finally culminated into small squelaming. It was strategic mistake to equate individual annihilation with class struggle, and a pre-condition for Guerrilla struggle. No place for 'United Front' and mass struggle on economic issues and its linkage with that of class struggle.

Excessive use of CRPF, state and district level armed forces. Warrants against revolutionaries and sympathisers, shoot at sight power to armed forces. Villification campaign together with certain ameliorative measures to weaken the movements.
MAP I: Map of West Bengal showing CPI(M-L), areas of operations in the state and neighbouring regions where bases were set up between 1967 and 1972.

1. Areas of operation under the North Bengal - Bihar Border Regional Committee of the CPI(M-L).

2. Areas of operation under West Bengal - Bihar Border Regional Committee of the CPI(M-L).

3. Areas of operation under the Bengal-Bihar-Odessa Borders Regional Committee of the CPI(M-L).
The Naxalbari and After: Maoism in West Bengal

The spring thunder of mid-1960s in 'Naxalbari', drew its inspiration from the Indian jacqueries of the 18th and 19th centuries, as well as from the Telangana armed revolt of the 1940s. The movement relied heavily upon the revolutionary potential of the Indian peasantry. It not only rejected the 20th century bourgeois democracy but also challenged the ideological basis of the parliamentary left in India. The aim of the movement was 'area-wise seizure of power' and setting upon 'village soviets'. The roots of the revolutionary thunder was in feudal exploitation, rural poverty, effort of the Indian state to silence the protests of the rural poor, and its bondage to the two superpowers to maintain the status quo. The contemporary international situation provided fillip to the movement. Radicalism in Europe, Asia and America, Che Guevara's self-sacrifice for international revolutionaries, Cultural Revolution in China, established the pre-dominance of morality over political expediency and reimposed faith on the doctrine that 'sovereignty lay with the people'. [Banerjee, S., 1984 : ii-iii]

Three police station - Naxalbari, Kharibari and Phansidewa, under the Siliguri subdivision of the Darjeeling district of West Bengal, were centres for the terrorist movement during colonial period. The Maoist movement took place in this area in the spring of 1967. The geo-strategical location of the area attracted the revolutionary leaders. The district is surrounded in west by Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan in north, and Bangladesh in south. China is only 96 kilometres away from Naxalbari. Lower Himalayas occupy the north-western part of Darjeeling district. Further, the area is dominated by Terai region with ridges and narrow valleys. Lingering Sino-Indian conflict was another factor of strategegical importance.

The CPI(ML) was the product of growing discontent among the rural poor. The countryside was the Centre and the peasantry the main force. Now, it is important
to glean through the socio-economic conditions of the rural West Bengal, which paved the way for the radical agrarian movement in this region.

1. The Agrarian Situation

Siliguri sub-division has predominantly rural population with a low literacy rate. The SCs and STs constitute more than fifty per cent of the total population in the region. Oraons are the largest tribe and Rajbansis are the largest scheduled caste of the district. Backward classes constitute 28.62 per cent of the total district population, which is higher than the state average of 25.60 per cent. This indicates that concentration of land and power was more acute in the region. According to 1961 census, out of 119,414 rural house holds in Darjeeling district, only 12,072 were cultivating households [Ibid.: 22,183]. The figure shows that number of landless population was very high in the district. Later in 1967, poor cultivators and landless labourers became the backbone of the Naxalite movement.

On the other hand, large quantity of land was controlled by small number of rich peasants—Jotedars. Majority of the poor peasants, tenants and sub-tenants were relegated to the status of share-croppers, which gave rise to 'Tebhaga Movement' during 1946-47 in undivided Bengal. After independence, zamindari was abolished and the 'West Bengal Estate Act of 1954' was passed, which imposed the ceiling provision. 17,000 acres of land made available for redistribution. But, only 7,500 acres had been redistributed till 1967 [Dwivedy, S.N., The Hindu, 28 July 1967]. Further, loopholes in the Act was sufficient enough to escape the ceiling provision. Even bureaucracy remained hostile towards implementation of land laws.

However, unequal and exploitative agrarian situation led to many agrarian movements in West Bengal, such as indigo peasant revolt of 1860s [see, Bagal, J.C., 1953], tebhaga movement in 1946-47 [Sen, S., 1972], and later 'Naxalite movement' of mid-1960s. The Siliguri subdivision remained epi-centre of peasant
r0evolts during 1950s and 1960s. In the sixties, the Siliguri region provided necessary ground for the AIKS to transform the economic crisis into politically explosive situation. Two wars— with China in 1962 and Pakistan in 1965, and successive droughts severely jolted the vulnerable economy. Chronic malnutrition, death from starvation, self-annihilation by desperate peasants became order of the day by 1966-67 [Banerjee, S., 1984:1]. By 1966, demonstration against unemployment and rising prices became enormous in West Bengal. The stage was ready for radicalisation of the West Bengal politics and people.

2. The Naxalbari Uprising

1967 election came as the precipitating factor. In the State Assembly, the Congress was reduced to a minority, and the United Front Government was formed by fourteen parties, including CPI and CPM, on 2 March 1967. The CPM announced that it would use the government to accelerate the people's movement [People’s Democracy, 5 March 1967]. Land and Revenue Minister, Harekrishna Konar, announced quick distribution of surplus land and stopping of eviction of share-croppers [Banerjee, S., 1984 : 82]. The announcement raised expectation of the land hungry poor peasants. But in practice, the government became helpless in the face of constitutionalism, dogmatic bureaucracy, court, papers and documents became stupendous.

On the other hand, Charu Majumdar was busy in explaining his followers, in Siliguri, about futility of Konar's announcement. He explained that no land reforms could be possible without destroying the state machinery and the feudal class. Therefore, revolutionaries should move beyond economism and towards politicising the peasants [Ghosh, S.K., et. al., (ed.), Vol. I, 1992 : 57-60]. Even Konar was aware about futility of his claim, "it is impossible to do anything revolutionary under the limitations imposed by the present constitution and existing legislatures" [People’s Democracy, 21 May 1967].
However, a peasant conference was held on 18 March 1967 in Siliguri subdivision, in which active and mass peasant leaders of North Bengal like Charu Mujumdar, Kanu Sanyal, Jangal Santhal, etc., participated. The conference decided to end monopoly ownership of land by the landlords, organising and arming peasants, to distribute land through peasant's committee, etc. It was also decided to follow protracted armed resistance in its anti-feudal struggle [Sanyal, Kanu 1969]. The conference provided much needed ignition to strengthen militant struggles in Darjeeling district. By April 1967, 15,000 to 20,000 peasants became full time activists. Almost all the villages of the district were organised and peasant's committees were formed. Armed guards were constituted and firearms were looted. They also set up parallel village administration [Ibid.]. By May 1967, Chowpukhuria of Phansidewa, Buraganj of Kharibari, and Hatighisha of Naxalbari turned into rebel's strongholds. No outsider could enter these areas without Naxalites permission [Banerjee, S., 1984 : 87].

The first serious peasant police encounter took place on 23 May 1967, in which a policeman was killed by armed tribals. In retaliation, police killed nine on May 25, including six women and two children. Several peasants arrested. In face of severe police repression, rebels reply was that they came out "for a breath of fresh air" [Bhattacharya, A., Mainstream, 15 July 1967]. The incident was widely criticised and created rift within the rank-and-file of the CPI(M). Meanwhile, the struggle continued unabated. Between June 8-10 only, 80 cases of lawlessness, 13 dacoities, 2 murder and one abduction were reported by armed bands. Ajoy Mukherjee, the then Chief Minister, told newsmen on 12 June that a 'reign of terror' had been created in Darjeeling. On 13 June, the Union Home Minister Y.B. Chavan, told the Lok Sabha that a state of 'serious lawlessness' prevailed in the area [Banerjee, S., 1984 : 89].

However, on 12 July 1967 massive police operation was launched to nab the revolutionary rank-and-file. By 20 July, important leaders were arrested. Due to
mounting police repression many activists surrendered by the end of July 1967. With this, the spontaneous phase of the revolutionary struggle came to an early end. There were apparent lull in the Naxalbari.

2.1 The Aftermath

The Naxalbari uprising proved to be a watershed in the Indian Communist movement. It not only opened the floodgate for the spate of militant agrarian struggles, but also created riddles with in the rank-and-file of the CPI(M). Dissension among the CPI(M) ranks was sharpened by ceaseless Chinese comments through People's Daily and Radio Peking during this period.

To contain the rising rebellion among its ranks, the CPI(M) Central Committee met at Madurai in August 1967. The party in its resolution rejected the Chinese characterisation of the Indian ruling class as 'Comprador-bureaucratic capitalist', and its suggestion for 'armed struggle' to capture power from them. Instead, the CPI(M) characterised the Indian state as 'bourgeois-landlord Government led by the big bourgeoisie'. The party advocated the 'peaceful transition' as opposed to 'armed struggle' to achieve the People's Democracy [CPI(M), Political Resolution, 18-27 August 1967]. However, the Madurai Resolution not only clarified official position of the CPI(M) on vital issues, but also paved the way for the critics of the official line to come openly with their alternative thesis.

Soon after Madurai conference, secretary and member of Utter Pradesh State Committee of the CPI(M), Shiv Kumar Mishra and Srinarayan Tewary, revolted against the central leadership. This was followed by dissensions from Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, and Jammu and Kashmir. Meanwhile, Charu Mazumdar came out with an artical in which he denounced the Madurai
Resolution, and urged every revolutionary of the party to defy the 'Centralism of the Central Committee'. He stressed the need to build up a revolutionary Party through "Propagation and dissemination of revolutionary ideology" [Mazumdar, Charu, in Ghosh, S.K., et.al., (ed.), 1992 : 75-80]

3. **The Birth of the CPI (ML)**

In the middle of November 1967, a conference was organised in Calcutta by the All-India Naxalbari Krishak Sangram Sahayak Samiti-- a liaison body of different Maoist groups. The conference decided to form an All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (AICCCR), guided by Marxism-Leninism and Maoist thought [Liberation, Vol. I, No.1, December 1967]. Soon a provisional Committee was formed to consolidate revolutionaries and to form a revolutionary party. Thus, with in few months of the Naxalbari defeat, the ground was ready to launch a Revolutionary Party.

The CPI(ML) was formed on 22 April 1969-- Lenin's birth anniversary; at the Calcutta Maidan. In its Political Resolution, the party viewed the Indian Society as semi-feudal and semi-colonial. The Indian State as the State of big landlords and comprador- bureaucrat capitalists, and its government was lackey of U.S. imperialism and Soviet Social-imperialism. The agrarian revolution and abolition of feudalism was the main axis of the People's Democratic Revolution. The basic tactic would be guerrilla warfare through armed struggle [CPI(ML), Political Resolution, in Liberation, Vol. II, No. 7, May 1969].

4. **The Renewed Phase**

With the birth of the CPI(ML), the tactics of the red revolutionaries assumed sharpness and uniformity. Due to increasing police repression, 'annihilation'
campaign was accelerated, and under ground activities over open mass actions was stressed.

Debra and Gopiballavpur under Midnapur district were centres of peasant struggles during mid-1960s. The Communist revolutionaries of the area, in Shurmuhi meeting on 21 August 1969, decided to implement the programme of ‘annihilation of class enemies’ in their zone. Debra, Gopiballavpur and Bahoragora, of Midnapur district, were selected as the area of operation.

Between September-October 1969, several landlords were killed by the guerrillas, their guns and properties were seized and records of debt were burnt. As a result, the landlords either left their villages or surrendered to the rebels. There was sort of power vaccum in the region. People's courts were set up. Thus, embryonic form of the people's political power was established in the area [Liberation, Vol. III, No. 3, January 1970].

