Chapter III
Marxist Phase (1938-1951)

In Bengal following election to the provincial legislature in 1937 a new coalition ministry led by A. K. Fazlul Huq (1873-1962) was formed. According to Laushey, one of the first tasks of this new Bengal Government was to deal with the terrorists still under detention.\(^{104}\) Now completely responsible for the maintenance of law and order, the Bengal ministry was initially intransigent to the demand for release of political prisoners. But there was considerable political pressure on Fazlul Huq ministry in this regard. It would be pertinent to mention in this context that Bengal in late 1930s witnessed a series of agitations demanding release and repatriation of the political prisoners led by Sarat Chandra Bose (1889-1950), Soumyendranath Tagore and others. As it grew heavier, the Bengal government was compelled to give in to the pressure. This paved the way for PD’s release in 1937.

Sources like police reports and Prafulla Gupta’s book *Comrade Pannalal Dasgupta* indicated that during 1937-38 he chose to work amongst the poor, downtrodden villagers in Birbhum from the vantage point of his rapport with their lives and acquisition of insight into rural society. His close contact with rural folks in Bibhum as we already mentioned was

\(^{104}\) Laushey, 1975, p-122.
developed during internment in village domicile. In late 1930s, his activities were centered on small peasants, Santhali tribes and mill-workers in Birbhum in order to organize them politically against the feudal and the capitalist forces. During this Marxist phase, his ideas and activities were noticeably different from those of the preceding one. It is also important to mention that on his release he started working as an active member of Soumyendranath Tagore’s group in Birbhum.\textsuperscript{105} The crucial significance of this phase of his political career derived from the fact that it was marked by his application of Marxian ideas in practice that reached its apogee in the Dum Dum-Basirhat case of communist uprising in February, 1949. Hence, in course of analysis of his ideas and activities during this period question abound as to what led him to select Birbhum as the centre of his functioning, why did he join Saumyendranath Tagore’s group as well as his differences, at a later stage, with Saumyendranath Tagore.

All these issues will be examined in the following two parts. The first part will include his association with Soumyendranath Tagore’s group and his activities in Birbhum, especially under the umbrella of ‘Amar Kutir’ from 1938 till his expulsion from the district in July 1940. It would concentrate on his role as an organizer of the Revolutionary Communist Party of

India\textsuperscript{106} acting incognito in different theatres of the Quit India movement of 1942 till the mutiny of the ratings in Indian Navy in February 1946. The second part will be concerned with the formation of a breakaway group of the Revolutionary Communist Party of India by PD in 1948, followed by his design for creating liberated zone by seizure of power at remote peasant areas through armed insurrection in February 1949. This action ended with a steep retreat of his group within a day. It necessitates a brief review of the failure of Dum Dum-Basirhat action, the responsibility of which squarely fell on PD, the proponent of immediate socialist revolution in the Revolutionary Communist Party of India.

\textsuperscript{106} According to the party history, in the second conference of the CLI held in 1940 the name of the party was changed from the CLI to the Communist Party of India. Then again in March 1943 the party changed its name and it was rechristened as Revolutionary Communist Party of India (RCPI). This was done in order to differentiate its stand from the official communist party of India i.e. CPI.
(Rebel Group)\textsuperscript{107} and the chief mastermind of the entire blueprint.

\textbf{Part I}

The application of Marxist thought in Indian society offered radical alternative to Indian nationalist thought in three respects. First, to the nationalist, India was a British colony and Britain’s relations with India were one of domination, mass exploitation and extraction. But the Marxist imparted a global dimension to the understanding of the scenario by linking colonialism to the structure of capitalism. Thus, the Marxist brought in a deeper insight in the study of colonialism, which they

\textsuperscript{107} After the first major split in RCPI following party’s Birbhum conference in April 1948, the faction of the party led by PD was identified as RCPI (Rebel Group), in short RCPI (RG). After PD’s arrest in July 1951, this faction was led by Upen Das (Assam), Haren Kalita (Assam), Rashik Bhatt (Gujarat), Niranjan Sen by interim arrangement until Sudhin Kumar became Secretary in 1955 at Party’s Seventh Conference in Nowgaon, Assam. Hence it came to be known as RCPI (Kumar). It claimed itself to be the main party. Similarly, another section of the party comprising leaders like Provat Sen, Sudhir Dasgupta, Khemesh Chatterjee, Gour Pal, Sunil Maitra, Satish Samanta et al who rallied behind Saumyendranath Tagore came to be known as RCPI (Tagore Group).

After the split the strength of RCPI got considerably weakened from within. It was revealed from an intercepted letter dated 26/10/1953 from one Sadhan Mazumdar, a known whole-time worker of the peasant front of RCPI (RG) in Nadia to Haren Kalita of Assam in which he regretted that the party leadership was unsteady and hesitant. He even expressed the worry that communist-minded people were apprehensive of the possibility of party’s probable liquidation and that RCPI was simply following the footsteps of the CPI. The organization of the party had sunk into a standstill state. (IB File 857-41 Assam, Serial No. 275 on RCPI-RG-Assam, p-14). Even there was internal churning in the RCPI (Rebel Group) on the issue of non-participation in the election since according to the thesis placed in Birbhum in 1948 by the party’s faction led by PD, election was boycotted. While Haren Kalita made it clear that “election could not be contested in compliance with the thesis”, in the opinion of Tarun Sen Deka of Assam, participation in election could “help in revitalizing the party”.(Same IB file, p-17-8). Even we learnt from the intercepted letter of comrade Sudhin Kumar dated 2/11/1953 to Tarun Sen Deka that there were ideological confusion and organisational anarchy prevailing in the party (Same file, p-27). Similarly we find from IB file 1804/48 and 1804/48 KW that Balaram Chatterjee of Krishnagore, Nadia strongly fought against the tendency of merger of RCPI rebel group with the CPI. All these clearly showed that the RCPI (RG) was undergoing a critical state, especially during the period from 1948-53.

However, in the 1960s and 1970s on several occasions both the factions of the party (i.e. RCPI) came close to the extent of forging mutual cooperation. In particular, after the formation of the Left Front government in West Bengal in 1977 the two groups came to the verge of unification. Yet, the differences could not be resolved. According to sources of the party, in 2001, however, both the factions came together, agreed to resolve differences and finally got amalgamated. In the meantime, however, Kanai Paul of Shantipur temporarily stepped out of the party over certain disagreements with Saumyendranath Tagore and set up the Revolutionary Workers’ Party along with other splinter groups. Since its extinction RCPI, at present, is united party.
viewed as an offshoot of capitalism and its world-wide spread in the form of imperialism. So, colonialism in India was not an isolated phenomenon. Rather, one had to view it by transcending the surface reality, and placing things in the interconnected perspective of capitalism-imperialism nexus in global politics as a whole.

Second, the Marxist brought in certain complexity in the understanding of the Indian society. The nationalist take of Indian society was based on assumed harmony among people. The common thread of unity binding them in a multi-cultural social fabric made possible their collective political mobilization against the British rule. The Marxist interpretation, however, was more incisive in classifying the Indian populace in terms of different interests corresponding to different socio-economic strata in society. For example, the capitalists, workers, landlords, peasants and the middle class, however they could live together, underlying this apparent social camaraderie there were discords due to their conflicting class interests. Drawing on this perspective, in his *Shreni Dal O Biplob* (i.e. *Class, Party and Revolution*), Saumyendranath Tagore spoke of the class divisions in Indian society.\(^{108}\) Though the statements in this booklet were little simplistic Saumyendranath traced the roots of every political party to different class interests.

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Third, the Marxists brought in certain militancy to Indian nationalist currents. As a result, the political struggle for freedom was turned into a broader comprehensive goal of emancipatory class struggle for the establishment of an egalitarian socio-economic order. Not only that, some like Saumyendranath Tagore began to talk of communist revolution. Conceptually it was completely different from armed revolutionary activities then in vogue in Bengal. It was due to the impact of ‘Marxism, an ideology which specifically deprecated acts of terror and urged instead the organization of the peasants and workers for a coming social revolution’.

All these left a deep impact on the minds of young revolutionaries of the day. It was the logical outcome of their analysis and searching, so was evident in PD’s case. In other words, the failure of armed revolutionary attempt at Mechua Bazar led him to explore new line of political action. It did not, however, mean smooth switch over from armed revolutionary path to communist mode of political action. As L.P. Sinha aptly stated in *The Left-Wing in India,* “the path from nationalism to Marxism-Leninism was strewn with many difficulties of an exploratory nature.”109 Put in this context, it might be inferred that in passing through this process of search, his growing contact with communist ideas, that appealed to his mind

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109 Though L. P. Sinha has made the statement in the context of the history of the Communist Party in India, it is equally applicable to those who joined left movement in India. In this broader sense it fits with PD’s case. Sinha, L. P., *The Left-Wing in India 1919-1947,* New Publishers, Muzaffarpur, Bihar 1965, p-476.
intellectually, had turned into a political disposition in favour of communist ideology.

According to the estimation of David M. Laushey, during this transition period perhaps as many as fifty per cent of the members of revolutionary samities had converted to Marxism, and it was they who took the initiative in the debate over the future course of action. The only point at issue among these Marxists was whether to join the CPI, the CSP, or to form a new leftist party of their own.\textsuperscript{110} This clearly reflected the mental dilemma from which many revolutionaries of the day suffered. It was even true in PD’s case. We learnt from Prafulla Gupta’s book \textit{Comrade Pannalal Dasgupta} that subsequent to his release PD went to Calcutta to talk to the leaders of CPI on ideological terms. But at that time another communist organisation sprang up in Bengal on grounds of ideological disagreement with the CPI. Saumyendranath Tagore was associated with it. PD came in close touch with this group, and at length, joined its ranks.\textsuperscript{111}

The Communist League of India (hereafter CLI) was founded on 1\textsuperscript{st} August 1934 under the leadership of ST. According to Somendranath Bose, a veteran member of the party, in 1934, on the question of leadership, perhaps, ST moved out of CPI and formed a new communist

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid, p-124
\textsuperscript{111} Gupta, Prafulla, \textit{Comrade Pannalal Dasgupta}, First imprint, Naya Duniya, Kolkata, 1953, p-12
party. It is learnt from *Historical Development of Communist Movement in India* published by Polit-Bureau of RCPI that Sudhir Dasgupta, Probhat Sen, Ranjit Majumdar and Arun Banerji were with...