Meanwhile, similar incidents were reported from other parts of the West Bengal. 24- Parganas, Jalpaiguri and Naxalbari emerged as another centres of renewed Naxalite onslaught. Landlords, moneylenders and police spies were the main targets. By 1970, parts of Assam and Tripura engulfed by the flames of Naxalite struggle. Within a sort span of time, the revolutionary flame was raging in nine states [ Banerjee, S., 1984 : 143].

However, due to increasing intensity and magnitude of the movement, the then Home Minister of the State, Jyoti Basu, sought the help of central force-- the Eastern Frontier Rifles (EFR). With the deployment of the EFR, the policy of 'encirclement and suppression' was started. The police had been asked to “shoot to kill if necessary” [The Statesman, 2 December 1969]. The EFR had been authorised to use light machine guns and hand grenades besides rifles [Ibid. : 9 December 1969]. The police of West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa started joint operation in the area.
In the face of 'encirclement and severe repression', militant mood of the revolutionaries got transformed into self-defence and escapism. With the fall of the United Front Government in March 1970, repression further intensified under the direct supervision of the Central Government. The Centre started “stick and carrot” policy. Rs.65 million was made available to help poor peasants and agricultural labourers. On the other hand, expenditure on police went up from Rs.187.6 million in 1961-62 to Rs.888.4 million in 1970-71 [Banerjee, S., 1984 : 149].

However, crisis within the CPI (ML) was getting sharper. Due to mounting police repression and loosees, many revolutionaries started questioning Charu Mazumdar’s tactics of ‘annihilation’ and reliance on conventional weapons. Meanwhile, the Party Congress was held in Calcutta in May 1970. The Congress adopted comprehensive Programmes to carry on the annihilation campaign through conventional weapons to release the initiative of the poor and landless peasants [Sen, Samar, et.al., (ed.), Vol. II, 1978]. Immediately after the Party Congress, the police started ruthless offensive to wipeout the Communist revolutionaries. Reports from various areas repeatedly underscored the heavy loosees. Now, the movement assumed an incredibly sporadic character. This not only reduced the red bases to a minority, but also increased the doubts and misgivings among the revolutionary leaders. Very soon, the dissension started coming from Srikakulam, Bihar, Midnapur, etc. [ see, Banerjee, S., 1984: 164-65], over the efficacy of tactical line and strategy, and functioning of the central leadership. With the mounting criticism and counter-criticism, the Chinese support came to an abrupt halt. By the middle of 1970, Radio Peking maintained a scrupulous silence over the fate of the Maoist movement in India.

4.1 The Revolutionary Upsurge in the Urban Area.

Although, the movement was petering out in old areas, the flame of Naxalbari was lit in other parts of the state. Now Calcutta turned into epi-centre of
unprecedented militant youth upsurge. The industrial recession in 1966-67, rising unemployment and academic anarchy prepared enough ground for the student youth rebellion in the early seventies.

Calcutta had been the centre of pro-Naxalbari youth activities since 1967. Students of Calcutta had formed the 'Naxalbari Peasant's Struggle Aid Committee' in 1967 [Banerjee, S., 1984 : 89]. Later this committee became liaison group of various Maoist outfits of West Bengal. However, till 1970 the students', activism was confined to union affairs, posterimg and study groups to propagate Maoist thoughts. After the imposition of the President rule in West Bengal in March 1970, Calcutta witnessed violent youth activism. The CPI(M-L) provided political direction and ideological justification to youth anger and frustration. The Party channelized their explosive energy for revolutionary activism. Their activities were of three types. Actions were against the educational system. Some activities were to attack police force. Yet another kind involved clashes between various political parties.

On April 10, 1970 the students of Jadavpur University ransacked the Gandhi Study Centre. Yet in another incident, students of Calcutta University attempted to destroy a part of the journal section of the library and forcibly occupied the Vice-Chancellor's office, on 16 April 1970. Such actions continued till August 1970, and got front page coverage in the various newspapers all over the country [Free Press Journal, Bombay, 13 May 1970]. In each such attacks, the Maoist students distributed leaflets and said that the present educational system was inherited from the colonial period. Thus needed dratic changes. They also termed leaders like Gandhi, Nehru and Tagore as "bourgeois nationalists" and destroyed their statues [see, Liberation, Vol. 3, No. 6, April 1970, also Ibid., Vol. 3 No.10, August 1970]. Their actions were fully endorsed by important CPI(ML) leaders [Banerjee, S., 1984 : 178-82].

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Due to rising revolutionary tide, the police swung into action. This led to many attacks and counter attack between students and police. The Calcutta District Committee of the CPI(ML) asked the youth to form guerrilla squads and launch counter-raids on the police [The Hindustan Times, Delhi, 11 April 1970]. By July students were joined by some industrial workers in Calcutta [Ghosh, S., in The Times of India, Delhi, 19 May 1970]. This led to more stringent police measures. Thus between late 1970 and early 1971, a full-scale battle like situation emerged in Calcutta. Soon, the West Bengal Police was joined by CRPF and BSF battalions. They started indiscriminate arrests, suprise raids and shot at small provocations. The Maoists also launched surprise attacks. By 9 September 1970, they killed 12 policemen and injured 325 [Ghosh, S., in The Times of India, Delhi, 9 September 1970].

However, during this period, the Calcutta police was in vulnerable condition, due to internal dissensions and confusion [For detail see, Banerjee, S., 1984 : 183-84]. Therefore, at the initial stage, the Calcutta police could not take up the challenge thrown up by the CPI(ML) urban guerrillas. According to the West Bengal Government sources, between 1 April and 12 November 1970, 36 policemen were killed and 400 injured in CPI(ML) attacks [Ibid. : 185]. As per the police estimation, by November 1970, about 10,000 to 20,000 Maoists were active in West Bengal, half of them were active in the Great Calcutta area.

Soon, the police force was joined by military and para-military forces. The well-equipped military forces was aided by series of notorious laws, some of them had colonial legacy. On 10 September 1970, the West Bengal Government announced that the provisions of the “Bengal Suppression of Terrorist Outrage Act of 1936” would be applicable with immediate effect. In November 1970, the “West Bengal Prevention of Violent Activities Bill” was
passed. These laws gave wide powers and legal sanction to armed forces excesses.

Equipped with arms and legal sanctions, the armed forces unleashed ruthless terror and destruction in the urban centres. No mercy was shown to the Maoists, quite a few non-cards became victims [Ibid. : 186-87]. Total civil war like situation prevailed, from the last quarter of 1970. Civil norms were relegated in the background. Sole motive of the police force as to kill the Communist revolutionaries. On September 1970, four youths were killed, one non-cadre postgraduate student, within a few hours in the college street area of Calcutta. In another incident, 11 youngmen with their hands tied behind them found dead on the Barasat road, suburb of Calcutta, in November 1970. Third degree punishment and fake encounter of the urban Maoists became order of the day.

Inspite of the police repression, guerrilla actions continued in the city. On 21 February 1971, guerrilla attacked the Behala police camp and seized nine rifles and 300 rounds of ammunition. The very next day similar attack was conducted and two rifles were captured. On 9 March 1971, guerrilla attacked the Railway Protection Force at Santoshpur Railway Station, killed two armed men, and seized three rifles and some bullets.

The urban guerrillas were successful in mobilising revolutionary sections of the working class. The youth, students and workers formed guerrilla squads by the end of 1970. Between October and November 1970, guerrillas killed nine policemen at Durgapur. Similar incident were reported from other industrial centres, such as Asansol, Burpur, Burdwan, Nadia, Birbhum, Howrah, Midnapur, etc. Rich businessmen and government officials became target of the guerrilla actions.
The police force became panicky due to rising revolutionary upsurge. Their panic and frustration often got ventilation inside the jails, where they shot down unarmed prisoners. In Midnapur Central Jail, eight prisoners were killed and 60 injured in police firing, on 17 December 1970. In the same jail two more were killed and 60 injured, on 4 February 1971. On the same day, police opened fire in Persidency Jail, wounding 24 prisoners. Again on 21 February 1971, 10 prisoners were killed and 62 injured in Berhampore Jail [Banerjee, S., 1984 : 189]. Charu Mazumdar urged the revolutionaries to take the oath to “avenge the murder” of the heroes [Ghosh, S.K., et. al., (ed.), Vol. II, 1993: 115-16].

4.1.1 Another Experiment: Birbhum

Throughout 1970-71, the urban West Bengal was reeling under the Naxalite onslaught, ‘Birbhum’ emerged as another epicentre of the movement. It was here that the CPI(M-L) could establish peasants' political power and maintained it till the end of 1971. Birbhum had strategic advantages due to two factors. First, it was situated on the West Bengal - Bihar border. Second, here the struggle was based on the close coordination of urban and rural tactics. Towns of Birbhum district: Suri, Nalhati, Bolpur, Rampurhat, Hetampur; were surrounded by ‘red villages’. Here, the “urban struggle was built up as complementary to the struggle in villages” [Liberation, July 1971--January 1972].

The first Maoist slogans appeared in these areas around May-June 1970. By end of the year, educational institutions and government offices became targets of the Maoist activism. ‘Annihilation’ campaign was launched against class enemies, alongwith rural areas. Soon the struggle spread to the wider areas [Ghosh, S.K., et.al., (ed.), vol. II, 1993 : 283-85].
From the beginning of 1971, emphasis was laid on to seize firearms from the landlords and police. From 1 March to 5 June 1971, 299 firearms were snatched by the guerrillas in the West Bengal. Out of which around one-third in Birbhum alone [The Hindustan Times, Delhi, 20 June 1971]. The immensity and magnitude of arm-snatching was so high that it was difficult for the CPI(M-L) to keep account of them. According to the West Bengal - Bihar Border Regional Committee (WBBRC), “on an average, five to ten guns reached the Party every day. It became difficult for us to keep account of them” [Liberation, July 1971 - January 1972 : 25]. Situation became so alarming that the district administration requested the private gun owners to deposite their arms in the police station. This made the urban gentry more vulnerable.

Meanwhile, the guerrillas continued their attacks on the landlords and moneylenders. As a result many of them fled to safer places. The WBBRC reported, “... the entire area was swept by the huge storm of a peasant upheaval during May, June and July 1971” [Liberation, July 1971-January 1972 : 33]. Even the district administration announced three police station area-- Rajnagar, Khairasole and Bolpur; as the 'most vulnerable'. These areas were on the inter-state and inter-district borders, and adjacent dense forest of Dumka in Bihar. Due to geographical difficulty and widespread Maoist operation, the police force became virtually immobile in the area [Hindustan Standard, 28 June 1971].

Soon the police force was joined by the army. The West Bengal was under the President rule. Hence, the Central Government took the responsibility to extinguish the revolutionary flame. Under the Presidentship of the then Union Minister incharge of West Bengal, Siddhartha Shankar Ray, decision was taken on 4 July 1971 to deploy the Army [The Statesman, 5 July 1971].
With the entry of the army, the movement could not be sustained for long. In spite of initial difficulty due to 'intelligence failure', the army did not face any widespread guerrilla onslaught. Thousands of Santhal peasants were thrown behind bars. Many ranks-and-file were either killed or arrested. Very few managed the escape. With this, the Birbhum struggle came to an early end.

4.1.2 Clashes between Political Parties

Another noticeable feature of the movement was inter-party conflict and bloody clashes. In May 1970, CPI(M) and CPI(ML) supporters clashed with one another. P. Sundarayya, CPI(M) leader, claimed that 206 of its rank-and-file were killed by the Naxalites [People's Democracy, 25 March 1973]. This was provoked by the feeling among the Maoists youth that the CPI(M) cadres were active as police informers... “The bunch of counter revolutionary revisionist scabs known as CPI(M) is today acting as one of the prongs of the offensive unleashed by the reactionary government. This fascist clique is anxious to serve its masters...” [Liberation, Vol. 3, No.10, August 1970 : 50]. By March 1971, during the mid term election of the West Bengal Assembly and the Lok Sabha, this inter-party clashes gripped almost all the political parties of the state. The violent Maoist-police, and inter-party confrontations reached its peak in March-April 1971. Between March 1969 and June 1972, 656 CPI(M) cadres were killed. 238 by the congress and its mass fronts, 206 by Naxalites, 89 by armed forces, 62 by CPI, 19 by S.S.P. and 19 by other parties... [CPI(M), 1972 : 91]. To tackle the situation, the government deployed around 100,000 armed forces, out of this nearly 50,000 were from army. By that time, the movement in rural areas was completely silenced [Ram, Mohan, The Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses Journal, Vol. 4, No. 3, January 1972 : 292]. However,
large scale violence continued in Calcutta till the end of 1971. Between 1 August and 31 October 1971 alone, the Maoists killed 177 people in the West Bengal, mostly in the urban centres.