112 Bose, Somendranath, *Sarkari file-e Soumyendranath Tagore*, Pustak Bipani, Kolkata, 1978, p-39(Parisitha). However, Prof. Buddhadev Bhattacharya has quoted from Gangadhar Adhiakari’s writing that Tagore separated himself from the party (i.e. CPI) as early as 1933. According to Bhattacharya, Disagreement on fundamental questions like the attitude to be taken by the communists towards the petty bourgeois intelligentsia and trade union unity continued till the middle of June 1934 when the Bengal apparatus of the Stalinist party started a campaign of distortion of Tagore’s viewpoint and it was only after then the CLI was started in 1934. *Society and Change*, vol. x No.3, Oct.-Dec 1995, p-4. Sudarshan Chattapadhyay, a veteran spokesman of RCPI in his introductory discussion to the selective compilation of Soumyendranath Tagore’s articles entitled *Against the Stream* vol. I (1975) has, however, mentioned that the rift between Tagore and the then leadership of CPI began in 1934 when following the resolution of the Communist International on the German debacle, Abdul Halim disagreed with Tagore’s criticism of the German Communist Party. Then Soumyendranath Tagore himself published the book *Hitlerism or the Aryan Rule in Germany* on behalf of the Ganashakti Publishing House, which was the publishing house of the Calcutta committee of the Communist Party of India. This was the beginning of Soumyendranath’s parting of ways with the CPI. Sri Chattapadhyay has further mentioned that after publication of the book in 1934, Soumyendranath traveled all over India, met various communist leaders and came to the conclusion that the bureaucratization of the Communist International had also affected the Indian leadership of the communist movement to such an extent that no independent thinking and application of Marxian methodology were possible in the stifling atmosphere of the official communist party [*Against the Stream*, Vol. I, p-xxiii]. Also what probably struck Tagore in early 1930s was that critical thinking had been banished from the CPI in the name of party discipline. As a result, Tagore’s criticism of ultra-sectarian policies of the party which had kept the party isolated from the national struggle during the civil disobedience movement in India and had divided the nascent trade union movement, were not liked by the party leaders. After prolonged discussion with various leaders Tagore, therefore, decided to leave CPI and start a parallel communist organisation called the Communist League of India in August 1934. *Against the Stream*, vol. I; see the brief note in p-65 appended to the article The Nature and The Tasks of The Indian Revolution reproduced from Red Front, 1934.

However, according to Somendranath Bose, the aforesaid view that the CPI did not agree to Tagore’s contention regarding the causes of the victory of Fascism in Germany was not valid. Because in the book on Hitlerism Tagore did not hold the communists responsible; instead in the fifth chapter of the book entitled *Who paved the way for Fascism in Germany?* he arrogated the responsibility on the German Social Democratic Party for its treacherous role in crushing the proletarian movement and thereby helping fascist elements in Germany. Hence, Bose was of the view that Halim’s aversion to Tagore’s viewpoints on the question of Hitlerism that it led to his difference with the Bengal leadership of the Communist League as ‘the true leftist party in India’. The very nomenclature suggests that it was originally inspired by the idea of the Communist League established by Karl Marx and Frederik Engels in 1847. Besides, prof. Manjula Bose in his study of Saumyendranath’s political ideas has elucidated his distinct views with regard to trade union movement, the role of the bourgeoisie, specially petty bourgeoisie which set him apart from the theoretical position of the CPI. All these differences might be assumed to underlie at the back of Saumyendranath’s decision to form a separate party in August, 1934, known as the Communist League of India. Bose, Manjula, *Saumyendranath: Karme O Manone*, Tagore Research Institute, Kolkata, 2007, p-87.
Saumyendranath at the time of forming the party. The name Communist League was chosen because of its historical association with the Communist League of Karl Marx.\textsuperscript{113} Evidently PD was not among those in the founding group. We might reasonably conjecture that it was so probably because he was in gaol at that time. Yet, as ST himself admitted in an interview to Laushey, an American research scholar that PD was one of the important early members of the organisation who started their careers as Anushilan Terrorists.\textsuperscript{114} In the introduction to the volume *Rachana Sangraha* (i.e. the collected writings) PD said, ‘although I had converted to Marxism, I did not join the communist party at all. In stead, we had formed revolutionary communist party separately. It was because there were more differences than similarities between the official communists and the strand of the revolutionary communists. Yet, our political objective was identical’\textsuperscript{115}.

In this context, a question pertinently arises as to what led him to join the CLI, because there were different other Marxist parties in Bengal. Not only that, but also, CLI, notwithstanding its claim to all-India status, was

\textsuperscript{114} Laushey, p-157.
\textsuperscript{115} Dasgupta Pannalal, *Rachana Sangraha*, Nabapatra Prakashani, Kolkata, 1999, see *Bhumika* (i.e. introduction)
basically based in Bengal. In spite of it when PD chose to work under ST’s leadership, it might be assumed that probably he took a conscious decision in favour of joining the CLI. In the political history of left movements in Birbhum at that time such trend of changing party affiliation was quite visible among the revolutionaries as mentioned by Bharat Jyoti Roychowdhury. According to Roychowdhury, after 1943 this fluctuating tendency of crossover ended and in Bibhum district communist movements began to flow in two parallel streams, one led by the CPI and another by RCPI. However, all through his Marxist phase PD remained associated with the CLI. It marked the unity of his thinking with that of party’s highest leadership. Barring certain exceptions like his meeting with Gandhi, his views were compatible with ST’s staunch anti-Congress, anti-imperialist stance and policy of revolutionary organization until there arose sharp differences of opinion on the question of action within the party in late 1940s. All these not only showed his

116 Bose, Manjula, Saumyendranath Tagore: Karme O Manone, Tagore Research Institute, Kolkata, 2007, p-173. In her words, ‘even within Bengal the activities of the party were confined to several particular areas viz. Howrah, Hooghly, Berhampore in Murshidabad, Mymansigh, Barisal etc. Gradually, its activities expanded to Nadia, 24 Parganas, Birbhum, Dinajpur, Faridpur, Chittagonj, Tripura etc’. We found supporting facts in favour of Manjula Bose’s claim in the article of historian Gautam Chattopadhyay, who knew ST closely. He stated quoting from a secret letter of the Intelligence Branch addressed to the then Home Secretary to the Government of India dated 9/06/1942 that though ST himself had claimed his party organization to be substantially strong in a number of places like many districts of Bengal, Assam, United Province, Ahmedabad etc, in fact, that was somewhat inflated. However, in some districts like Nadia and Murshidabad the Communist League had considerable hold particularly amongst the militant youths. See Gautam Chattopadhyay’s article on the inauguration of the communist movement in India and Saumyendranath in Baitanik, Saumyendranath’s commemorative volume edited by Amit Das, 2002, p-17.

117 Roychowdhury, Bharat Jyoti, Birbhum Prekshapate Rajnitik Andolon (First Part), Muktamon, Kolkata, 2008, p-75.

118 Prafulla Gupta referred to this meeting of PD with Gandhi in his Bengali book Comrade Pannalal Dasgupta, 1953, p-17.
faith in the ideological plank of the CLI, but also indicated that CLI provided sort of organizational anchorage to his ideas and activities.

According to Manjula Bose, a veteran scholar who knew the party for long time, PD’s contact with the CLI was mediated through Tarapa Gupta of Berhampur, Murshidabad\textsuperscript{119}. Thus introduced to ST, it paved the way for PD’s membership of the organization. Besides, ST also wanted to win support from the ranks of terrorists for strengthening his party since the CLI was probably not composed of more than a handful of members for the first four years of its existence.\textsuperscript{120} Moreover, ST’s attack on unbridled state repression on terrorist movement in Bengal and his personal endeavour in the setting up of Political Prisoners’ Relief Committee implied that his attitude was imbued with underlying sympathy for armed revolutionaries and political prisoners. All these provide with indirect clues to PD’s growing attraction to the political line of ST and his energetic and magnetic personality. At that time activities of the CLI were mainly organized around ST. He was the only recognized public figure in the party. Hence the party banked for increase in membership and organizational proliferation on his campaign, inspirational leadership,

\textsuperscript{119} Bose, Manjula, \textit{Saumyendranath Tagore: Karne O Monane}, 2007, p-150. It is learnt from M. Panda’s article \textit{Swadhinata: Patabhum Murshidabad} that Tarapada Gupta hailed from the renowned Gupta family of village Andulia of Kandi sub-division of Murshidabad. The family was well-known for its revolutionary connection. Tarapada’s political career started as a revolutionary in the 1920s as he was arrested in Dakhineswar Bomb case in 1924. He was one of the accused in the postal loot case in Putia in 1927 and was involved in Mechua Bazar conspiracy case in 1929 in which PD was also arrested and imprisoned. After release in 1936 Tarapada joined the communist movement led by Saumyendranath Tagore. (Das, Kalyan Kumar (Ed), \textit{Swadhinata Sangrame Murshidabad}, Silpanagari Prakashani, Berhampore, 2008, p-19).

\textsuperscript{120} Laushey, p-112

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authority on Marxism and above all, his eloquent presence in public meetings. All these clearly indicated that the CLI was typically individual leader-centric party. According to Amitabha Chandra, major problems of such political organizations were those of excessive reliance on singular personality that posed constraint to rapid expansion of their activities and correspondingly slow growth of membership. In the opinion of Amitabha Chandra, the CLI was not free from these organizational weaknesses.121 Besides, the CLI had financial difficulties.122 It was so because it did not get or bother to get pecuniary assistance from the Communist International. Yet, from the functioning of the CLI it transpired that it served as a small training school of Marxism to a batch of interested youths during 1930s. In that sense, in the contemporary communist movements in Bengal the CLI occupied an important place, though ST’s own political role permeated major portion of its performance.


122 Prof. Manjula Bose discussed financial scarcity pestering RCPI in her book Saumyendranath: Karme O Manone on the basis of information provided by Somendranath Bose, who was once a whole time member of the party. To corroborate her point she stated quoting from the reports of Secret Branch of police that often the party had to rely on generous grant of Miss Sarojini Hutheesing of Ahmedabad, who was younger sister of Shrimati Tagore, wife of Saumyendranath Tagore. It was the familial source while some other channels of financial assistance for political works of the party have been reported like Indulal Yajnik, the peasant leader of the All India Kisan Sabha, Saumyendranath’s friends circle in Bombay (now Mumbai) who extended monetary help for procuring a press for publication etc. But all these were inadequate to meet expenses of the activities of the party. Here Prof. Manjula Bose raised the pertinent question as to why other small leftist parties like the Forward Bloc, Revolutionary Socialist Party etc having to deal with similar problem of paucity of fund did not wither completely. In reply she held the view that unlike the Revolutionary Communist Party, these parties did not act independently. Saumyendranath: Karme O Manone, 2007, p-174-175. It not only showed distinct political stand of RCPI but also its consistently uncompromising attitude to action.
Seen in this perspective it might be reasonably assumed that the leadership qualities of ST had attracted PD. However, his initial move to join CPI and then shifting away seemed to indicate that politically his decision to join CLI was mainly based on ideological perception of the functioning of the left parties in India. At that time the Congress Socialist Party (hereafter CSP) was operating within Congress. M. N. Roy had organized his group within Congress. And the Labour party of Niharendu Dutt Mazumdar was cooperating with CPI, which in turn was following a policy of United Front with the CSP and Congress. To the revolutionary communists, however, this dependence of different left parties on Congress meant submerging the Marxian movement to a counter-revolutionary platform which hampered the growth of the revolutionary consciousness among the oppressed classes. It must have irked PD’s communist mind as he was looking for a Marxist line of revolutionary class struggle independent of Congress politics.