Even the Government was not treating the Naxalite struggle as merely law and order problem [The Searchlight, Patna, 9 January 1971]. The Central Government was well aware about the political meaning of the revolutionary challenge. To control the growing upsurge, the Central Government started three dimensional attack [The Times of India, Delhi, 2 May 1970]. The first was stern police action. The second was to create political organisations to counter the Naxalite propaganda. And the third was to take economic measures to strike at the root of the problem [Frontier, Vol. 5, No. 27-29, 14 October 1972].

Now, the police and armed forces launched massive manhunt. Large-scale arrests were made and criminal cases were instituted against the Maoists. So called 'encounter' became order of the day [Frontier, Vol. 7, No.36, 28 December 1974]. Large number of Maoist waited for years as undertrials. By 1973, in the Presidency Jail of Calcutta, 80 per cent of total undertrial prisoners were Maoists [Frontier, Vol. 6, Nos. 35-37, 8, 15 and 22 December 1973]. The number of prisoners in West Bengal was put between 8,000 to 12,000 [The Hindustan Times, Delhi, 18 July 1972]. Inside the Jail, Maoists' life was very tough and there were often violation of human rights. Many a times this culminated into clashes between the police and the prisoners. Between December 1969 and May 1971, 40 prisoners were killed, as per official version, and 200 according to unofficial sources [Frontier, Vol. 5, No. 40, 13 January 1973 : 4]. Several political and intellectual groups started civil rights campaign in Andhra, West Bengal,
Orissa and Delhi, to protest against the plight of the revolutionaries \cite{Frontier, Vol. 5, No. 35, 9 December 1972, also New wave, Vol. 2, No. 37, 22 April 1973}. Around 300 intellectuals of the U.S.A. and Western Europe signed a statement demanding democratic rights for the revolutionaries in India \cite{Mohanty, M., 1977 : 172}. But, all this had little effect on the actual situation.

To implement the second measure, the Government strengthened the Chhatra Parishad in West Bengal. Their aim was to attack the Maoists, physically and propaganda-wise. On 12 August 1971, in Baranagar 1,000 youths of the Parishad attacked many houses of the revolutionaries and killed 19 Maoists, unofficially 125 \cite{Frontier, Vol. 5, No. 40, 13 January 1973, also The Statesman, Delhi, 7 May 1972].

However, socio-economic answer to the revolutionary challenge was most glaring during 1969-70. “Garibi Hattao” (remove poverty) was the catchy slogan of the congress during 1971 \cite{Mohanty, M., 1977 : 173].

The above governmental measures together with organisational and stratigical failures of the CPI(M-L) led to prolonged silence in the West Bengal Maoist movement.

5. An Assessment

Although, the Naxalite movement in the West Bengal could not be sustained for long. But within a short span of five years, the movement generated unprecedented interest and controversy, within the Indian democratic set-up. The movement brought to the surface many subdued contradictions. The contradiction between popular goals and the constitutional system. The contradiction between parliamentary struggle and revolutionary struggle within the Indian communist
movement. During this phase, the movement established, 'violent means as legitimate mode of social change', for many people. Another interesting feature of this phase was, induction of 'mass activism in politics'. All the above issues, got more radicalised during this phase, than ever before.

However, Naxalite sparks in the West Bengal could not start a prairie fire but prepared fertile ground for new sparks in Bihar and other parts of the country. We will return to this in the ensuing section. However, the movement in West Bengal failed due to brutal state suppression, together with organisational and strategical weaknesses. Now let us dwell upon the causes of the failure.

The main aim of the CPI(M-L) movement was the seizure of 'political power' from semi-feudal and semi-colonial ruling classes through armed guerrilla warfare. Vanguards of the movement were poor and landless peasantry. To achieve the above political goal, two conditions are necessary [Banerjee, S., 1984 : 265-66]. First, rapid expansion of the 'base areas', and second, formation of huge people's militia or the People's Liberation Army (PLA). But the Party could not advance beyond the initial stages of the warfare-- seizure of firearms, formation of guerrilla squads, annihilation of class enemies and mobilization of masses on economic issues. Even these actions were confined to the limited pockets. Neither these squads be transformed into the PLA, nor the urban workers could effectively coordinated with the fighting peasantry. Although, worker-peasant unity would hence been a decisive factor to raise the movement to a higher level.

However, one of the fundamental weaknesses was that, the leaderships could not be developed from the basic classes. None of the prominent organisers and political commissars came from among the landless and poor peasants [Liberation, July 1971 - January 1972]. Further, during entire 1970 and the first half of 1971, there were no conscious effort to mobilise the peasantry through economic
movements. "Annihilation of class enemies" was the single goal of the Party. Mass movements as follow-up actions was completely ignored during this period. As a result, the masses of the peasantry remained passive expectators [Ibid. : 35]. It was only after massive police repression and losses in Debra, Gopiballavpur and Birbhum, that the leadership felt the need for economic movements together with armed struggle. From the end of 1971 till his arrest in July 1972, Gharu Mazumdar desperatly emphasised the need for mass struggles on economic demands as complementary to guerrilla warfare [Banerjee, S., 1984: 268]. But by then it was too late to resist the massive onslaught of the state armed forces.

Even before the movement could cross the initial stage of warfare, the CPI(M-L) got crippled due to disunity and dissensions. This led to isolation from the masses, and decimation of a large number of cadres. According to one popular understanding, the responsibility for this can be laid on Charu Mazumdar's manner of leading the movement [for detail see, Ibid. : 270-74].

Charu Mazumdar's emphasis on 'mass movements', 'armed fronts', and 'combination of legal struggles with armed struggles', during 1965 to 1968 and in 1972 stood out in sharp contrasts to his distrust of these modes of struggles in 1969-71. Charu's sweeping generalization about annihilation, about mass front, and about the liberation of India, further misled the cadres and reduced the mass base [Banerjee, S., 1984 : 270]. During 1969-71 the Charu clique elevated him (Charu) to the sacrosant position of the 'revolutionary authority', almost transformed him into a demi-god.¹ During this period, Charu Mazumdar became intolerant of friendly criticism, developed bureaucratic behaviour in inner-party struggles and

¹. But within few years these devotees of Charu denounced him in the severest terms [for detail see, Sumanta Banerjee, 1984 : 150-155].
prevented the process of democratic centralism within the Party which in turn, robbed the much needed coordination and cooperation between different Maoist groups all over the country. This caused irretrievable harm to the movement. Further, fanatical hero worshipping of Mao—“China’s Chairman is our Chairman”, and excessive identification with China “China’s path is our Path” [Liberation, Vol. III, No. 1, November 1969]; robbed the Indian Maoists of a nationalistic image. This led to further alienation of the Party from the masses.

However, intera-party and inter-party struggle alienated the middle class, which is a force to reckon with for any revolutionary struggle. Growing apathy of the middle class was largely due to internecine battle between the rank-and-file of the CPI(M) and the CPI(M-L) during mid-term poll in 1971 [Banerjee, S., 1984 : 192-94].

Strategical mistakes committed by urban guerrillas between 1970-71, was another factor that alienated urban middle class. Due to lack of sound planning and strategy, urban guerrillas often chose wrong targets. They attacked the educational institutions, petty businessmen, lower rank policemen and bureaucrats. The situation was so threatening that Charu Mazumdar had to remind the impetuous cadres about Mao’s thought “workers, peasants, the petty bourgeoise and the business community are components of the united front” [Liberation, July 1971 - January 1972].

Entry of the lumpen-proletariat in large number was another cause for the decline of the movement. The police used them in two ways. Some of these lumpen proletariat were used as ‘agent provocateurs’. Initially they joined the movement as cadres, but actually worked as ‘corpus delicti’, which exposed the unwarned Maoists to an unanticipated police raids. Some other lumpen-proletariat were recruited as unofficial band of paid homeguards. Being local, they helped the
police to raid the otherwise impenetrable areas of the CPI(M-L) strongholds. This caused irreparable damage to the movement. As a counter-insurgency expert said, "a young insurgent movement is necessarily inexperienced and should be relatively easy to infiltrate with agents who will help to disintegrate it from within and derail it" [Galula, D., 1970 : 68].

But one of the major weakness of the CPI(M-L) movement was its over emphasis on 'politicizing the masses' and neglecting 'militarism'. Charu Mazumdar felt that the People’s Liberation Army should be built up only when politically conscious poor and landless peasants were ready to seize firearms. Thus, one sided stress on political initiation led to imperfect development of the PLA, and naive understanding of the military strength of the Indian state. This proved counter-productive and suicidal in the latter phase. Charu became victim to similar idealistic precondition on the question of 'base area' as well. According to him, 'politically conscious' peasant mass was the primary factor, and geographically suitable terrain was secondary consideration for the development of 'base area'.

However, when the revolutionary tide was on the ebb in the West Bengal, Bihar revolutionaries were engaged in fanning out the Maoist thoughts and the Marxist-Leninist ideology in Central Bihar. By 1973 'Bhojpur' emerged as Naxalbari of Bihar. Jagdish Mahto, Rameshwar Ahir, etc. emerged as grass-root revolutionary leaders. Let us dwell upon the Maoist movement in Bihar.
### Comprehensive Chart of the Naxalite Movement in Best Bengal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Movement</th>
<th>Phases</th>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Area of operation</th>
<th>Agrarian Scenario</th>
<th>Vanguards / Social Base</th>
<th>Against whom</th>
<th>Mode of operation</th>
<th>Reaction / Response</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Failures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Revolutionary Thunder in West Bengal</td>
<td>First Phase</td>
<td>1967-68</td>
<td>Jalpaiguri and 24-Parganas, Naxalbari</td>
<td>SCs and STs constituted 50 percent of the total population of Siliguri subdivision.</td>
<td>Poor peasants, landless labourers and Bhagchals</td>
<td>Jotedars, Zamindars, rural reactionaries, police force</td>
<td>Protracted armed struggle against landlords, feudalism, rural reactionaries. Most of them were landless labourers. Even poor cultivators had very unremunerative holdings, unable to sustain their livelihood. Majority of them became sharecroppers, which had abominous provisions.</td>
<td>Initially Jotedars were defensive, but soon extended all-out support to police force to quell the movements.</td>
<td>Police</td>
<td>Spontaneous phase of the movement. No conscious efforts to form 'people's militia' and base area. Complete failure of subjective preparation and military training, tactics etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second Phase</td>
<td>1968-70</td>
<td>Debra, Gobindapur and Baharagora of Midnapur districts, 24-Parganas, Jhalpur, Naxalbari.</td>
<td>Severe successive droughts, rising prices, massive unemployment, chronic malnutrition, war which China and Pakistan, worsened the vulnerable economy of the country side in particular and the state in general.</td>
<td>Distribution of land through vili committee, higher wages, abolition of debts, etc.</td>
<td>Youth, Women, toiling masses and poor peasants.</td>
<td>Agrarian armed struggle through guerilla warfare and underground activities.</td>
<td>Massacre of poor peasants, state armed forces, police spies.</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Third Phase</td>
<td>1970-71</td>
<td>Calcutta, Asansol, Bardwan, Howrah, Midnapur, Burnpur, Nadia, Birbhum, Bagerhat, Surampur, Nalhati, Helampur, and entire rural areas of the district.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Students, youth, industrial workers, intelligentsia, Poor peasants, landless labourers, Santhal tribe.</td>
<td>Landlords, moneylenders, state armed forces, police spies.</td>
<td>Agrarian armed struggle to unleash revolutionary upsurge to capture state power. In Birbhum urban armed struggle was developed as complementary struggle in the rural areas, seizure of fire arms.</td>
<td>In Birbhum many landlords and moneylenders fled to safer places, due to massive Naxalite onslaught.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- **Issues:** Feudal exploitations, seizure of land and crops, debts, end of Zamindars monopoly over land.
- **Government:** In Birbhum many landlords and moneylenders fled to safer places, due to massive Naxalite onslaught. Some economic measures were taken to weaken the movements.
Bihar Peasantry and the Maoist Movement

Bihar agrarian structure has witnessed several peasant movements. However, during the nineteenth century, the peasant movements were largely isolated, sporadic, spontaneous and unorganised. Revolts such as the Santhal insurrection (1855-56), the Munda uprising of 1899 - 1901 and Indigo cultivators strike (1860s) [for detail see, Sinha, L.P., 1965], were manifestations of the genuine grievances of the peasants against the oppression and highhandedness of landlords, moneylenders and colonial rule [Ibid.]. It was in the twentieth century that such resistance articulated itself in the form of organised and sustained movement under the modern leadership — ‘Champaran Satyagraha’ of 1917 [for detail see, Prasad, R., 1949]. But the movement remained directed against European planters. It could neither touch the local exploitative elements, nor could take the poor peasantry into its fold.