In 1950 in *Bharate Samyavadi Andoloner Dhara* (i.e. the currents of communist movements in India) PD acknowledged, “The RCPI was born out of opposition to the policy of class cooperation of the official communists. Communism cannot survive without class struggle. The plan of spurious freedom of the joint national front cannot bring about real

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freedom for India. This led the revolutionary communists to differentiate their path from other communists. The latter spoke for the constitution of a joint national front through the platform of the Congress. The revolutionary communists (then they were known as the CLI), on the other hand, emphatically urged for the formation of a joint front of all oppressed classes, which would be known as the Red Front, in order to put up uncompromising struggle against the British. Hence, real freedom would not be realized following the path of the bourgeoisie. The communist party called upon the people to penetrate the organization of the Congress with a view to strengthening Congress as a formidable mass political institution. The revolutionary communists vociferously objected to it because, the policy of directing the Indian masses towards the Congress, the pound created by the bourgeoisie, was wrong. It would not help in building up the leadership, own independent agency and politics of the Indian peasants and the workers.”

It showed that this sense of felt-requirement of independent class organizations of workers and peasants as well as a revolutionary party to lead the masses along the path of uncompromising fight for freedom and egalitarian socio-economic order continued to prod PD and brought him closer to ST. In ST he found

genuine urge for building ‘the independent communist organization of the working class, peasantry and the middle class’ in as early as 1934.\textsuperscript{125}

With regard to Congress, ST had a distinct view. For him, ‘Congress represented a party of the landlords and mill owners who had gone over to the side of imperialism and that was why, any anti-imperialist would necessarily be anti-Congress.’\textsuperscript{126} Yet, he regarded that as a multi-class organisation Indian National Congress was a factor in the anti-imperialist united front, but not the organizational realization of the anti-imperialist people’s front.\textsuperscript{127} Thus, underlying a critical attitude to Congress there was a measured appreciation of its role, which helped formulate distinct line of action of the CLI during 1930s: co-operation with Congress on specific issues to the extent which would help further the cause of people’s anti-imperialist struggle, but not as collaborator of Congress politics. The immediate tasks of the revolutionary communists, according to ST, would be “to rally rank and file around the genuine anti-imperialist platform, developing outside the Congress”. Clearly, it was not orthodox blind opposition to Congress but theoretically enriched perception of its stance. This critical evaluation of Congress on one hand and CLI’s

\textsuperscript{125} Tagore, Saumyendranath, \textit{The Nature and The Tasks of The Indian Revolution} as compiled in \textit{Against the Stream}, vol. 1, 1975. The original article was published in 1934 in \textit{Red Front}, R.C.P.I paper in English which was started in May 1938.

\textsuperscript{126} Bhattacharya, Buddhadeva (ed.), \textit{Society and Change}, vol.x, no.3, 1995, see the article \textit{RCPI on Gandhi} written by Buddhadeva Bhattacharya, p-8.

\textsuperscript{127} See the article \textit{The Nature and The Tasks of The Indian Revolution} in \textit{Against the Stream}, vol. 1, 1975, p-66. Also \textit{Historical Development of Communist Movement in India}, Polit-Bureau, C.C., R.C.P.I, 1944, p-31.
distinct stance among other left parties definitely tended to attract PD to ST's camp.

Under ST's leadership CLI came to represent a 'parallel communist organization' on the basis of his understanding of the communist ideology and the situation in India in stead of toeing the lines dictated by the British Communist Party or that of Stalin's Russia in the thirties. Although CLI lagged far behind the CPI in terms of influence and strength, the former was able to maintain its independent parallel existence throughout 1930s. This, according to Amitabha Chandra, justified its claim to 'parallel communist organization'. This not only indicated inherent strength of the party but also helped explain its steady growth. Among the students and workers in city and vast multitude of peasants in different districts in Bengal, the CLI was able to develop an impressive appeal for the programme of struggle. In 1937 ST joined kishan sabha. It indicated how the leadership was seeking to penetrate the countryside with the aim of building organizational bases among the marginalized farmers. In late 1930s CLI also plunged in different other movements like anti-fascist campaigns, Bandi-mukti andolan, students' movements, trade union movements of workers of jute mills, of cigarette

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128 Chandra, Amitabha, *Communist League: Tirisher Dashaker Ekti Samantaral Communist Sangathan* (Communist League: A parallel Communist Organisation in the decade of 1930s) in *Itihas Amasandhan* (Vol. 8) edited by Abdul Owaliah Mahmud, Paschimbanga Itihas Sansad, Kolkata, 1993, p-401-416. In the book *Historical Development of Communist Movement* it was also stated that the decision to float CLI as a parallel party was arrived at after disillusionment with the official Communist Party, p-29.
factories, of transport sector, clerks, sailors etc. All these curved out a
dynamic, uncompromising fighting image of the party and its radical
spirit and appeal especially among the youth. It showed the context in
which PD’s inclination to CLI was to be appreciated.

Further, PD’s attraction to Marxism as a theory of building new social
order through revolutionary action seemed to be the most important factor
that drove him ideologically to the camp of ST. So, it was not an
impulsive decision on the part of PD, but his response to radical strain in
Marxist thought combined with the revolutionary thrust in ST’s resolute
posture to utilize Marxist doctrine for vigorous political struggle. It lent
certain militancy to PD’s approach. The upshot of this effect was revealed
in his call for immediate socialist revolution, and determined the direction
of his activities.

ST’s ideas on revolution in India were articulated in the book *Bourgeois
Democratic Revolution and India*. It was published in 1938 which was
extremely important from the point of view of PD’s release from prison
this time and his search for a revolutionary Marxist party. The idea which
ST presented in this book was a conception of a combined revolution in a
backward semi-feudal, semi-capitalist colonial country like India.

Opposing the two-stage theory of revolution—the democratic revolution
under the leadership of the bourgeoisie, and the socialist revolution under
proletarian leadership, ST pointed out that the bourgeoisie in India due to
its historically belated appearance and dependence on British power for favour were incapable of leading the democratic revolution to its logical conclusion. Hence, given the historical situation in India at that time, which was characterized by imperialist domination, the proletariat and the peasantry must lead people's democratic revolution and then to transform it into socialism. This democratic revolution could be completed by putting the toiling masses in power. Thus, the democratic revolution would grow into socialist revolution. In short, this was the idea which guided the CLI and influenced PD’s thought and activities during the Marxist phase until he developed his own views at variance with ST’s in late 1940s.

In *Chasir Katha* (i.e. disquisition on farmers) written by ST in July 1939 we would see that he urged for organizing and mobilizing the peasants through independent peasant organization. ST also wanted to attract the peasants to the fold of revolutionary organization. Clearly this approach influenced PD’s mind at that stage as he was seeking to foment discontent already present among the peasants for revolutionary action. The idea behind using the peasantry was that they were conceived of as a major force and mass front to organize actions in specific rural setting. Besides, theoretically, poor and landless peasants were class alignment of the proletariat in the historic task of passing over from bourgeois-democratic phase of the impending socialist revolution.
The strategic location of far-flung village centre towards which PD shifted attention in 1937-38 provided reasonable ground to believe that he wanted to operate from remote rural areas far away from the administrative centre of the state. This caused the impression that there was tactical reason behind his shift towards village centre. It appeared from these that he wanted to use interior rural areas for mobilizing peasants and organizing revolutionary activities. While analyzing the reasons behind the creation of *Ruppur Samya Sadan* in a remote rural pocket at the fringe of Bolpur by a group of revolutionaries of *Amar Kutir* including PD, Prof. Amiyo Ghosh expressed similar views in his book *Jatiya Andolan O Jila Birbhum*.129

On release in November 1937130 PD did not leave Birbhum, but kept staying at its countryside for the political tasks of sensitizing and organising local, exploited masses. We get an idea of contemporary economic situation of Birbhum from Bharat Jyoti Roychowdhury’s *Birbhum Prekshapate Rajnitik Andolon* (First Part). The author, who grew up in the then political milieu of Birbhum, maintained that ‘Birbhum was agriculture dependent. In the late thirties factories meant only a few rice-mills. Hence, the primary and main task before the communists in the initial period of communist movement in the district

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130 According to the IB file No.316-28 Part VI internment order on PD was revoked conditionally in November 1937 and unconditionally in June 1938.
was to set up farmers’ organization. Naturally, activities of the CPI and CLI were driven in that very direction.\textsuperscript{131} The critical challenge involved in this task could be gauged from backwardness of the region in which its marginal farming community had submerged. As quoting from Visva Bharati’s annual report of 1934 Palit et al stated that Birbhum was one of the poorest and most backward districts of Bengal.\textsuperscript{132} This pointed to a situation of intense class polarization in which the economic condition of the district had wallowed. Drawing on the district handbook of census and the report published in the issue of \textit{Birbhum Barta} on 2\textsuperscript{nd} December 1940, Prof. Amiyo Ghosh in his book \textit{Jatiya Andolan O Jila Birbhum} attributed severe crop failure in the district towards the fag-end of 1930s to the flood in 1939 followed by drought-like situation in 1940.\textsuperscript{133} All these aggravated the crisis and added to the plight and dissatisfaction of the peasants. It naturally provided the fertile ground for ‘the mobilization of the peasants as peasant sabhas were able to move closer to the poor villagers in the famine-prone situation and galvanized into works of political organisation’.\textsuperscript{134}

But while ‘the manner of struggle by the peasant sabhas was mainly passive resistance interspersed with occasional conflict with the landlord

\textsuperscript{131} Translated in English from the Bengali book \textit{Birbhumer Prekshapate Rajnitik Andolon} (First Part) by Roychoowdhry, Bharat jyoti, 2008, p-74-75
\textsuperscript{133} Ghosh, Amiyo, \textit{Jatiya Andolan O Jila Birbhum}, Granthanir, Sriniketan, 2000, p-156.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid, p-157.
class',\(^{135}\) activities of *Amar Kutir* members including PD amongst the tribal masses and youths in remote villages of Bolpur, Khairasole and Dubrajpur acquired distinct dimension due to radical anti-feudal, anti-imperialist overtone. Reports of District Intelligence Branch (DIB) are replete with such news. For instance, the report dated 22.06.1940 in the DIB file 87/1939 said “A procession was organized by Pannalal Dasgupta, Monoranjan Dutta, Ramani Ranjan Ganguli and some others of ‘Amar Kutir’. Some Santals, lower class Hindus and boys of adjoining villages took part in the procession. They paraded through the streets crying ‘Down with the Zamindari system’, ‘Down with imperialism’ etc.”\(^{136}\) These give an idea of his role as an organizer of various movements in the countryside. What is noticeable here is that the Mechua Bazar event was predominantly urban centered, whereas in 1938 PD chose remote rural backyard to resume operation in Marxist lines. However, from the viewpoint of expanding arenas of communist movement in India during 1930s it was not the question of his personal engagement, but it required to be placed in the broader context of growing tendency among the Marxist leaders to develop class organizations among the peasantry. It was evident in the foundation of

\(^{135}\) Ibid, p-153  
\(^{136}\) Ibid, p-161
All India Kisan Sabha in 1936. In Bengal Provincial Peasant Association was set up. In March 1937 when the first conference of this peasant association was held at Patrosayor in Bankura district of the then undivided Bengal, according to Abdullah Rosul, a veteran leader of the peasant front of undivided CPI, members of CLI namely Tarapada Gupta, Sudhir Dasgupta and ST played prominent part in it. According to Rosul, these leaders wanted to use peasant movement for building up a platform of broader democratic battle for national liberation cum socialist movement. It indicated the contemporary direction of communist movement in India. PD’s activities in remote peasant areas of Birbhum in late 1930s might be seen against this backdrop. Therefore, his decision to operate from remote Birbhum villages inhabited by poor villagers and aboriginal tribals was simultaneously political as well as well-thought out strategic decision on his part informed by variation in political situation in late thirties and the strategic advantage of working from rural centre.

137 At the time of its foundation on 11th April 1936 in Lucknow under the presidency of Swami Sahajananda it was held under the banner of All India Kisan Congress. But as “the hiatus between the Congress and the peasant organizations began to widen, at the Comilla Conference in 1938 the All India Kisan Congress changed its name to All India Kisan Sabha. It adopted the red flag as the symbol of peasants’ struggle.” Leftist Movements in India 1917-47 by Satyabrata Rai Chowdhuri, South Asia Books, Columbia, USA, 1977, p-218. In its manifesto it declared its objective as “To secure complete freedom from economic exploitation and achievement of full economic and political power for the peasants and workers and all other exploited classes”. Communist Movement in India Historical Perspective and Important Documents vol.I Ed. by Sen, Arindom and Ghosh, Partha, 1991, p-203. It was indicative of the leftist approach to the articulation of the revolutionary class demands of the toiling peasantry, workers and other exploited classes.

It is pertinent to mention that during this period of his activities PD selected Susen Mukherjee’s (1888-1955) ‘Amar Kutir’ (My Cottage)\(^{139}\) as work-base. It was an institution at Ballavpur (a village near Santiniketan), which served as a meeting-place for revolutionaries and village uplift workers. ‘Though originally conceived of as a non-political organization, Amar Kutir was driven by the ideas of economic nationalism until late 1930s when its activities began to assume political

\(^{139}\) ‘Amar Kutir’ was set up in 1926 near Shantiniketan by Susen Mukherjee, a revolutionary turned social activist. The object was to establish a commune or ashram for political sufferers released from jails. It became the nerve-centre of peasant movements and communism in the district of Birbhum. Susen Mukherjee’s political background and contemporary intelligence tip-off suggest that it provided shelter to various political absconders. Besides, there were allegations of objectionable propaganda carried on by its members among the peasantry in surrounding localities. All these brought the Kutir under police scanner in early thirties. Susen Mukherjee was suspected in one such case and subsequently arrested in May 1932. Though sentenced for only six months, he was kept behind bars till late 1936—the period in which he came across many a political activist including PD. On release Mukherjee moved to Calcutta where he started business of leather crafts at a small scale. It may be considered to be a step toward future extension of Amar Kutir since this urban connection meant proximity to market. However, Amar Kutir was far from a mere business firm. Susen Mukherjee himself conceived of it as a nursery of constructive works at large. It was on his sincere invitation that political workers of different persuasions whom he met in jails joined the Kutir at a later stage. Similarly PD also came to stay there around July-August 1938 and merged into its constructive qua revolutionary activities. According to Ananda Sen, though Susen Mukherjee happened to be the founder of the Kutir, PD was among those who put life in the institution (Sen, 2004,p-3). Amar Kutir, inevitably incurred the wrath of the colonial power. The British police raided and ransacked it many times but failed to close it down altogether. After 1940, however, two incidents created conducive grounds for the police to clamp down on the activities of the Kutir (Anil Kr. Ghosh). One was mail robbery at Ahmadpur on 7/3/1940 and the other setting up of an armed training camp under the auspices of Ruppur Somya Sadan. Though police effort to establish connection of Kutir members fell through in the first case, it entangled some including PD in the latter case. In spite of these, the Kutir resumed work from 30/12/1940[D.I.B.O, File 91/1941]. Here a question naturally arises as to why the government did not declare it illegal. The reason apparently lay in the fact that Amar Kutir was constituted as rural institution of constructive works as well as a house of political workers to render service through handicrafts etc. It was different that in practice many of its members propagated political ideologies. Therefore, while police could take steps against its members, there was legal difficulty in disbanding this institution. Secondly, close proximity to the world famous ashram at Shantiniketan also restrained police regarding Amar Kutir. That was to say, if Kutir was closed down on the pretext of providing shelter to active political workers, similar questions would have arisen with regard to Shantiniketan and Sriniketan. It was because district intelligence of Birbhum had enough information of the involvement of the members of both Shantiniketan and Sriniketan in various objectionable activities also. In spite of that, the administration had to remain quiet lest any police action created overwhelming adverse reaction. This indirectly acted as protective shield for Amar Kutir, thus helping in its persistence. After independence, however, the institution evolved into a larger body named Amar Kutir Society for Rural Development under the stewardship of PD. At the time of its new beginning in 1978 PD was its chairman.

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According to Bharat Jyoti Roychowdhury, after 1938 when Sushen Mukherjee was released from prison and a number of former terrorists turned Marxists including PD came to stay at Amar Kutir, this institution resumed functioning with renewed vigour. Henceforth Kutir members took part in direct political activities.

According to Monoranjan Sadhukhan, PD’s close lieutenant, this time centering on Amar Kutir, PD and his colleagues collectively devoted themselves to the dual task of organizing anti-imperialist movements and constructive works to rebuild village and village economy. In fact, both these aspects were closely interwoven because mobilization of peasants was extremely necessary to start any anti-imperialist movement in the countryside, which, in turn, was contingent on constructive works in villages viz, spreading literacy, imparting training in village crafts, constituting volunteer corps for relief etc. Taken together these were a mammoth task well beyond the ability of any leftist party, and so for CLI too. Though CLI had acquired some footing in the political map of

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141 Roychowdhury, Bharat Jyoti, Birbhum Prekshapate Rajnitik Andolon (First Part), Muktamon, Kolkata, 2008, p-64.
142 Sadhukhan, Monoranjan, A Short Life-sketch of Pannalai Dasgupta, a typed script dated March 14,1985, Calcutta, p-2.
143 Later in a letter to Haren Kalita, the then secretary, Central Committee of R.C.P.I (Rebel group), found in the IB file, Office of the DIG, CID Assam, dated 04.12.1954 PD stated that by constructive works in villages he meant construction of people’s units at the grass roots level to develop a sense of unity among the members of the masses who only occasionally combined for a joint action because of lack of social consciousness and socialist spirit. To quote PD from the aforesaid letter, “Mass movement and revolutionary struggle must be based on a substantial basis of mass units.” It showed that PD viewed constructive works from the standpoint of his definite political mission and considered these activities as means to the end. However, the date of the letter indicates that PD was in jail at that time when his views were passing through a crucial phase of transformation from violent communist politics to peaceful constructive programme in rural society.
Birbhum through initiatives of ST and the role of his group in the district 
Krishak Committee\textsuperscript{144}, it was not in an organizationally predominant position at that time. This could well be the logic that informed PD's approach insofar as he worked together with other leftists at that time.

In this context we may pertinently refer to three reports in DIB file 91/1941 dated 11.2.1939, 12.2.1939 and 22.2.1939 respectively to indicate the nature of PD's political activism\textsuperscript{145}. According to the first report, “The detenus of *Amar Kutir*, Ballavpur are holding ‘Kishan Meetings’ everywhere and delivering objectionable speeches against the British administration and are asking the people not to pay rents to Zamindars or taxes to Union Boards”. The report on 12.2.1939 said that PD led the members of *‘Amar kutir’* to put up an anti-zamindari movement against Golak Behari Ghosh, the then zamindar of Darpasila and the President of Ruppur Union in Bolpur P.S.\textsuperscript{146} This event has also been reported in the political chronicle on the heydays of party formation of CPI in Birbhum.\textsuperscript{147} The DIB report dated 22.2.1939 showed that PD, Ramani Ranjan Ganguli, Kalipada Basistha of *Amar Kutir* were approaching the Santhal coolies of the local rice mills regularly and they

\textsuperscript{144} Source: D.I.B.O File 55/37 as quoted in Amiyo Ghosh's *Jatiya Andolan O Jila Birbhum* (1915-1947), 2000, p-232. Such Krishak committee led by the party was conceived as the nuclei for spreading revolutionary propaganda in the countryside so that with its help it could be possible to take initiative in local peasant struggle.


\textsuperscript{146} We get two different reports on the peasant movement in Darpasila village from the accounts of Prof. Amiyo Ghosh as stated in his book *Jatiyo Andolan O Jilla Birbhum* 1915-’47.

were trying to persuade them to go on strike and not to join the work unless the mill owners increased their daily wages and pay extra for the work done by them after 5 p.m. daily. All these clearly showed the direct nexus of the *Amar Kutir* members, particularly PD’s role in the mobilization of local peasants through multiple and systematic attempts at building up radical collective sentiment against the feudal and imperialist forces. The very nature of this political intervention showed that PD and his associates wanted to develop rural bases of peasant resistance for future action at a greater scale.

No doubt, these activities were confined to small localized pockets, and did not assume the form of wider mass movement. Besides, these areas being contiguous to *Amar Kutir* were strongholds of revolutionaries. Hence, effect of their activities were naturally intense in those areas where political influence, direction and organizational support were available than other parts relatively weaker in organizational terms. But seen from the broader perspective of struggle informed by Marxian understanding it might be argued that activities of PD and his group at *Amar Kutir* in late thirties could not be confined to meeting peasant demands alone. But they tended to address deeper issues by igniting anti-feudal, anti-imperialist consciousness among the lower strata of peasantry at large. In this sense his activities had a larger dimension related to the
organization of anti-feudal, anti-imperialist movements in the countryside.

Under PD the secret preparation for armed struggle brought in certain degree of militancy in the political activities in Birbhum district. This can be inferred from the activities of Ruppur Samya Sadan as indicated in Amiyo Ghose’s book on Bibhum. This indicated a stage of radicalization of youth and peasants’ movements consequent upon the changed political context in the wake of Second World War. According to prof. Amiyo Ghosh, *Amar Kutir* members were divided on the question of support or opposition to Second World War. Kalipada Basistha, Suren Banerjee, Keshab Das and others favoured the line of C.P.I and they parted ways with Communist League members led by PD in early 1940. As a result, the leadership of the *Kutir* fell in the hands of the CLI members. They began vigorous anti-war campaign and ‘secretly carried on anti-war propaganda among the people in the vicinity of Bolpur’. The idea of armed struggle was probably conceived by PD in this context. This became a factor differentiating his position from that of ST. Because nowhere in his writings during this period did ST speak of armed struggle; rather he had concentrated on developing organizational bases in the peasant areas to strengthen the party as well as leftist

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movements.(Manjula Bose). On the contrary, PD perceived the war-torn situation to be an opportune moment for seizing power. This clearly indicated that PD from the beginning of the Marxist phase of his journey adopted a more radical stance than the party leadership on the question of tactics of struggle.