From 1929 onwards, peasant movement took on a militant posture which turned unorganised, sporadic discontent among the peasantry into a mass movement. The 1930s saw the emergence of a massive peasant organisation— ‘The Kisan Sabha’; under the leadership of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati. The interesting feature of the movement was the creation of a grass-root leaders, such as Sawami Sahajanand Saraswati, Yadunandan Sharma, Karyanand Sharma, etc. The Kisan Sabha succeeded in generating mass enthusiasm from its very inception in Bihar. Many struggles were launched under the banner of the Kisan Sabha. Some of the famous struggles were those directed against the Dalmia Sugar Factory at Bihta in 1938-39, the Rewra struggles in Gaya in 1933 and 1938, the Bakasht movements in Barahiya tal, Rewra, Majiawana and Amwari during 1936-38 [for detail see, Sankrityayana, R., 1950].

Through countless agitations and struggles, the Kisan Sabha raised the consciousness of the tenants and instilled confidence in them to fight for their
rights. The Kisan Sabha succeeded in its agitation against proposed tenancy amendment as early as 1929, the year it was founded. Perhaps most significantly one of the long-term effects of the Kisan Sabha was zamindari abolition but that came to fruition after independence.

However, the Kisan Sabha could not resolve the contradiction within the peasantry. The Sabha was largely used by the middle and the rich peasants, and the landless agricultural labourers were ignored by and large. The Kisan Sabha lost its character and function after independence. However, detailed discussion on the Kisan Sabha is available in the previous section of this chapter. After independence, zamindari was abolished (Bihar was the first state to pass the Bill for zamindari abolition way back in 1948), land reform was introduced. The green revolution, however, was yet to make its impact. Under the influence of the ‘Sarvodaya movement’ the state of Bihar witnessed "Bhoodan, Shramdan, Jeevandan, Gramadan, Prakhanddan, even Bihar-dan". Agrarian production had gone up and per capita income crawled upwards. Production of all crops in Bihar went up from 87.75 million in 1952-53 to 109.22 million tonnes in 1964-65 [India, 1976 : 356-59]; and the per capita income rose from Rs.283.04 in 1964-65 to Rs.293.63 in 1967-68 [Bihar Statistical Hand book, 1971 : 204]. On the whole the situation seemed to be promising. But in the mid-sixties suddenly the scenario became grim. The state was ravaged by terrible droughts leading to famines. The early sign of agricultural growth began to fast disappear and the shortage of food became a major issue. To a significant extent much of the problem was due to the faulty implementation of land reforms and various half-hearted legislative measures which denied a large number of the rural poor viable land holdings. The development programmes characterised as ‘betting on the strong’ [Wertheim, W.F., 1969] and the political process following independence, immensely strengthened the rural rich but did not help the mass of rural poor. Thus, developments during the last four odd decades have quite undeniably resulted in a vastly increased polarisation of classes in agrarian Bihar.
Many organisations were formed to guard the interests of the rural poor in Bihar, beginning from the Kisan Sabha, to the Khet Mazdoor Union led by the CPI, and even the Bihar Provincial Khet Mazdoor Sabha by Jagjiwan Ram, etc. And yet they all failed to redress the basic economic hardships in the state. It is because of this violent reality of the country-side that the 'Naxalite' ideology and movement found propitious grounds in the regions in late sixties and early seventies [Sengupta, N., in Das, A.N., (ed.), 1982 : 33]. In sharp contrast to the Kisan Sabha movement, the Naxalite movement was centrally organised, secretive in action, and partially urban based. The organisation had come into existence mostly after the formation of the CPI (M-L) Party in 1969.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) matured in the womb of growing discontent and tension among the rural as well as the urban poor. But it flourished primarily in the rural areas. Let us recapitulate very briefly, the essential features of the agrarian situation during the pre and post 1966 period in Bihar, to get a bearing on our problem.

1. The Agrarian Structure of Bihar

Chronic malnutrition and death due to starvation had become common phenomena during 1966-67 as a result of drought and famine. Apart from natural calamity, the roots of the 1966-67 famine were to be found in the prevailing system of land tenure—the manner in which the land was held, the way it was managed and its produce disposed off. But this menace conveys a small fraction of the grim picture of rural poverty.

The life of the poor peasants moved around a vicious circle of borrowings at exorbitant rates from village moneylenders for expenditure on the barest essentials. The rate of interest on these borrowings ranged between one-half to
two-thirds of the crop produced. In some places it was as high as 70 to 80 percent [see, Banerjee, S., 1980: 5]. The poor peasants first mortgaged their small plots and later sold them to the big landlords, reducing themselves to the position of tenants, share-croppers or landless labourers.

The landless agricultural labourers condition was even worse. They worked on the farms during the peak seasons and elsewhere during the lean period to supplement their earnings. Lack of employment opportunities outside the primary sector, together with under-employment and low wages in agriculture, often forced the landless labourers to borrow money at exorbitant rates. The inability of the poor to pay off these debts and ever accumulating interests, often lead to a form of bonded slavery which perpetuated from generation to generation.

Other forms of exploitation also co-exist. 'Begar' or forced labour on the landlord's private estate, and the imposition of levies on tenants so that they bear the cost of ceremonies in their employer's house on special occasions are the two most egregious ones. On the social front the peasants suffer from social exploitation and discrimination. Most of the rural poor belong to the lower castes or to untouchable castes. They are not allowed to draw water from the village wells which are reserved for upper castes, and are usually not permitted to enter the compounds of the pukka houses of their employers. They are condemned very often to live in the dingy hamlets of the outskirts of the village.

The picture that emerges from the above account of exploitations is one of the nightmarish poverty, humiliation and oppression, inflicted upon more than half of the rural population by a minority of rich landlords and moneylenders. For the past several decades, Bihar has been in a state of agrarian turmoil. In response to the widespread agrarian unrest, certain economic measures were taken by the
government of Bihar to bring about some changes in the agrarian structure. These measures can be grouped under two rubrics:

i) measures flowing out of Land Reform, and

ii) those emanating on account of the Green Revolution.

Let us analyse these two groups of measures to see whether they have minimised the age-old rural problems or aggravated them.

1.1 Land Reform Measures and Its Impact on Agrarian Structure

It was Daniel Thorner who recognised very early the ambiguous character of land reform in India, and came to the conclusion that techniques of land reform would never change the prevailing balance of power in rural areas [Thorner, D., 1962]. This is quite clear from the fact that instead of improving the tenant's condition, tenancy reform led to the mass eviction of tenants.

Land reform measures can be divided, broadly, into three phases. The first phase started just after independence when the zamindari system was abolished in order to eliminate the non-cultivating intermediate tenants. The second phase initiated during the 1950s, aimed to bring about tenancy reforms on two fronts. First, it sought to give security of tenure to the tenants, and second, it aimed to regulate the rents they paid. The third phase, after the end of 1950s, initiated to enforce ceiling on the size of individual land holdings and distribute the excess land thus recovered, among the landless or small peasants. But all these measures failed miserably, partly due to the strong influential position of old landlords in Congress, and partly due to numerous loopholes and delays in implementation. On the contrary, large-scale eviction of tenants was started to prevent them from asserting their
new rights. Further, no legal restriction on the size of holdings existed prior to the passing of the land ceilings act almost a decade after abolition in 1960 [Thorner, D., 1962].

The government of Bihar was the first in the country to introduce some significant land reform measures, e.g. Zamindari Abolition Bill in 1947, and the fixation of minimum wages in a few districts as early as 1948. However, these acts have had hardly any significant impact on the rural poor. Land reform and other rural development programmes in Bihar remain largely unimplemented on account of the concentration of power in the hands of a tiny group of upper caste land owners. They treated the entire package of agrarian reforms with utter contempt and defiantly reduced it to naught. The state machinery has been repeatedly censured both for its favours to the upper caste land-owning class as well as for the repression and the neglect of the poor. The limited development that has taken place in some regions has a skewed character. Daniel Thorner, on a visit to Bihar in 1956 remarked: “Eight years after the Bihar legislature voted its acceptance of the principle of zamindari abolition, the majority of the zamindars of Bihar were in legal possession of their lands” [Thorner, D., 1956 : 16].

Further, irregularities in land transfer by Congress leaders, government officials, and businessmen1, to the land hungry peasants, accentuated the anger of the poor masses. This led to the famous ‘Sathi Farm Struggle’ in Champaran, which was the only organised peasant struggle during 1950s and 1960s in Bihar. Although, this movement was relegated to the background, it became a source of inspiration for peasant mobilizations in other parts of the State.

1. Where Ram Prasad Shahi, then Exise Commissioner of Bihar, got about 350 acres of the Sathi Farms, B. B. Verma, a Congress leader, settled large areas of land with this relatives, Prajapati Mishra, another Congress leader got Bettiah Raj land settled in his own name are some of the examples [for detail see, Das, A.N., 1983 : 223 - 24].
1.2 The Green Revolution and Its Impact

The principle assumption of the green revolution is that the benefits from the increase in agricultural output would percolate downward in the rural hierarchy to increase the income and well-being even of the weaker sections. This assumption proved imaginary at least in the case of Bihar. The impact of the green revolution not only widened the gap between the rich and poor, but also posed the question of distributive justice and raised the level of relative deprivation. Chester Bowles had observed as early as 1967 that, "the dramatic increase in food output which are occurring and which should continue to grow in the years ahead, may lead to sharp disparities in income, which in turn may create an expanding sense of economic and social injustice" [Bowles, C., 1969: 83]. Soon this was realised by the government too. The then Home Minister, Mr. Y.B. Chavan, speaking at a conference of State Chief Ministers in New Delhi, warned, "... unless the green revolution is accompanied by a revolution based on social justice, I am afraid the green revolution may not remain green" [Patriot, November 29, 1969].