Besides, in the event of armed struggle police repression was bound to affect the organizational activities and their extension to district level. This might be the reason that lay underneath the difference of views between ST and PD in late thirties. So, it was not that the disagreement between ST and PD had surfaced in the second half of 1940s, but the very idea of seizing power through preparation of armed struggle guided PD's activities since late thirties. He was not a routine worker; instead through his dynamic leadership and intervention in local problems, he was able to acquire scope to organize action in his way. Besides, his control over local unit of the party was evident from the support that he enjoyed in his activities in Birbhum. It was crucial in the sense that without support of the local unit it would have been difficult to carry on his overtly radical design.

151 Ibid, p-19
In early 1939 in Nanur, his election as the chairman of the peasants’ conference in Birbhum was a proof of his front-ranking role in peasant problems of the district. It was also a veritable opportunity to use the body as a powerful agency to transmit radical leftist ideas amongst the peasants. Since this Nanur conference was recognized by undivided CPI in its party documents its real political significance was that it was a starter of united peasant movement by the CPI and the CLI in Birbhum. However, this coming together of CPI and CLI in Birbhum did not last long due to political differences between the two parties.

PD had set up the first unit of Bangiya Krishak Sabha on 21st February 1939 in collaboration with Suren Banerjee, Moni Ganguli, Kaipada Basistha, Radhanath Chattaraj, Sailajakanta Mitra and others. A nine-member working committee was constituted in which Sailajakanta Mitra, Satish Mondal and PD were chairman, general secretary and treasurer respectively. It fueled the anti-landlord uprising which started to crystallize in Sadipur village lying close to Amar Kutir in the presence of two hundred peasant representatives. These apart, there are evidences in police reports regarding PD’s involvement in the peasant organization of Birbhum. In a short note on the district krishak organization submitted

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152 However, according to Prof. Amiyo Ghosh, there is no data on Nanur Conference in the DIB record of Birbhum. Based on this finding he said that if such a conference had held at all, it was not a district level peasant conference. Ibid, p-152.


under Birbhum DIB No. 3814 dated 14/08/1943, it was mentioned that the expulsion of PD in July 1940 was the cause of disorganization of the krishak organization under the control of the CLI in that district. All these clearly showed that he occupied a prominent place insofar as the activities of peasant organization in Bibhum from 1938 to 1940 were concerned.

Even before 1938, according to Durga Banerjee, who was a pupil of Suri Vidyasagar College during 1940s and joined the student front of RCPI to participate in different movements, PD had encouraged and arranged finance to send Bhudev Das and Arjun Mondal of Khairasole to the peasant conference held at Patrosayar in Bankura as district representatives of Birbhum. At that time PD was detained under Khairasole police station in Birbhum.\footnote{\textsuperscript{155} In the opinion of Durga Banerjee, the Nanur conference in which PD became the chairman gave a major impetus to the district peasant organization. Its expansion had taken place in a number of villages in the entire district through fund-raising campaigns etc. Even thereafter, in May 1940 PD was re-elected as the chairman of the peasants' conference in Mollarpur\textsuperscript{156}, another remote village in the north-west of Birbhum.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{155} Banerjee, Durga, \textit{Swadhinata samajtantra O Ganatantrer Sangramie Birbhum}, Publisher: Tanushree Banerjee, Sainthia, Birbhum, 1999, p-36.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{156} Ibid, p-38.}
However, this information regarding PD's re-election as chairman in Mollarpur peasant conference provided by Durga Banerjee is problematic. Bharat Jyoti Roychowdhury pointed out that the news of his re-election as chairman in Mollarpur did not get corroborated by the report on the initial stage of party formation in Birbhum as incorporated in the CPI (M) party documents on communist movements in Bengal—*Banglar Communist Andolan Dalil O Prasangik Tathya*, vol. iv, edited by Anil Biswas et al. This debate on facts notwithstanding, PD's role during 1937-40 could be said to have concerned with organizing a communist movement centering on rural base in Birbhum.

In September 1939 when the Second World War broke out and the CLI vigorously opposed the British in the war, PD's role in organizing anti-imperialist movement was evident from his involvement in the activities of *Ruppur Samya Sadan* (hereafter RSS). As the name conveyed, the camp was set up to impart political education and military training to the cadres with the communist objective in view and to spearhead revolutionary struggle in villages. On the basis of data obtained from DIB file 87/1939 prof. Amiyo Ghosh informed that it was started on 17th June, 1940 with twenty members. PD and Ramani Ranjan Ganguli of *Amar Kutir* were conductors of the camp. Quoting the intelligence report contained in DIB file 73/1938 prof. Amiyo Ghosh also mentioned that this volunteer training camp was organized "by the volunteers recruited..."
mostly from amongst the Santhals and Koras and other classes of the village Ruppur and adjoining villages to receive training in *lathi-play*, wrestling and gymnasium etc."\(^{157}\) This intelligence report if read together with another report dated 3/5/1939 of a DIB officer contained in IB file 316-28 Part-I regarding interception of correspondence of a number of suspects including PD, it would appear significant in the sense that these pointed to the social basis of the political struggle that gained momentum in Birbhum under his leadership. It mainly drew the broad masses of local poor tribal and 'the low class people', which showed the class composition of the volunteer corps of RSS.

However, the said report in the DIB file 73/1938 observed that the administration did not fully know the object of the starting of RSS, but it appeared from its mode of work that it had been 'started in furtherance of the subversive activities'. It signified two important points. First, a high degree of secrecy was maintained in the operation and functions of the camp and second, the use of the term 'subversive activities' indicated the political motive of the organizers of the RSS. This got confirmed in the comments of Sailajakanta Mitra, who was one of the members of the executive committee of the RSS. In an interview with prof. Amiyo Ghosh, Sailajakanta Mitra conceded that 'activities of the training camp were carried on with immense concealment. As classes were taken to imbue

the masses with class-consciousness, so training in military techniques was necessary for seizure of power. Hence techniques of pistol-shooting were taught covertly in the camp. It was those trained volunteers with whom a people’s militia was constituted. These indicated that the idea of armed seizure of power was strongly present in PD’s activities in 1939-40.

As a political organizer, probably he had the understanding that radical political struggle could not be sustained in the condition of organizational weakness from which the CLI had suffered. Hence, he and his associates probably thought of floating RSS as an allied organization that would operate locally in strictly secret manner as part of comprehensive preparation for revolutionary programme of communism. It became evident from practical training in firearms which indicated conscious urge on the part of its architects like PD to go for all-out struggle. However, if we follow the line of CLI set by ST we would see that he did not deprecate the choice of violent path in a particular situation. But ST was more interested in the preparation for the revolution that lay in the awakening of the consciousness of the toiling masses through propaganda and field activities. From that angle, PD’s initiative at organizing anti-imperialist movement demonstrated certain proneness to hurry towards

action or armed strike to let loose the forces of revolution, which
differentiated his approach from that of ST.

Unlike ST, who acted as leader of the open front of CLI, PD was inclined
to party’s secret organizational works at local level. It was evident in the
secret, revolutionary nature of the activities of RSS that he had conceived
of. In his book on nationalist revolutionary movements in Birbhum Prof.
Amiyo Ghosh cited the report of the DIB file 87/1939 that “This organ of
the party (CLI) advocated spread of anti-British feelings amongst the
masses and incited the subordinate police and military ranks against the
government and encouraged sabotaging of workshops and formation of
National Militia, so as to seize powers of administration.”159 This
suggested that RSS was not simply an instrument of subversion and
sabotage against the government, but PD and his group envisaged it as
the organ of focused struggle for communism and anti-imperialism.

The CLI in its second conference in early part of 1940 changed its name
to the Communist Party of India (hereafter CPI-ST, i.e. Communist Party
of India led by Saumyendranath Tagore to differentiate it from main
CPI).160 This conference meeting just after the outbreak of the Second
World War provided an analytical view of the causes of the ‘Second

159Ibid, p-20.
160 Bhattacharya, Buddhadeva, *RCPI on Gandhi and Gandhism* in *Society and Change*, vol. X, No3,
Oct-Dec, 1995, p-13. However, Prof. Bhattacharya abstained from mentioning the year of the second
conference of the CLI. The data of holding the the second conference in early 1940 has been taken
from Baneswar Saikia’s book *Bharatar Biplabi Communist Party: Gathan Aru Gatidhara* published
from Assam in 2003, p-11.
Imperialist War’. Unlike Roy group and the official CPI, CPI-ST did not consider that the nature of the Second World War had undergone any qualitative transformation due to German aggression on the Soviet Russia on 21st June 1941. The CPI-ST emphasized that in their opinion though the government of Soviet Russia still retained the Soviet form, in content it was no longer a genuinely people’s government. Hence, the entry of Soviet government in the war (or attack on it) would not alter the character of the war necessitating change in the party’s policy. As such, the political line adopted at the second conference of the party led it to draw ‘the masses on to the path of an imminent and decisive struggle

161 According to the discussion in the special issue of Red Front, Vol.4, No.1, March 1943, the entanglement of Soviet Russia did not effectuate any change in the character of the War. To quote “it is no wonder and not beyond any speculation that the imperialist countries will attempt to have intervention to destroy Soviet Russia...and according to Lenin, “We are living not merely in a state but in a system of states and it is inconceivable that the Soviet Republic should continue to exist for a long period side by side with imperialist states. Ultimately one or the other must conquer. Meanwhile a number of clashes between the Soviet Republic and the bourgeois states is inevitable”(Collected Works-Lenin). Anyway, due to omissions and commissions, today, Soviet is entangled in the present war. But the cry...of India’s pretended heirs of Marxism-Leninism or more accurately the Maxwell Boys with quack phrases “strengthen the war effort to save the Soviet” or the like as Soviet happens to be the partner(?) of Allies, is a pure nuisance. Because Soviet cannot be saved and protected without the “Joint efforts of the proletarians of several countries.” Hence, the support of our revolution by the workers of all countries and still more the victory of these workers in at least several countries is a necessary condition for completely guaranteeing the first victorious country against attempts at intervention, necessary condition for the final victory of Socialism. So this position leads us to think, unlike the Churchillian product viz. Joshi-Group or Roy-Group, the victory of socialism by the efforts of a single country is impossible or absurd(in a sense that it is being threatened by the cordon of Imperialist or Capitalist Gangsters) unless victory of revolution in a number of other countries takes place. Naturally, it stands as an essential factor to crush imperialism from within in an opportune moment when imperialism is weakened due to its entanglement in war...This fight is, at present, for two-fold purposes, i.e. (1) to achieve victory of proletarian revolution; (2) to save the Soviet Russia...But the muddle headed or incorrigible opportunists, like National-Frontists—now, the “People’s war” Group and the Royists, financed and protected by the Imperialists in India do not or fail to find the revolutionary significance which they cannot avoid of course, in the Indian Masses march towards “Self-determination of Nations” and want to bring in the kingdom of reason and of eternal justice through the British Imperialism Cum American, which is as far as heaven from the earth and so their cry to save Soviet-Russia is as futile as to reach moon with dwarfish hand.”(p-6)
against British imperialism and its native servitors, the Indian bourgeoisie, feudal princes and the landlords.\textsuperscript{163}

In keeping with this overall stand of the party, PD's activities during this period reflected militant anti-war attitude. It was evident from the notes on his activities as contained in the Intelligence Branch file 316-28. It states, "In spite of restriction on his movements under the DI Rules in September 1939 the subject (i.e. PD) continued his activities, spreading anti-war propaganda and exhorted the CLI members to prepare for a revolution, became the President of the anti-war propaganda committee formed in the district of Birbhum in the same year, was responsible for the publication and circulation of highly prejudicial party leaflets in 1940-41 exhorting the people not to help the British in their war efforts..."

All these showed why the district administration did not allow him to carry on his political activities. In July 1940 the District Magistrate of Birbhum under section 26 of the Defence of India Rules ordered PD to leave the district for his activities were considered prejudicial to the maintenance of public order and efficient prosecution of the war.\textsuperscript{164} But his connection with the political movements in Birbhum did not sever completely. It was evident in his activities in this district during the Quit


\textsuperscript{164} See the externment order issued by the District Magistrate of Birbhum in Amiyo Ghosh's book \textit{Jatiyo Andolan O Jila Birbhum}, Bolpur, 2000, p-212. But the date given in the said order was 9\textsuperscript{th} July, 1940, whereas in the IB file 316/28 we find that the order was served to PD on 15.07.1940.
India Movement in August 1942 and the famine in Bengal in mid-1943.\textsuperscript{165}

Thereafter, in the guise of a Muslim he started working at Kidderpore area among the seamen for carrying out anti-imperialist campaign.\textsuperscript{166} It may be pointed out that the CLI was able to build up a support base among the dock and transport workers in Matiabruz and Kidderpore-Watgonj areas in late 1930s. Therefore, it became suitable place for him to work from this area while keeping close contacts with the party’s headquarter. 'But when he found that the anti-war campaign was losing its intensity he managed to enlist in the Indian army to learn the techniques of modern warfare and for fomenting, if possible, rebellion therein. The idea was to provide back-up political support to the aggrieved peasants and workers for the organization of rebellion. Since organizationally CLI was too small at that time to be able to organize any mass movement, this probably led PD to take that decision.'\textsuperscript{167} Prafulla Gupta in his book \textit{Comrade Pannalal Dasgupta} (1953) has supported this view.\textsuperscript{168} Although it was doubtful whether a mass revolution could be organized in this way, we find that the party leadership, specially, ST had similar plans at that time. Quoting a secret report Somendranath Bose

\textsuperscript{165} Dey, Amalendu, \textit{History of Quit India Movement in Bengal}, Paschimbanga Bangla Academy, Kolkata, 2003, p-296-297.
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid, p-5
stated in his book *Saumyendranath Tagore and Dinendranath Tagore* (1984) that just after the conclusion of the students’ conference in Lucknow on 30th October 1941 ST told that unless splits and fissures could be created within the army, the possibility of revolution being the common aim of all communists could not be realized.\(^{169}\) Therefore, PD might be acting under the direction of ST at that time.

PD remained in army for two months and within this short period he acquired popularity among both ordinary soldiers and officers.\(^{170}\) It proved that he had a pleasing personality and competence in accomplishing daring tasks. Soon, however, he was detected there and discharged on adverse police report. It was evident from the letter dated 28.01.1942 written by the then Deputy Commissioner of Secret Branch, Calcutta to the Officer Commanding, No 2 Training Battalion, IAOC, Jabalpore. There it was categorically stated that “reliable information has been received that one Pannalal Dasgupta S/O late Benode Lal Dasgupta of Kuarpur, Palong, Faridpur and of Calcutta has left recently for Jabalpore after securing a job in the Rations Department of a Combatant Regiment. He is connected with terrorist and communist activities and has been reported to have joined the Army to create dissatisfaction among the Indian soldiers. He is definitely unsuitable for

\(^{169}\) Bose, Somendranath, *Saumyendranath Tagore and Dinendranath Tagore*, Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Kolkata, Magh, 1391(i.e. 1984), p-79-80.

employment. I suggest he be discharged immediately." It is further learnt from the note sheet attached to the same file that “On his discharge on adverse police report from Jabalpur he was shadowed up to Howrah station on 25.2.1942 when he was lost sight of. He has been moving in hiding since then with different assumed names and has been organizing the RCPI groups and supervising their works in different provinces.”

Thus he went into hiding in 1942 to elude the British Government’s desperate attempts to arrest him while continuing his revolutionary political activities.

During 1940s PD’s political activities were characterized with secrecy till his arrest in July 1951. While his activities in the national revolutionary phase were cloaked in secrecy, the Marxist idea of class struggle leading to violent eruption at a matured stage required organizational preparation to guide the revolution. This might act as an ideological influence on him so far as his secret engagement in pursuit of left revolutionary struggle was concerned. The need for secrecy became clear in the practical realm when ST got imprisoned at the beginning of the Second World War.

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172 IB File 316/28, see Extract of the Notesheet, page vii.
173 Sudarshan Chattopadhyay, a veteran spokesperson of RCPI in his prolific introduction to Saumyendranath’s writings anthologized as *Against the Stream*, vol. ii, 1984, mentioned, “immediately on the declaration of the war he on behalf of his party issued a policy statement which was published as a pamphlet entitled ‘Imperialist War and India’ in September 1939. In it Saumyendranath pointed out that there was no difference in content between the British and the French imperialism on the one hand and Fascism on the other. It was therefore the duty of the communists to mobilize the masses under the slogan ‘War against the War’ and utilize the present crisis of the imperialists to push forward the struggle for Indian independence. As soon as the pamphlet was issued it was banned and Saumyendranath was arrested under the Defence of India Rules”. p-ix
This affected the RCPI to a considerable extent. Even then its activities in different mass fronts, workers’ organization did not stop.\(^{174}\) But difficulties got multiplied when other important leaders were apprehended. For instance, the then secretary of RCPI namely Sudhir Dasgupta was first arrested in Bankipur and after he had fled from the police escort in the train was rearrested from Calcutta on 2\(^{nd}\) November, 1942. All these indicated how much repression and persecution RCPI had to undergo for its anti-war and anti-imperialist stance at that time.

It was during this crisis period when PD assumed the charge of party’s general secretary towards the end of 1942.\(^{175}\) However, according to comrade Nirmal Bhandari, a veteran leader of RCPI, PD was appointed as secretary by the party’s highest organization, the Central Committee (i.e.CC) in 1942-43 when ST was in jail. Comrade Bhandari justified the choice because “PD was an impeccably dynamic leader. He was the main collector of men, money and arms, moving continuously from place to place for organizational works, and one who also had theoretical insight.”\(^{176}\) So, all these combined with the veil of secrecy with which he managed to move at large, inspiring the political workers, organizing and leading them to action, definitely influenced the decision of the CC to appoint him as the secretary of the party. Faced with the difficult time at

\(^{174}\) Bose, Manjula, *Saumyendranath Tagore Karme O Manone*, Tagore Research Institute, Kolkata, 2007, p-120.
\(^{175}\) Ibid, p-150
\(^{176}\) Interview with RCPI comrade Nirmal Bhandari at Dum Dum party office on 14.05.2011.
the fag-end of 1942 when many RCPI leaders were put behind the bars for the declared policy of uncompromised opposition to the ‘imperialist war’, the party desperately required an organizer to fill the vacuum. PD’s appointment as the secretary of the RCPI happened in that context.

PD’s participation in the August movement in 1942 was continuation of the Marxist phase of his political career. If we put his activities against the backdrop of the critical analysis made by RCPI of this movement, then we could possibly gauge his political attitude to the popular outburst. ST wrote in his characteristic style in Revolution and Quite India published in Red Front, October 1942, that the Indian national congress contemplated the movement as “a short and swift one.” To quote ST, “the bourgeoisie wants only a pressure movement, not a revolutionary movement.” He opined that spontaneous, atomized and non-centralised character of the movement was deliberately maintained so that it could fizzle out quickly and did not transform into a revolutionary process.

Against these, PD’s views were manifest in one of his booklets Bharate Samyavadi Andoloner Dhara (i.e. Currents of communist movements in India) published in 1950. He said, “In our opinion there could be no cessation or intermission of the revolt that broke out in 1942. That revolt

177 Tagore, Saumyendranath, Against the Stream, vol. ii (edited by Sudarshan Chattopadhyay), published by Miss Sarojini Hutheesing on behalf of the Saumyendranath Memorial Committee, Shahibag, Ahmedabad, 1984, p-122
178 Polit-Bureau, RCPI, Historical Development of the Communist Movement in India, 1944, p-57.
had to be extended and transformed into a massive revolutionary class struggle. Also India’s national freedom struggle should be given a complete shape with the culmination of successive conflicts in socialist revolution. Hence, as Marxists, our participation in the 1942 movement could not be equated with following the Congress line; rather it meant to join the revolutionary currents inherent at the heart of India.” This made clear that while RCPI joined the Quit India movement, its objective was completely different from that of Congress because RCPI envisaged the mass upsurge as having revolutionary potential which could be mobilized for launching ceaseless struggle for the achievement of national independence as well as an equalitarian social order.

Thus, PD’s role in the Quit India movement was integrally related to the political philosophy of RCPI and its stance with regard to the movement. At that time he was not only the secretary of the Central Committee of RCPI but also the prime organizer of its activities. The extent of his activism was adduced by Prof. Amiyo Ghosh in his study on political movements in Birbhum. Based on the DIBO File 87/1939 Prof. Ghosh mentioned that PD played a key role in transmitting the thought of organizing sabotage activities which was decided upon in a secret meeting of the Congress Socialists, Forward Blocists, and those of Revolutionary Socialist Party and the Communist League held at

\[^{179}\text{Dasgupta, Pannalal, } Fannalal Dasgupta Rachana Sangraha, }\text{Nabopatro Prakashan, Calcutta, 1999. See }\text{Bharate Samyavadi Andoloner Dhara in p-102.}\]
Calcutta.\textsuperscript{180} This indicated that during the movement he worked tirelessly to spread the conflagration to different theatres and played a pivotal role in amalgamating with other leftist parties for committing various sabotage activities. This got confirmed from the notes in police report that “During the Congress movement in 1942 he combined with the RSP and the Forward Bloc and worked with a destructive programme. He procured dynamite sticks which he supplied to the Bolpur CLI group for blowing up railway bridge and participated in setting fire to Bolpur Railway station. During the period he contacted the troops in Assam front and managed to secure from them some military rifles, cartridges and a large quantity of explosive substances. In 1943 he incited the CLI members of Birbhum district to loot paddy and rice from local rice mills. After the arrest of important leaders of the party in 1943 he assumed leadership of the entire CLI organization in Bengal and other provinces.”\textsuperscript{181}

All these were significant from two angles. First, it revealed the nature of his active involvement in the August movement. But more importantly it revealed the divergence of views between ST and PD. While the former sharply criticized the CSP, the Forward Bloc and the RSP, in one word

\textsuperscript{180} Ibid, p-188.