Jannuzi, during his field investigations in Bihar, observed that even in those areas where the impact of the green revolution is felt, the wage for the labourers have remained static since 1957, and that the income of affluent farmers has gone up [Jannuzi, F.T., 1974: 165]. Rising living standards of the affluent farmers gave rise to new expectations among the rural poor. Thus the mass of the agrarian population derived very few benefits but experienced instead declining social and economic status in relation to the rural elites. Further, the green revolution not only benefits the rich peasantry but is confined to certain areas and for certain crops. This capital intensive strategy was introduced in selected districts with high production potentials and was confined to the new dwarf varieties of wheat, even High Yielding
Varieties (HYVs) of wheat could cover only 1,019,369 acres out of 21 million acres of cultivated land in Bihar by 1969-70 [Ibid.: 165]. However, HYVs of paddy—paddy is Bihar's principal food crop; covered only 705,558 acres in 1969-70 [Ibid.: 163]. The impact of the green revolution could not be felt in the cultivation of Bajra, Maize, Jowar, etc., which constitute the staple diet of the rural masses in Bihar.

The new capital-intensive agricultural strategy of mid-sixties not only displaced a large number of agricultural labourers and small tenants, as they were becoming redundant, but also forced the small farmers to sell their lands to the rich farmers. A new breed of 'farmers', e.g. doctors, lawyers, businessmen, retired military and civil servants emerged, who with their unaccounted money looked towards farming as a source of high supplementary income free from any tax burdens [Landejinsky, *The Statesman*, September 11 and 12, 1970]. Hence, the general belief and enthusiasm of the seventies showed a different picture. Now the agricultural ladder has been replaced by a descending escalator on which small and medium sized farmers, be they tenants or owners, rapidly moved down to the level of landless agricultural workers.

Continued sub-division and fragmentation of holdings due to change in market processes, institutional changes, and demographic pressures [for detail see, Vyas, V. S., in Hobsbawm, E. J., *et. al.*, (ed.), 1980 : 186-91], led to a growing rate of landlessness and made millions of peasants increasingly aware of their state of isolation and frustration. Their experience of declining social and economic status in relation to the elites of the agrarian sector, resulted in the acceleration of political and economic polarisation.

However, growing discontent and tension of agrarian poor was effectively channelised by the different Maoist groups in Bihar in late 1960s, which
provided a new dimension to the peasant radicalism in the state. But the CPI(ML) could not remain an united radical party. By the end of 1973, different factions of the CPI(ML) emerged in Bihar agrarian structure, which added another dimension to the radical peasant movement in the state. However, before probing deeper into the Maoist movement in Bihar, it is important to quickly glean through different factions of the CPI(ML).

2. Factionalism in the CPI(M-L)

The CPI(ML) which was formed in 1969 by the extremists within CPI(M) did not remain united for a long time. Within a year of its inception this party started suffering from chronic factionalism, because of severe ideological and personality differences, and because of its extremely sectarian and bureaucratic attitude [Roy, A.K., 1975 : 233]. It is said that about a dozen factions sprouted in 1969-70, particularly in West Bengal, all swearing by the thought of Mao-Tsetung.

A severe jolt was experienced by the central leadership of the CPI(ML) in 1970, when a powerful section of the party's membership—the Asit Sen group; isolated themselves from the main CPI(ML) body and criticised Charu Mazumdar's line of thought through its journal 'Liberation'. After that Mazumdar's authority was challenged by Sushital Roy Choudhary, Satyanarayan Singh and Sheo Kumar Mishra—secretaries of the party's state units in West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, respectively.

The differences that erupted towards the end of 1970 between Satyanarayan Singh and Charu Mazumdar were based on the following tactical questions: the main point of difference between them was whether left deviation or right deviation constituted the main danger inside the party. Charu maintained that revisionism continued to be the main deviation. Another tactical difference between the two was with regard to the role of the rich peasantry. The Bihar unit favoured a
policy of winning over and neutralising the rich peasantry and conducting a struggle principally against the landlords. This group accused the CPI(ML) leaders of not making a distinction between landlords and rich peasants in their annihilation campaign [Dasgupta, V., 1974 : 157]. Secondly, the Bihar unit criticised the failure of the party to demarcate the role of the party in the village from their role in the towns. The Bihar unit was in favour of a policy of prolonged guerrilla struggle and encirclement of the urban areas. Thirdly, the Bihar unit was critical to the adoption of offensive strategy in cities and villages without keeping in mind the uneven development of revolution in these two areas. Meanwhile, the intervention of the Communist Party of China (CPC) added fuel to the fire. The CPC made it clear that Charu had distorted the ideological policies of the CPC and had failed to mobilise the rural peasants. The CPC acknowledged the role of Asim Chaterjee, Satyanarayan and others. As a result, Charu Mazumdar and his old colleagues were expelled and Satyanarayan Singh was elected as the General Secretary which met at Deoghar in the first week of November, 1971.

Till the first half of 1973, the CPI(ML) factions kept their differences somewhat confined. But by the end of 1973, the Tenth Congress of the CPC observed three major factions within the CPI(ML):

1. Those who vehemently opposed Charu Mazumdar's line of thought and followed instead Satyanarayan Singh's, constituted the smallest faction;

2. Those who followed Charu Mazumdar and believed that Chinese criticism was the product of internal discussions in the CPC; and

3. Those who owed allegiance to Charu but accepted the Chinese criticism and admitted that Charu did commit mistakes in his execution of armed revolution. This was the powerful faction.

While all the CPI(ML) factions had been lying low for some time in West Bengal, many areas in Bihar came into their folds. The anti-Lin Piao faction of CPI(ML) started operating in Shahabad, Barh and Nalanda areas; the pro-Lin Piao group
found strongholds in Dhanbad, Giridih, Bermo, and Patna regions; and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) based itself among the tribals in Hazaribagh, Giridih, Aurangabad and Gaya districts of the state [see, Sinha, B.N., 1975].

The current struggle in Bihar is expanding in districts which have a history of agitation dating back to the old Kisan Sabha days. These are the districts where the incidence of big landlords is relatively low, but where landlordism enjoys a wider base, encompassing not only the ex-intermediaries but also the erstwhile powerful raiyats. Comparatively, agriculture in these districts is marked by a relatively greater use of modern means, better transport facilities and a more pronounced market orientation of the rural economy.

The main battle-field is confined to the central districts of Bihar—Bhojpur, Rohtas, Gaya, Patna, Nalanda, Jehanabad, Aurangabad, and Palamau. The impact is also felt in the districts of Nawada, Hazaribagh, and Giridih in Bihar. During the current phase of the movement, the main organisations which are leading the revolutionary movement in Bihar are the CPI(ML), Liberation, the CPI(ML), Party Unity, and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC). In some pockets the Provisional Central Committee (PCC), CPI(ML) and some pro-Lin Piao groups are also active. Therefore, it is clear that there are many organisations which stand in the forefront of the present peasant struggle, but there are only three major organisations—CPI(ML), Liberation, CPI(ML), Party Unity, and MCC; on account of the fact that they are the most powerful of the radical agrarian organisations in the region.

3. Radical Agrarian Movements in Bihar

Following the birth of the CPI(ML), the tactics of the Communist revolutionaries in different parts of India took a new cutting edge. In the face of the policy of increasingly 'encirclement and suppression' against rebels by the police, military
and para-military forces, the revolutionaries stepped up their 'annihilation Campaign' against the police, landlords and moneylenders, and stressed underground activities over open mass actions. By early 1970, the CPI(ML) had more than 100 guerrilla squads under its leadership and the revolutionary armed forces had turned 300 villages into "red" areas.

The struggle reached Debra and Gopiballavpur in the Midnapur district of West Bengal. This area borders Bihar and Orissa, and the landscape was dominated by jungles. The tribals formed an important component of the population here. On 21 August 1969, at a meeting in Shurmuhi, the CPI(ML) decided to implement the programme of 'annihilation' of class enemies in the district. Between September and October 1969, several landlords were killed by guerrillas. They seized guns, took possession of the properties owned by landlords, returned these properties to the original owners who had mortgaged them to landlords, and burnt the records of debt. As a result, there was a sort of power vaccum in the area, several landlords either fled from the villages or surrendered to the rebels. Naxalites controlled over 20 villages in the forests along the Bihar and the Orissa borders. No police personnel entered the affected areas without any armed escort in Naxalite controlled pockets [The Statesman, 13 December 1969]. By the beginning of 1970, similar incidents were reported from Assam, and Tripura, Lakhimpur in Uttar Pradesh, and a few places in Punjab. Within a short time, this movement made an impact, even though it remained confined to small pockets, in nine states.3

2. According to Charu Mazumdar, the annihilation of a class enemy does not mean only liquidating an individual but also liquidating the political, economic and social authority of the class enemy. With this Charu Mazumdar wanted to expose the explosive potential of the downtrodden peasants and to make them aware about their power--the power to turn upside down the traditional rural society, the power to rule [see, Charu Mazumdar, 1969].

3. These states were--West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Orissa, Assam, Tripura and Andhra Pradesh [see, Sumanta Banerjee, 1980 : 185]
The tactics of armed struggle had upset the status quo in the country-side and was considered a threat by the state, dangerous enough to make it come out in full force against the movement. The movement reached its high watermark in the villages of Birbhum in West Bengal along the border of Bihar, where the CPI(ML) could establish peasant’s political power and maintained it till the end of 1971.

The CPI(ML) emerged in Bihar too and tried to effectively utilise the turmoil among the poorer agrarian class to further its party programme. The Naxalite movement in Bihar has two phases. The first phase was between 1967 to 1971. During these years Naxalite presence was marked in north and southern most Bihar. The second phase which began from 1972, the Naxalite influence is greater in central and south-central Bihar — Bhojpur, Patna, Nalanda, Giridih, Hazaribagh and Dhanbad [Sinha, B.N., The Searchlight, Patna, 11-13 June, 1975]. But in the current phase, especially in the post-emergency period, the movement is most intense and vigorous in central Bihar.

3.1. First Phase of the Movement

Since the rise of Naxalbari agrarian movement in the spring and summer of 1967 and the spread of radical struggles in other parts of the country, the Naxalite activities also started taking place in Bihar. Before the formation of the CPI(ML) Party, the first Naxalite activity was reported in July 1967 in an area called Thakurganj in Purnea district of north Bihar, which borders the Naxalbari sub-division of West Bengal [see, The Indian Nation, Patna, July 1 and 6, 1967, and The Searchlight, Patna, 10 August, 1967]. However, the first radical agrarian movement under the leadership of CPI(ML) was started in April 1968, at a village called Gangapur in Mazaffarpur district in north- Bihar. Soon Gangapur emerged as a symbol of fighting peasantry
Within a very short span of time, the movement spread like wildfire in north Bihar and Chotanagpur (southern-most part of the state).

### 3.1.1. Naxalite Activities in North Bihar

The struggle of the Mushahari peasantry in the Muzaffarpur district had its origins in a movement on economic issues, launched by the Kisan Sangram Samity, dominated by the leaders of the Bihar State Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries. The first incident was reported in a village called Gangapur in April 1968, when peasants led by the Samity seized land [Singh, S., Liberation, Vol. 2, No.12, October 1969]. The landlord Bijli Singh along with his hired hoodlums launched an attack on the peasants. But the peasants drove them away and harvested the Arahar Crops from the land. In retaliation the landlords instituted cases against the peasants in a bid to harass them. But unlike past, the leaders of the movement this time refused to surrender to the authorities and went underground. This was followed by a phase of intense organisation by the Kisan Sangram Samity and the Communist revolutionaries and preparation of the peasantry for future armed clashes. The peasants were told that they would have to combat the police who would intervene on the side of the landlords [Ibid.]. This became amply clear to the fighting peasants when police camps were set up in the area and thousands of armed policemen were let loose on the villagers. In a village called Harkesh, on August 23, 1968, thousands of peasants fought a pitched battle with the police and managed to rescue one of their comrades earlier arrested by the police.

With the direct intervention of the State’s repressive machinery, the leaders of the movement felt that the stage of open confrontation and pitched battles between the peasantry and the landlords and the police was over. Guerrilla
warfare seemed to be the only way out. With the change in the tactics the struggle assumed some sort of sharpness and uniformity. In response to the police attacks, the revolutionaries stepped up their 'annihilation campaign' and stressed underground activities over open mass actions. Along with the police, the landlords and money-lenders continued to be the targets of the Naxalite 'annihilation campaign'.