\textsuperscript{181} IB File 316-28 (PF), Serial No. 73/1928, p-2204a-2. See notes on the activities of PD alias Bara Babu, alias Narayan Gupta, alias Naren Jana and alias Barda.
‘the Congress-Leftists’\textsuperscript{182}, for their belief in the ‘left manoeuvre of the Congress organisation’, the latter, i.e. PD viewed things differently. To quote his observation from Prafulla Gupta’s book \textit{Comrade Pannalal Dasgupta} (1953), “At the present moment the Congress Socialist Party or the Revolutionary Communist Party is not the issue. The point at issue at the present moment is to draw those forces to the revolutionary side by joining hands with any group whoever aims to attack British imperialism. Today organisation is not the real issue; the need of the hour is to tear asunder the imperialist power by repeated strikes”\textsuperscript{183} It proved that PD got over the confines of partisan politics and co-operated with the followers of different leftist parties. It was evident from his role as part of the group which was formed by the leaders of the CSP namely Jaya Prakash Narayan, Aruna Asaf Ali, Dr. Ram Monohar Lohia, Achuta Pattawardhan and Ashok Mehta to organize and guide the struggle. PD was in charge of the eastern zone comprising undivided Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Assam.\textsuperscript{184}

\textsuperscript{182} See Saumyendranath’s criticisms of the CSP, Forward Bloc and the RSP in his contemporary writings, specially \textit{Revolution and Quite India} published in Red Front, October, 1942 and compiled in volume II of \textit{Against the Stream}, Saumyendranath Memorial Committee, Shahibag, Ahmedabad, 1984, p-114-117.

\textsuperscript{183} Gupta, Prafulla, \textit{Comrade Pannalal Dasgupta}, Naya Duniya, Calcutta, 1953, p-43.

\textsuperscript{184} Ghosh, Amiyo, \textit{Jatiya Andolan O Jila Birbhum (1915-47)}, Granthanir, Bolpur, 2000, p-17-18. Prof. Ghosh stated this on the basis of the essay on PD published in the weekly magazine called \textit{Maurakshi} on September 12, 1962. Also find this information in \textit{Amar Dekha Pannalal Dasgupta} by Ananda Sen, 2004, p-6 and the election pamphlet \textit{Pannalal Dasgupta} by Prafulla Gupta, Yr?, p-6. However, there was no such note that PD was the zonal chief of the secret directorate set up during the August movement in IB files 316/28, 316/28(Four parts), 316/28(Five parts) kept in the State Archives Branch, Govt. of WB except the reference of the tip off regarding PD’s contacts with different revolutionary activists and leaders of political parties including the CSP, Forward Bloc, RSP etc which had been already mentioned.
Secondly, the aforesaid police report amply showed that PD was the mastermind of many sabotage activities. Under his direction in that period RCPI activities assumed an increasingly clandestine form. His rise in the party hierarchy and his assumption of leadership of the party around November-December 1942 might be reckoned the turning point for the RCPI. It was because henceforth the secret wing of RCPI and its functions became predominant in comparison to the activities of its mass fronts. Naturally this created a lop-sided approach which did not bid well for RCPI. As Sudarshan Chattopadhyay, a veteran theoretician of RCPI, who belonged to ST’s camp, frankly criticized the then leadership of the party for failure to implement radical programme, “because they did not have the capacity required for revolutionary work among the masses. Thus the leadership was forced to select the policy of terroristic sabotage. Accordingly, the Party went underground, started collecting arms, good, bad or indifferent, and converted the major part of the Party members remaining outside the prison into a ‘secret detachment’. Even the Red Front ceased publication. Contacts with masses were completely cut off.”

These indicated a state of crisis in RCPI because its contacts with the masses were utterly neglected due to more emphasis being laid on secret method of functioning. So, his radicalism shorn of mass orientation

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turned into a hollow concept in practice and evoked serious criticisms from within the party ranks.

However, PD’s dedication to the cause of Indian revolution could be shown from his penchant to keep up the spirit raised by the August movement in order to transform it into a protracted war.\textsuperscript{186} He held in the book \textit{Bharate Samyavadi Andoloner Dhara} (1950), “Therefore, with the cessation of the August movement by the Congress or the Congress Socialists or the Forward Bloc, our struggle could not halt; rather in the context of grave political crisis and intensifying situation of world revolution the truly uncompromising nature of our struggle should be made clearer, firmer and more rapidly growing. When talking of the inseparability of the national liberation from the socialist revolution that until its advent it would be impossible to get rid of imperialism and realize freedom in the real sense, we had talked of the socialist approach to the struggle for freedom in the colonial states.”\textsuperscript{187} It shows his sincere activism and conviction in the possibility of bringing about revolution through continuation of radical line of actions. Also by linking the anti-colonial struggles to the rapidly developing conditions of world revolution, he underscored the underlying dimension of socialist internationalism that invariably characterized these struggles. This


\textsuperscript{187} Ibid, p-102.
naturally meant that India’s fight for emancipation from the yoke of British imperialism was an act of internationalism which could not be seen in isolation from the international socialist movement. But this task was incommensurate given the limited organization, restricted mass base and resources of RCPI. So, what probably led him to formulate such an ambitious programme of stretching the struggle was the idea of rallying together the like-minded leftist forces for developing a united front of exploited classes, which was absolute preliminary of continuing the struggle unto a veritable revolution. He called it “Red Front.”

Here it may be mentioned that “For the CPI the war was an opportunity to further the cause of Indian revolution. It dubbed the war as imperialist in nature having no connection with democracy…” So, on this point there was no difference between the RCPI and the CPI, except the fact that internationally the CPI was tied to the Communist International and domestically, its attitude was more or less pro-Congress. On both these counts the RCPI had strong reservations. PD stated in *Bharate Samyabadi Andoloner Dhara*, “The working class has to be kept free from the bourgeois leadership and also the peasantry has to be weaned away from the bourgeois clutch. This would be an impossible task unless the Communist party divorced itself from the Congress...The Communist

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188 Ibid, p-93.
party however did not listen to our talk. Instead it got itself submerged into the quagmire of class-cooperation and sterile reformism of congress politics...In the meantime Germany waged war against Russia. At this critical turn of the situation when the CPI was bewildered to decide its next step, it was informed by the Communist party of Britain that it was no longer a war against imperialism, but people’s war. Now on they would be a party fighting on the side of the England, France, America and Russia. Though it appeared strange as to how with the attack on Russia the entire imperialist front had turned into a people’s front, however, on receipt of the instruction from abroad, there occurred a rapid switchover of its stance from treating the war as ‘imperialist’ one to ‘people’s war’. Following this line, the CPI did not take part in the mass uprisings in August 1942. As the unity of left parties could not be achieved on the issue of mass movement, PD criticized the CPI for their pro-British attitude and later also for their support of the Muslim League’s demand of Pakistan in his booklet *Bharate Samyavadi Andoloner Dhara*. 

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191 While the official line of the CPI was pro-war and anti-Quit India Movement, it was a fact that many of its party members supported, and even took leading role in the Quit India movement in different parts of India.

192 To quote PD, “In the name of Lenin and Stalin, the (official) communists moved to put into effect that imperialist stratagem which had been in vogue for dividing the Indian masses into Hindus and Muslims through the Muslim League. See *Bharate Samyavadi Andoloner Dhara* in PD’s collected works, 1999, p-95.
It is not a fact, however, that during 1942-44 the CPI completely abandoned the goals of complete independence and class struggle, and that it had altogether gone over to the British vis-à-vis the national liberation movement. As Prof. Utpal Ghosh in his research work on the CPI and India’s freedom struggle from 1937 to 1947 has shown on the basis of his study of documents that “the CPI was well aware of the true nature of British imperialism and repeatedly pointed out that co-operation with the British was temporary...” So, while it was a ‘mistake’ on the part of the CPI “to keep away from supporting the spontaneous rebellion” of the Indian masses in August 1942, “It is a truism that the ban on the CPI was removed and the party was legalized by the government in July 1942 in lieu of confirmed assurances of help in the war efforts”. Its policy was never ‘opportunistic’, and ‘treacherous’. All these were

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It is a fact that while the CPI had been declared legal on July 22, 1942, prominent communists like Dange, Ghide, Bharadwaj et al were in jail even in September, 1942. It explodes the myth that the communists were playing the role of government agents.

In *Bharate Samyavadi Andoloner Dhara* PD snubbed the CPI in this way for their anti-movement and pro-British policy during and after the 1942 movement, p-95, PD’s *Rachana-Sangraha*, 1999. Even in Red Front, March 1942, it was stated that “the vendors of people’s war ideology are trying to bring about that psychological change (i.e. from hostility to co-operation) in the attitude of the Indian masses towards British imperialism. That will mean nothing else but weakening, disintegrating and disrupting the revolutionary mass front for India’s independence. That amounts to a treachery to India’s revolution.” Quoted in *Historical Development of Communist Movement*, 1944, p-48. But the present researcher has the feeling while going through literature on RCPI that neither PD nor the rest of the RCPI leadership delved deeper into the predicament of the CPI when the fascist forces invaded Russia. The RCPI leadership was swayed by the apparent surface reality of the pro-war turn in the stance of the CPI, and as such, it failed to arrive at a proper understanding that the CPI did not surrender their ultimate revolutionary anti-imperialist aims and lines of thought. The stance taken by the CPI vis-à-vis the national movement in 1942 has to be viewed in the context of the deteriorating war situation after the attack on Russia by the fascist forces. It was because Russia’s eventual defeat would have meant the virtual destruction of socialism and the international working class movement. Therefore, it was not question of Russia per se, but more importantly saving the first socialist state of the world for the sake of international movements for socialism. Seen from that angle, the views of the RCPI with regard to the CPI were over-critical. But in all fairness, it can be said that the criticisms of RCPI seemed to have
probably not beyond the knowledge of the then RCPI leadership, including PD. Yet, their attitude to the CPI was harsh and also biased to a considerable extent.\textsuperscript{196} 

In the circumstances when the CPI withdrew from the movement, the revolutionary communists, according to PD, had to plunge into the 1942 movement with red flags in hand to save communism.\textsuperscript{197} But in undertaking the policy of unilateral fight without taking sufficient cognizance of the adverse situation of government repression, the fragmented nature of the Indian left, and the very small size of RCPI and its little strength to counter the mammoth influence of the Congress on the masses, PD's idea of organizing a revolution through certain hits and blows and transforming those activities into a full-fledged civil war was nothing but lack of his matured political vision.