By September 1969, in Mushahari the stress shifted from mass attacks to guerrilla actions. On the nature of the movement in Bihar, Satyanarayan Singh said, "the Mushahari guerrillas have made three attacks in a small period of one and half months, have killed 5 class enemies and their agents, injured 15, burnt land notes and documents of land deeds worth lakhs of rupees, seized the properties of landlords" [Liberation, Vol. 2, No.12, October 1969]. One of the most important actions of the Mushahari rebels was the attack on the landlord of Narsinghpur on June 30, 1969. He was the first landlord to come into direct clash with the peasants of the area. Although the landlord escaped but the guerrillas managed to kill three accomplices and seized property worth Rs.20,000 and burnt land documents.

The rebels intensified their struggle and carried out attacks in two other places— Paru and Baruraj, in Muzaffarpur district. By June 1969, police force cracked down upon rebels and tried to implement the 'encirclement' and 'suppression' policy. As a result the leadership changed its tactics. The leaders felt that in such a situation, smaller guerrilla units alone could effectively operate. Further, the need was felt for retaining the base in the villages in the face of police attacks. However, the areas where guerrilla struggles were taking place could not be developed into a political base area until and unless revolutionary work was continued during the encircling operation by the enemy. While the main leadership of the guerrilla force should escape, there must remain local party leadership, guerrilla units.
and Kisan Sangram Samities, to continue political propaganda and other organisational tasks [for detail see, Singh, S., in Ghosh, S.K., (ed.), 1993, Vol. II: 251-63]. Regarding middle peasantry, Satyanarayan Singh admitted that till then his party's work among this class had been very superficial. He asserted: "it might be realised that without having the firm support of the middle peasant revolution cannot win. Sectarianism in this respect has to be combatted and vigorous efforts to that end is absolutely necessary" [Singh, S., Liberation, Vol. 2, No.11, September 1969].

Regarding the seizure of the state power "bit by bit and step by step" policy should be followed. He argued that being a long drawn revolution, it concretely solved the question of seizure of power in one or more villages, then in one or more areas, then one or more zones, and ultimately throughout the country. The need for annihilation of class enemies assumed importance in this context. According to Singh, "it must be understood in relation to the smashing of the feudal authority and building up of peasants authority in the villages [Singh, S., Liberation, Vol. 2, No.13, November 1969].

The struggle reached upto Darbhanga and Saharsa districts, borders of Bihar and Nepal, which had strategic advantages. During this period in Nepal, peasant struggles under the leadership of Maoist Communists were also taking place. The Indian Nation, Bihar's English Daily, reported on April 22, 1968, "a map and some other documents seized recently, reveal that guerrilla warfare training camps have been set up on the other side of Bihar-Nepal Border. Some of these are manned by Chinese..." Across Bihar's border in the east, in the Naxalite area, the north Bengal-Bihar Border Regional Committee of the CPI(ML) was active during the first phase (1967-71) of the movement. Its action often spilling over into Purnea district of Bihar. During 1950s Purnea had witnessed militant movements of the peasantry, particularly
of the share-croppers, under the leadership of the CPI and the socialists. But by 1960s the militancy of the peasants was lost as all movements were locked up in the labyrinth of legalism under CPI leadership. In the 1970s, the Naxalite movement made little headway in this district. On November 4, 1970, about 400 military-police personnel launched an operation in the Munger district, where seven big landlords and money-lenders had been killed earlier. Large-scale operations and arrests followed throughout the state. By January 1971, the police had thrown about 1500 CPI(ML) alleged activists and sympathisers behind bars, of them 200 were from Jamshedpur, the steel town, where the party was trying to build its units among the workers [Banerjee, S., 1980 : 288, also see Singh, N.K., Liberation, Vol. I, 1978 : 70].

3.1.2 Naxalite Activities in Chotanagpur

During the first phase of the radical agrarian movement in Bihar; i.e. between 1967-72, The West Bengal-Bihar Border Regional Committee of the CPI (ML) was active. Its action extended upto Santhalpargana and Birbhum. Similarly, the area of operation under the Bengal-Bihar-Orissa Border Regional Committee of the CPI(ML) extended to Singhbhum and to the southern most parts of the south Bihar. Their activities were concentrated mainly among the tribal population but it had strongholds among the working class, especially in the steel city of Jamshedpur. Ranchi and Singhbhum districts were the stormy centres during the early part of the 1970s. It is interesting to note here that Chotanagpur region remained the centre of turbulent uprisings throughout the 19th century. In 1820s, the Ho tribal of Chotanagpur rose against the British rulers and the local money-lenders and the landlords. The Oraons, another tribal community, rebelled in 1820, 1832, and 1890. The Kol tribals organised an insurrection in 1831-32,
which was mainly directed against government officers and private money-lenders [Datta, K.K., 1970 : 39]. The intensity of the Kol rebellion had reached such an extent that troops had to be rushed from far off places like Calcutta, Danapur and Banaras to quell it. The most interesting aspect of these struggles was that the tactics adopted by the rebels foreshadow in many respects the methods of 'guerrilla warfare' fashioned by Mao-Tsetung. It was in these areas that the Naxalites found a fertile ground and penetrated among the tribal population. Quite interestingly, Naxalbari, where the first uprising took place in 1967, was also inhabited by the Santhal tribals.

The hills of Chotanagpur came in the news in May 1970s, when 54 men were arrested by the Bihar police after extensive operation in the jungles of Jaduguda. Almost all the apprehended were Bangalis between 16 and 26 years of age. They were arrested with large quantities of arms and ammunitions with them. The entire episode became sensational and caught the headlines of the dailies particularly due to the presence of a 26 year old British lady, Miss. Mary Tyler. This group was known as the Revolutionary Communist Council of India and owed allegiance to Marxism, Leninism and Mao's thoughts, according to their pamphlets [Singh, N.K., 1978 : 70, also see, Banerjee, S., 1980 : 218].

Jamshedpur, a very important industrial centre of Bihar became known as the “Little Calcutta” because of growing Naxalite activities in the town. Naxalites consolidated their hold here under the leadership of S.N. Singh, who worked for a long time in Jamshedpur trade unions. The ‘import’ of many hardcore Naxalites from Bengal, especially from Midnapur area also helped in establishing Naxalism in Jamshedpur.

By 1970, three-fourths of the police machinery was engaged in tackling the Naxalites and only one-fourth was left to look after routine jobs. The
SP of Jamshedpur admitted that, the Naxalites have posed a big problem for the police force [Ibid. : 72].

In the rural areas of Singhbhum the Naxalities were active in the region bordering Gopiballavpur of West Bengal. At least ten persons, mostly zamindars and money-lenders, were killed within a year. Naxalite violence had resulted in the posting of two companies of Bihar military police all through the areas bordering West Bengal. In the rural areas of Singhbhum, besides killing ten persons, the Naxalities attacked the house of a police sub-inspector in Kharaswan, 20 miles away from Chaibasa, in September 1970. Bombs were also hurled at the house of a mine manager in the same locality. After Singhbhum, Ranchi was the second biggest centre of Naxalite activities in Chotanagpur during 1970s. There were four main areas of their activities—Kolebira in Simdega sub-division, bordering Orissa; Mandar, Burmu and Khelari on the Palamau-Hazaribagh border; Silli on the Ranchi-Purulia road; and Ranchi town itself. In rural areas, the Naxalities had 'annihilated' eight class enemies in just one year. In Ranchi town, besides extensive wall paintings the Naxalites had confined themselves to throwing bombs and crackers. The first attack was made on September 1, 1970, when a few crackers were hurled at the local Jana Sangh Office. Thereafter, the local branch of the British Council Library and a bar were raided in typical Naxalite fashion.

In Dhanbad district, the Naxalite elements were active among the student community mainly during 1970-71. In the Bihar Institute of Technology (BIT, Sindri) many movements, inspired by Naxalite students, had been organised. The students of Jharia took out a procession to protest against the police firing in Calcutta University in September 1970. In December 1970, a much bigger action was conducted. Six armed youngmen raided the microwave
relay station in Dhanbad town and damaged the equipments. In January, the Registry Office of Dhanbad was set afire. In the same month the office of the Life Insurance Corporation was raided at Sindri. Naxalites were also active in the rural areas around Sindri. Besides threatening several rural kulaks and issuing 'death sentences', one village temple and the houses of two zamindars were burnt.

In other two districts of Chotanagpur—Santhal Parganas and Hazaribagh, were relatively peaceful. In both the districts a few suspected Naxalites had been arrested but no major incident was reported during the period. By 1970, all the districts of Bihar, barring Bhojpur and central Bihar, had seen indignant landless peasants and impatient students taking up arms. Between January-July 1970, the police arrested 954 Naxalite suspects, the number being highest at 468 in Singhbhum district, followed by Muzaffarpur with 170, Munger with 102, and Champaran with 88 [Sinha, A., December 24, 1977 - January 14, 1978 : 270].

3.1.3. Failure of the First Phase: Its Causes

By the end of 1971, the first phase of the movement came to an end. The essential condition for the success of radical agrarian movements is the rapid expansion of the base and the fighting forces of the revolutionaries. But the CPI(ML) failed to advance beyond the initial stages, i.e. the stage of 'annihilation' of class enemies, collection of firearms, and formation of guerrilla squads. Even so its influence was confined to a few pockets of power.

Further, even before the struggle could reach the higher stage the CPI(ML) became riddled with mutually fighting factions and its ranks found themselves gradually isolated from the people. Further, Charu's sacrosant position of revolutionary authority and his intolerant and bureaucratic behaviour put an end to all possibilities of collective decision in the light of criticisms and
exchange of experiences [Banerjee, S., 1980 : 356-57]. This inner-party struggle at the all India level had a profound impact upon the struggle in Bihar too, which weakened the movement from within. Finally, the state not only augmented the police force to quell the revolutionary outburst, but also empowered the police, CRPF and BSF with a host of tyrannical laws. Hence, in the face of imperfect development of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and a naive understanding of the military strength of the enemy, the whole movement crumbled.

3.2. Second Phase of the Naxalite Movement

As stated earlier, the Naxalite movement started taking place in central and south central Bihar in its second phase that started from 1972 onwards. Districts that were under Naxalite influence now comprised Bhojpur, Nalanda, Patna, Giridih, Hazaribagh, Palamau, Rohtas and Dhanbad. But in the post-emergency period, the movement was concentrated largely in central Bihar.

Central Bihar is identified as that part of the state which lies south of the Ganges and north of the plateau region of Bihar. It consists of eight districts—Patna, Gaya, Nalanda, Rohtas, Jehanabad, Nawada, Aurangabad, and Bhojpur. In the current phase, the movement is intense also in Palamau, Hazaribagh, Giridih and Dhanbad. These districts are adjacent to the main battle field of central Bihar and dominated by jungle landscape. MCC has greater presence in the region known as ‘Lal Khandi’ as counter to ‘Jhar Khandi’ in local parlance. The movement in central Bihar, consisting of numerous peasant groups, has many ups and downs but has been gradually expanding. There are now three major groups operating in the area, viz., the CPI(ML), Party Unity which has the Mazdoor
Kisan Mukti Manch (MKMM) as its mass front, the CPI(ML), Liberation group with Indian People's Front (IPF) as its front organisation, and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) with Jan Suraksha Sangharsh Manch (JSSM).

The spread of Naxalite activities in central Bihar came at a time when in other areas it was petering out. It was only after a bitter peasant-police encounter in an obscure village called Chauri in Bhojpur district which caught the headlines of the Bihar press in May 1973, that the existence of a peasant movement led by Naxalites of the district became common knowledge [see, Mukherjee, K., and Kala, M., 1978]. In the current phase, Bhojpur became 'Naxalbari' of Bihar, from where the revolutionary peasant movement has proliferated in other parts of the State.

3.2.1. Naxalite Activities in Bhojpur

The construction of the Sone Canal, as early as late 19th century, and the relative modernisation of agriculture in this region led to two consequences. First, it led to the emergence of the junker and kulak element, and consequently, to the loosening of traditional ties between rich and poor peasants [Ibid.]. Second, it led to the differentiation in the peasantry and depeasantization at the lowest levels, which in turn resulted in the emergence of a large number of unemployed landless agricultural labourers. Some of them were forced to migrate outside Bhojpur for their subsistence. This had an impact at two levels. At the economic level, it led to the development of 'money-order' economy, and at the socio-cultural level, this led to an exposure to a more "modern" world, which heightened the sense of relative deprivation and perception about the extent of their misery [Ibid.]. Together with the above factors, a high level of literacy in the area—many of the labourers
who were dubbed as 'Naxalites' and later killed or arrested, had some education [Das, A.N., 1983 : 250], and militancy as the dominant way of life of this area [Jha, H., et. al., 1985 : 22, and Grierson, Vol. I, Part-I, 1967: 151], opened the doors for outside elements known as 'Naxalites'. Later top Naxalite leaders, e.g. Satyanarayan Singh, Kesho Prasad Singh, etc., were joined by grass-root workers like Jagdish Mahto, popularly known as 'Master Saheb' who had been forced into 'Naxalism' by the landlords themselves [Das, A.N., 1983 : 248-49]. Later Mahto became one of the founding fathers of the 'Naxalite Movement' in Bhojpur. During the same time, several events took place in this district-- crop seizures took place in the Buxar Diara (river bank land) under the leadership of Satyanarayan Singh. Charu Mazumdar toured certain areas in Bhojpur and convened the first Bihar State Conference of the CPI(ML) at Nathpur village in Rohtas district [Mukherjee, K., and Kala, M., 1978]. Jagdish Mahto took an active part along with his comrades and organised mass meetings, demonstrations and rallies to protest against the oppression of harijans. Thus, the discontent of the harijans and the poor peasants of this area got interwoven with a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology, which led the trail of violence in Bhojpur.

Naxalite activities in Bhojpur began to occur in Sahar since 1971. Ekwari was the starting point, where Sheopujan Singh, a mercenary of the landlords was killed on May 20, 1971. But the first major attack came in Chauri village in Bhojpur district. Chauri is situated in the canal belt and is one of the most prosperous villages of this district. The Bhumihars hold most of the land, the backward castes and harijans are labourers, and among them 90 per cent are landless. Landlords of this area were reputed for oppressing and exploiting the landless labourers more vigorously. The wage rate here was further reduced in 1973, extra economic benefits given by the landlords were curtailed and begar was intensified [Mukherjee, K., and Kala, M., 1978]
When the price rise went beyond control, the labourers began protesting and demanded higher wages; but the landlords remained obdurate. The labourers stopped working, as a result the harvesting of the wheat crop remained suspended. Landlords called in the police on 6 May 1973, the police discovered a 'Naxalite' den and started firing on the labourers. The act was hailed by the landlords and their representatives[see, The Indian Nation, May 11, 1973]. But, Karpoori Thakur, a socialist leader, after a visit to Chauri alleged that the trouble has been brewing between the agricultural labourers and the landlords over the payment of wages and land allotment for tilling for the past year and a half [Ibid.]. These minor protests were ignored. The State came out on the side of the landlords and proclaimed that it was ready to fight the 'insurgency' in Bhojpur. Excessive police repression was launched on the poor and landless labourers, mostly Musahars and Chamars [for detail see, Mukherjee, K., and Yadav, R.S., 1982 : 121-25].

The year 1974 marked an upswing in Naxalite activities and 'encounters' took place more frequently than before. In 1974, 80 cases were recorded compared to 8, 7 and 10 in 1971, 1972 and 1973 respectively. But 1975 was the bloodiest year in Bhojpur. The police-peasant 'encounters' in Hanuman Chapra and Piro on 3 April, Dullamchak and Sahar on 14 April, Bahuara on 2 July, Bahubandh and Sahar on 28 November left a lingering trail of blood. In one block, Sahar, the entire population of poor peasants and agricultural labourers is believed to have joined the movement. The number of villages strongly held by Naxalites thana-wise was thus given in a statement prepared by the District Police Superintendent on July 10, 1975 : Sahar-39, Sandesh-29, Piro-23, Tarai-15, Jagdishpur-6, Nawanagar-6, Udwantnagar-6, and Berhampur-5. These 8 thanas cover 9 blocks [Sinha, A., December 24, 1977 - January 14, 1978 : 277]. The Bihar police along
with CRPF started a village to village campaign of liquidation of the insurgents.

After the proclamation of National Emergency the military and para-military forces were given a free hand to quell the insurgency. Numerous poor peasants and landless labourers were killed. On May 28, 1975, Shivaji Prasad Singh, DIG (Naxalite), announced that the Bihar government had decided to arm all able bodied persons in Bhojpur and Patna districts for self-defence in order to face the extremist menace [The Indian Nation, 30 May, 1975]. The Statesman on June 13, 1975 reported: ... “but even more to be deplored is the reported Bihar decision to provide firearms to all able bodied men in Bhojpur and Patna. This surely is an invitation to civil strife.”. The emergency gave the police a carte blanche. It could arrest anyone, it could kill anyone, ransack any village, without the least fear of exposure in the press or of democratic opinion. It was during emergency that the Bhojpur police launched “Operation Thunder” in May 1976, to liquidate the Naxalites and their alleged strongholds. It searched out the movement’s leaders and killed them. Most of the first crop of local leaders— Jagdish Mahto, Rameshwar Ahir, Nirmal Kumar, Narayan Kavi, Rajendra Yadav, Fagu Mahto, Chamku Musahar, were killed; and leaders like Prabhu Harijan and Rameshwar Dusadh were detained. Another reason for the downfall of the Bhojpur movement was the emergence of well-knit landlord syndicates, which terrorised peasants into submission and thereby cut off potential sources of recruits for the movement [see, Maharaj, et. al., 1979]. Due to these two reasons the Naxalites suffered serious losses. The movement went on despite heavy odds, but gradually lost much of its momentum by 1976.
3.2.2. Movement in Central Bihar

In the wake of the lifting of the black curtain of the emergency, Bihar saw a veritable upheaval of peasant unrest. The year 1977-80 was marked by the emergence of host of local-level mass organisation— Kisan Sanghas (peasant associations), Sangharsh Samitis (action committees), Jan Kalyan Samities (people’s welfare committees) so on and so forth, in different parts of rural Bihar. The Bihar Pradesh Kisan Sabha (BPKS), an important constituent of the Indian People’s Front (IPF) was also formed on 23 February 1981. Radical peasant activism shook the plains of central Bihar, with Patna standing in the forefront. The upsurge mainly centred on taking control of village property like tanks, common land, etc., from the landlords, seizure of vested land held illegally by the landlords, smashing feudal social oppression and the armed gangs of the landlords, resisting police atrocities, and demanding wage increase. By early 1980s, the movement engulfed 26 of the 38 districts of Bihar. These districts can be divided into three broader categories, in terms of the stable centres of struggle, intensity and expansion of work [see, The Flaming Fields of Bihar, 1986 : 62-63].

The first category includes those districts where the struggle is most intense and is marked by regular armed clashes and guerrilla operations. This includes rural areas of Patna and Gaya, the entire district of Jehanabad, few blocks of Rohtas and Bhojpur, and the districts of Nalanda, Aurangabad and Palamau. It is interesting to note here that, these are the districts of central Bihar where landed gentry organised their caste Senas to counter the revolutionary tide and maintain their Status quo in the region. We will probe deeper into the phenomenon in the fourth chapter of this thesis. The second category comprises of the districts where struggle has reached the level of mass movements with occasional instances of mass resistance and armed clashes. The remaining blocks of Rohtas and the districts of Nawada,
Hazaribagh, East Champaran, Madhubani, Vaishali, Begusarai, Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga, Bhagalpur, Puruea and Giridih fall in this category. In the third category districts where radical agrarian activism is still at the level of propaganda and organisation. The districts of Siwan, Samastipur, West Champaran, Munger, Gopalganj, Khagaria, Madhepura and Ranchi belong to this category.

While Bhojpur rocked under the Naxalite onslaught, similar activities started taking place in the contiguous district of Patna. The movement made its mark in Poon Poon in patna district as early as 1973. Here the revolutionary committees were forming village defence squads and were distributing confiscated crops among the people, storing surplus crops in tunnels that were also used as escape routes—a typical guerrilla strategy as directed by Charu Mazumdar during the latter phase of his life [Deshabrati, 15 February 1973, quoted in Banerjee, S., 1980:390]. Madhuban village in Dhanarua block of Patna district contained nine square miles of forest land. In 1970, the government got the land cleared by local landless harijans labourers with the aim of settling them on the cleared land. However, once the land had been made fit for cultivation, the rich Yadav peasants of the area occupied it and started terrorising the harijan labourers, beating them, maiming them, and raping their women-folk [Report of the Gahlor Inquiry Committee, 1983, quoted in Mukerjee, K., et. al., 1980]. This situation continued for a couple of years but slowly the resistance grew among harijans. As a result of brewing discontent, three yadav landlords from the neighbouring Pathanhat village were killed in August 1975. Consequently, the village was declared Naxalite-infested by the government and a police party was posted there and 18 harijan labourers were arrested [Ranjan, A., Dinman, May 13-19, 1977].
The radical agrarian movement in Bihar should be seen in the context of not only the state repressive machinery but also the private armies organised by landlords on caste lines. 'Bhoomi Sena', 'Brahmarshi Sena', 'Kuer Sena', 'Lorik Sena', 'Sunlight Sena', are only some among the numerous gun-wielding gangs of marauders set up by landlords in connivance with the local political magnates. The formation of the Bhoomi Sena, the most dreaded of all private armies which was responsible for the killing of several dozens of mass-organisation activists, was master-minded by a Congress(I) M.P., Mr. Mahendra Singh nicknamed as "King Mahendra". Similarly, another private army, Sunlight Sena, in Palamau was responsible for the killing of the first General Secretary of the Mazdoor Kisan Sangram Samity (MKSS) Shri Krishna Singh. The Sena is personally led by Mr. Vijay Singh, a local Congress(I) leader and the brother of Mr. B.N. Singh, the then Governor of Assam. These private armies are known for their rapacious attacks and massacres, especially of agricultural labourers in village after village. They committed massacres, arson, loot and gangrape of Dalit women in Belchi, Bishrampur, Parasbigha, Pipra Kansara, Narhan, Koriachatar, Noonhi-Nagwan, Danuha-Khagritola, and elsewhere. Interestingly enough these ghastly crimes by private armies of landlords did not draw the attention of the government. No special offensive measure was launched against those criminals. On the contrary, the government organised and deployed a special task force to throttle popular protest and banned the mass organisation MKSS soon after the Arwal massacre by the police in 1986. But these radical movements show no signs of losing momentum as yet.

Jehanabad is another storm centre of the peasant struggle. The peasant movement has spread to all the seven blocks of this district; viz. Arwal, Kurtha, Karpi, Jehanabad, Kako, Ghosi and Makhdumpur. Wage and land are the two main issues of the current struggle. Under the leadership of peasant associations, peasants have captured several plots of vested land
in villages like Barki, Murahari, Saida, Salempur, Shahpur, Nighma, and others. In Ghosi block, the peasant organisation launched a militant movement for capturing the land of the Mahant of Deora 'Math' who possesses no less than 200 bighas. Many clashes took place between peasants and the combined forces of the Mahant's goons, the Bhoomi Sena, and armed policemen. The armed squad of the peasants killed a notorious landlord, Ram Sagar Singh, and some Bhoomi Sena lieutenants. The peasants eventually wrested control over some 175 bighas of Math land. [see, The Flaming Fields of Bihar, 1986 : 144].

Some amount of unity has also been achieved between peasant organisations of the two major parties—Party Unity and Liberation; in this area on certain issues. For example, against Bindeshwari Dubey government's "Operation Task Force" strategy to curb peasant movements, the two peasant organisations jointly organised a huge rally and mass meeting on 4th October 1985, in which more than 50,000 people participated and forced the government to withdraw the Task-Force [Lal Nishan, 1989: 15].

In the very next year, i.e. in 1986, the Arwal massacre hit the headlines and shocked not only Bihar but the nation as a whole. Arwal joined the map of revolutionary struggles in the early 1980s, when an armed action to snatch rifles was successfully carried out at Badrabad police outpost under the leadership of the Liberation group of CPI(ML). But Arwal caught the headlines of the dailies on 19th April 1986, exactly a year after Banjhi killings in which 15 Adivasis, including an ex-Rajya Sabha M.P., were killed by the police. The Arwal massacre took a toll of over 60 lives. It is alleged that the entire plan was designed and executed on the pattern of Jalianwala Bagh firing of 13th April, 1919 [for details see, The Flaming Fields of Bihar, 1986 : 146, also Lal Nishan, 1989: 15]. Krishna Singh, the leader of the Brahmarshi
Sena, openly came out in support of the massacre, and the DIG of police blatantly threatened the ‘extremists’ with more Arwals in the days to come, and Bindeshwari Dubey, the then Chief Minister of Bihar, expressed satisfaction in the fact that Arwal has finally succeeded in enforcing ‘peace’ in trouble-torn Bihar. But, far from sounding the death-knell of the peasant struggle in Bihar, Arwal succeeded in intensifying it.

4. Government Response to the Radical Agrarian Movement

In the present circumstances the government of Bihar is caught in an awkward position due to the intensity and magnitude of the movement. On the one hand, the government is burdened with the onerous task of regaining the confidence of the rural elite and establishing its credibility as a reliable custodian of “law and order”. On the other hand, it is an all the more important and complex task to win over the confidence of the agricultural labourers and poor peasants belonging to Dalits and other oppressed castes, in order to weaken the movement from within. To achieve these twin objectives, the government of Bihar, in collaboration with the Central Government, launched a comprehensive plan which has three essential ingredients. First, the unleashing of a brutal armed offensive to crush the revolutionary peasant movement. This offensive was euphemistically called “Operation Rakshak”, and was launched in the middle of August 1988. Second, various reform measures were sought to be implemented in October 1988, to wean away the toiling poor from the Naxalite influence. This strategy was suitably named “Operation Siddharth” recalling symbolically love and compassion in the tradition of Lord Buddha. The third, ingredient of the action plan was to begin an incessant and systematic vilification campaign against the Bihar peasant movement to discredit the Marxist-Leninist organisations.
Large contingents of BSF, CRPF and Gujarat Armed Constabulary have been pressed into service in addition to the Bihar police to make the offensive more effective. For example, Jehanabad district alone had 4,200 additional forces by October 1988 [Report of Lok Sangram Morcha, 1989 : 1]. The districts of central Bihar are now dotted with police camps, occupying schools, state dispensaries and other public places, disrupting normal life. Large-scale combing operations are being carried out during the night, involving raids in hundreds of villages. According to official reports, 862 “extremists” have been arrested, in Jehanabad, Gaya, Aurangabad and Palamau districts in just one year in 1988 [The Times of India, Patna, 29 January 1989]. During the end of 1988 and beginning of 1989 more than twenty activists and supporters belonging to MKSS, IPF, BKS and Krantikari Kisan Committee have been killed by the para-military forces in Pantith and Bhadari (Jehanabad), Bhabua (Rohtas), Bandhuwar (Palamau), Ramgarh (Hazaribagh) and many places in Gaya and Aurangabad districts [Singh, B., in Frontier, January 21, 1989 : 6, also Report of Lok Sangram Morcha, 1989, Annexure-2]. In almost all such cases, persons were arrested and killed from close range.

Hundreds of villages are being continuously raided and poor peasants are being indiscriminately arrested on cooked-up charges in a bid to harass and terrorise them. During the raids, the police and para-military forces have looted even the meagre belongings of the people. For example, in Azadbigha village in Aurangabad district police took away, forcibly, money, watches, transistor-sets and silver jewelleries of many of the harijan landless villagers [see, Singh, B., 1989: 5]. Many villages in Jehanabad, Patna, Rohtas and other districts of central Bihar can testify to similar occurrences [see, Report of Lok Sangram Morcha, 1989, Annexure-4, col.8]. Moreover, large sums of money is being regularly extorted by the police and para-military forces under threats of arrest and torture.
Many of the arrested are so brutally tortured in police custody that they often die in custody [Ibid., Annexure-5]. Furthermore, hundreds of political prisoners are languishing in various jails without trials in abominable conditions. In almost all jails, the number of prisoners are more than twice the capacity of the jails [Ibid., Annexure-7]. Jehanabad jail has a capacity for lodging 60 prisoners is now stuffed with more than 325 undertrial prisoners. Madhu Singh, and important leader of Palamau peasant struggle was implicated in numerous murder charges and arrested. Jay Prakash, a front ranking leader of MKSS, is in jail for about three years without trial. Even, cultural workers and poets, sympathetic to the movement, have not been spared. Virendra Vidrohi, a poet has been detained under the Anti-Terrorist Act. Amarjit Singh, a Sikh cultural worker associated with eminent playwrite, Gurusharan Singh's Amritsar Natya Kala Kendra, who came to Bihar to know and write about the peasant movement, was declared as a Khalistani terrorist and arrested under the Anti-Terrorist Act and severely tortured.

5. The Limits of the Movement

Inspite of the fact that the peasant mass fronts of the CPI(ML) Liberation and CPI(ML) Party Unity have grown and gained legitimacy in the area, the movement has not been able to extend its support base to the middle section of the peasants. The fact that wage struggles have been by far the most important economic issue in the struggle, has led some to conclude that the struggle against feudal remnants, on the basis of implementing “land to the tiller”, is no longer the central economic issue of the agrarian struggle [DN, Frontier, February 10, 1990 : 5]. Although, neither Party Unity nor Liberation is clear at this point, the way they equate the transformation of the old landlord class from feudal to capitalist landlords with that of the rise of the capitalist farmers from the rich peasantry, clearly indicates that the chief target of the agrarian struggle is no longer only
the landlords. For example Vinod Mishra, General Secretary of the Liberation group, states: “a considerable section of the kulaks have also turned out to be targets of this struggle and moreover, various complex economic and social factors allow them to mobilize many a segment of the various intermediate strata, particularly under caste banners” [The Flaming Fields of Bihar, 1986: 172-73]. Party Unity identifies the rising sections of the backward castes, in central Bihar as new type of capitalist landlords, and are included among the main targets of the peasant movement [see, Report of Mazdoor Kisan Sangram Samiti, August 30, 1987: 27].

There is no denial of the fact that capitalist transformation is taking place in central Bihar. But it should be noted that there are two paths of capitalist transformation. Hence the crucial point is: which of the two kinds of capitalist transformation should have the revolutionary movement’s support? The landlord-based transformation, or the peasant-based transformation? Although, the Liberation group admits their problems in uniting with the middle peasants [see The Flaming Fields of Bihar, 1986: 74, 121], but they do not relate this weakness to their policy of opposing the path of peasant capitalist development. As a result, it may be argued that middle peasant alienation has taken place because of the continuing identification of this movement with the agricultural labourers alone, and that too more often with the harijans. Further, Party Unity and Liberation have failed to relate the caste question to the class struggle and have failed to build an alliance between the lowest and the middle sections against the caste system and its oppressions.

Be that as it may, and inspite of the fact that the radical peasant movements of Bihar, and particularly central Bihar, may have peaked, they still constitute a major political force in that region.
However, in the current phase, the Maoist movement is expanding in districts which have a glorious past of fighting heritage dating back to the Kisan Sabha days. In this region the incidence of big landlords is few, but landlordism enjoys wider base, encompassing not only the ex-intermediaries but also erstwhile powerful raiyats. Agriculture in the area is marked by relatively greater use of modern inputs and contractual labour force. Not only is the rate of literacy higher, but also the region has experienced relatively higher rate of urbanization, modernization, better transport facilities and a more pronounced market-orientation of the rural economy.

However, keeping the above scenario in mind, one wonders as to why the region, instead of experiencing tranquility, was often rocked by the revolutionary onslaughts? Further, judging from Naxalite successes in Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal, it is puzzling to note as to why the countryside of north Bihar* and Chotanagpur* has by and large remained unmoved by Naxalism? Hence, it is not as if there are one or two factors which have paved the way for radical agrarian movement in central Bihar, but there are several factors at work. The socio-politico-economic and cultural transformation in the region not only challenged the feudal mode of oppression and exploitation, but also threatened the hegemonic position of the dominant caste(s) of the area. This in turn, together with other factors, forced the landed gentry to launch their caste Senas to maintain the status quo.

We will ponder and reflect upon the above transformations in the subsequent chapter.

4. The current radical agrarian movement is concentrated in south and south-central Bihar and not in other regions of the state, i.e. north Bihar and Chotanagpur.

* Although, north Bihar has large landlords and Chotanagpur a strong tribal component.
## Comprehensive Chart of the Maoist Movement in Bihar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Movement</th>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Area of operation</th>
<th>Agrarian Scenario</th>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Vanguards / Social Base</th>
<th>Against whom</th>
<th>Mode of operation</th>
<th>Ruling Class of the Area</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Maoist Movement in Bihar</td>
<td>First Phase</td>
<td>1967-71</td>
<td>North Bihar districts of Muzaffarpur, Dibrugarh, Saharsa, Purulia and Mungir. Dhanbad, Ranchi, Santhal Pargana, Jamshedpur, Singhbhum, Palaman and Hazaribagh districts of Chotanagpur. But, Naxalite base area and activism were localised and confined to smaller pockets.</td>
<td>Severe feudal exploitation and oppression. Acute poverty and deaths due to starvation. Skewed distribution of land and other resources. Failure of land reform measures. Partial and localised impact of green revolution. Backward agriculture, under-developed secondary and tertiary sectors. Huge army of unemployed and underemployed youths. Large number of poor peasants and agricultural labourers. Strong feudal ethos among landed gentry. Inhuman social oppression and humiliation of rural poors, and to treat them as bonded slaves, who are outside the civilized world. Strong political domination of upper castes and landed elites. No political freedom to million toiling masses.</td>
<td>To abolish all forms of feudal exploitation, oppression, seizure of excess land of feudal landlords, subjugation of lower castes and oppressed peasantry, end of all forms of feudal land tenure, seizure and seizure of village common property, lizat of oppressed peasantry, end of all forms of feudal exploitation and corruptions. To capture the state power.</td>
<td>Landlords, moneylenders, government officials, police force.</td>
<td>Landless labourers, poor peasants, large number of student-youth, especially J.P. movement, Middle peasantry and a small section of erstwhile landlords.</td>
<td>Intense underground mobilisation of poor peasants and landless labourers, Guerilla actions and 'annihilation campaign'. Formation of village committees, parallel administration and political propaganda. To mobilise industrial workers, student-youth and political campaign in urban areas.</td>
<td>All out support to the state machinery to quell the movement.</td>
<td>Vigorous encirclement and 'suppression' by military, para-military, state armed forces and police. About three-fourths of the state force was engaged to control Naxalites.</td>
<td>Three action programmes to quell the movement. First, brutal armed actions, e.g. 'operation thunder', 'operation Rakshak', etc. Second, reform measures to wean away the oppressed peasantry from Maoist influence, e.g. 'operation Siddharth', etc. Third, vilification campaigns against the movement and the radical ideology.</td>
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