\textsuperscript{196} For example, in the manner in which RCPI directly charged the CPI for guilt of collusion with the British imperialist government and leveled tarnishing allegations against it for receiving money for propagating support to the imperialist war or playing the role of informers of police reflected hyper-critical attitude of RCPI to the CPI. For a glimpse of such critical portrayal of the acts of the CPI see pages 48-9 of \textit{Historical Development of Communist Movement} (1944) published by the Polit-Bureau, C.C. RCPI. However, it is true that in a manifesto issued in September, 1942, the CPI condemned the August movement as being an act of sabotage, and criticized those taking part in it as "fifth columnists" and "agents and promoters of anarchy", which deeply hurt the revolutionary sentiment and nationalist opinion in the country. L.P. Sinha in his \textit{Left-Wing in India} (1965) said "In this there also entered the whispering campaign that the Party was being financed by the Government in its propaganda activities." p-522. So, the vilification of the CPI by the RCPI has to be understood in this context.

\textsuperscript{197} Dasgupta, Pannalal, \textit{Bharate Samyavadi Andloner Dhara}, as incorporated in Pannalal Dasgupta \textit{Rachana Sangraha}, Nabapatra Prakashan, Kolkata, p-95.
However, it was not true that he had no idea about the limitation of political power of RCPI and lack of revolutionary thinking in the country, which he expressed in *Bharate Samyavadi Andoloner Dhara*. He justified the bold revolutionary line taken by RCPI when other left parties were not inclined to aggressive programme. Hence, the need of unilateral fight arose ‘to direct every unrest towards the path of revolution’ and ‘call strike on the basis of party’s own strength’ so as ‘to pull partial success on the course of revolution’. Therefore, PD’s activities at that time need to be understood in the context of the then critical situation and the line of onward struggle taken by RCPI in response to it.

It was at this stage Bengal entered the most tragic period of its history when the famine of 1943 engulfed the province as a result of the “denial” and “scorched earth” policies pursued by the government most vigorously in Bengal. The man-made famine was a deliberate political and war ploy of the British who fell victim of Japanese invasion in the far east and hence grew afraid of its imminent attack on India, specially because of the lurking possibility that Azad Hind Fouj led by Subhas Chandra Bose might cross into Bengal. Hence, the panicky government began to take away all food and other resources from Bengal without considering its

198 Ibid, p-109
199 However, according to H. N. Mitra, the editor of The Indian Annual Register, 1947, vol. 1, this scarcity of food that caused the famine in Bengal during 1943-44 had been created by the cooperation of the British bureaucracy with the Indian trading classes. He wrote drawing on the report of the Famine Commission and the report of the Bengal Administration Reorganisation Committee that both the reports exposed all the dishonesties that had engulfed Bengal. The Indian Annual Register, 1947, vol. 1, (1990) p-92.
adverse repercussions on common people. Consequently when the famine known as *Panchaser Monnontor* (so called for it occurred in Bengali calendar year 1350) broke out, PD along with his associates in ‘*Amar kutir*’ began running public kitchens in different villages in Birbhum. He also directed the members of the RCPI to join the relief work in collaboration with the Bengal Relief Committee.\(^{200}\)

Not just relief works, rather a militant mood could be noticed in PD’s contemporary political thought and activities. It was evident in his propaganda campaign against government’s crop collection in Birbhum in 1943-44. In this connection he also criticized the CPI. To quote him, “Although it (i.e. CPI) poured scorn on the black-marketers and hoarders, it did not initiate any movement against those unscrupulous contractors and traders who were involved in black-marketing, lest that could turn into an anti-government campaign. So, when the famine decimated the lives of millions of men and women, they did not go on strike or put up any strong protest against the government.”\(^{201}\)

In the light of the lessons of the 1942 movement PD stressed on forming panchayets as revolutionary organizations in every neighbourhood following the line of ‘Commune’ or ‘Soviets’ of the November Revolution in Russia. This he thought would be an important stage and


\(^{201}\) Translated in English from *Bharata Samyavadi Andloner Dhara* in PD’s Collected works, p-97
programme of socialist revolution. A point to be noted here is that at that time ST also wrote an article entitled *Onward From ’42* published in Red Front in March, 1943. In this article ST mentioned four distinct facets of organizational task in terms of Panchayets, i.e. the organ of power of the masses in revolutionary action, *Ganavahini*, or people’s militia, Revolutionary Committees as the direct medium between the masses and the revolutionary party and the Revolutionary Communist Party, the party of the toiling masses championing the teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin. So, this was the thought of the highest leadership of RCPI.

Similarly, PD wrote an important booklet called *Biplabi Sayavadi Dal o Panchayar* (i.e. Revolutionary Communist Party and Panchayet). In it he stressed on forming Panchayets keeping in view the immediate task of hastening socialist revolution since capitalism of the day had become bankrupt. He said, “Wherever you work—in factory, barrack, wherever you reside—in neighbourhood, slums or village, organize all exploited...

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203 Tagore, Saumyendranath, *against the stream*, vol. II, Saumyendranath Memorial Committee, Shahibag, Ahmedabad, 1984. See the article *Onward From 42*, p-130-1.

204 *Biplabi Sayavadi Dai O Punhayet* was written by PD under the pseudonym Narayan Gupta. There was no publication year printed in the booklet. It was published by Prafulla Gupta, 6 Khudiram Basu Road, Calcutta. The booklet was printed by Shri Baladeb Roy of New Kamala Press at 5/2 Kesab Sen Street, Calcutta. However, from the reading of this booklet it appears that it was written after November 1945 in the aftermath of the historic march of millions of people towards Dalhousie Square. The entire booklet of 36 pages was divided into seven parts.
masses in Panchayets and constitute swaraj in your own Panchayet.” Clearly he conceived of Panchayets as the institutional receptacle of rebellious discontent of the masses and transposed Panchayets as counter-government of people in the intermediate stage of revolution. In PD’s view panchayets would be embodiment of people’s collective strength, not the seats of partisan purpose. There was no contradiction between the panchayets and revolutionary party. To quote him, “Party’s relations to this class organization are same as the relation between sugar and sweetness. The party has educated the people in formulating their opinion, it stood as vanguard of popular struggle and it has been trying to establish people’s raj. The party is made up of those elements of the crowd who played outstanding role in mass struggle, made sacrifices and marched forward enthusiastically. The test of panchayets lies in selecting these elements, and hence there could be no conflict between party and panchayet.” As a revolutionary party helps in organizing amorphous masses, in PD’s view, the panchayets or revolutionary council would be an instrument of collective struggle, an organ of asserting people’s power based on class struggle to usher in social transformation. Furthermore, he stressed on the need of having ‘a volunteer force that would be required to undergo training for self-defence as a means to prevent the backlash of imperialist counter-violence and also one that

205 Ibid, see the first untitled page of the booklet.
would undertake the task of disciplining the crowd\textsuperscript{207}. If all these are read along with the exhortations in the leaflet \textit{Consolidate the Victory}\textsuperscript{208} published by RCPI dated 23\textsuperscript{rd} November 1945, asking people to “Organize the organs of fight and the organs of power”, thus hinting at panchayets and urging to “organise small fighting squads”, it would be amply clear that at that time PD strove towards formation of panchayets as radical organization for the fight against the imperialists and their collaborators. Under his stewardship and relentless efforts, panchayets were set up by organizing peasants, workers, miners and sailors in various pockets of 24 parganas, Howrah, Birbhum, Murshidabad, Jessore, Khulna, Asansol, Tatanagar, Jharia, Dibrugar, Goalpara, Sibsagar, Gowhati, Bombay (now Mumbai), Ahmedabad and other places.\textsuperscript{209} This suggests that in a broader perspective he was interested in extending and disseminating socialist revolutionary current to a number of small strategic spots. The idea was to transform the flicker of revolutionary action at one pocket into a rapid fire in other places.

In 1945-46 one significant event in his political life was his meeting with Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948). Though there is no mention of such meeting in the records of the Intelligence Branch, we find its reference in both Prafulla Gupta’s book \textit{Comrade Pannalal Dasgupta} (p-\textsuperscript{207}\textsuperscript{207} \textsuperscript{208} \textsuperscript{209} Ibïd, 30-1. This leaflet is contained in the IB file 250 B-45 RCPI, Serial No. 237, p-6. Gupta, Prafulla, \textit{Pannalal Dasgupta}, the pamphlet, Bolpur, Yr?, p-7.)
17-37) and Ananda Sen’s *Amar Dekha Pannalal Dasgupta* (i.e. Pannalal Dasgupta in my eyes, p-8-9). Prafulla Gupta rather specifically mentioned that when absconding PD met Gandhi twice.²¹⁰ Tough a staunch believer in radical Marxist path to revolution, he met Gandhi to discuss about the political situation of the country. According to Prafulla Gupta, PD wrote the chapter on Mahatma Gandhi in his book *Chetana Prerona O Sanghat* after meeting Gandhi probably for the second time. The time of release of this publication is very important which indicates that PD completed its writing in January 1948. This was shortly before the assassination of Gandhi on January 30, 1948.²¹¹ To quote PD, “Gandhi’s impact on millions of people of the country is quite evident. They turn up in huge numbers to see Gandhi but without having any intent to accept his teachings.²¹² It is a strangely paradoxical phenomenon...Although Gandhi created the possibility of an awakening in the minds of this vast multitude, ultimately he failed in his attempt to usher in any real improvement or permanent awakening.” Then PD said, “Gandhiji is the meeting point of two mutually opposite sides, both loyal to him—the rich

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²¹¹ In *Chetana Prerona O Sanghat* PD wrote that shortly after completion of writing this book the world was shocked by the most vile act of murder of Gandhiji by Nathuram.p-15, *Rachana Sangraha*.
²¹² Even in *Revolutionary Gandhi*, the English translation of his much cited work *Gandhi Gabesana* PD said, “We glorify the name of Gandhiji, but fear suffering, and avoid following his teachings.” But in the very next sentence his saying brought out the appreciative tone in his attitude to the ideas of Gandhi. To quote PD, “We fail to realize that the only way to save ourselves from slow self-destruction would be to try the great Gandhian experiment once more and endeavour to make his dream come true.”(PD's *Revolutionary Gandhi*, Translated by K. V. Subrahmonyan, Earth Care, Kolkata, 2011, p-437) It clearly showed PD’s assessments of Gandhi’s ideas during his study of the major works on Gandhi.
and the poor. The poor hold him in respect for the very reason against which the rich regard him to be their respectful ally. The poor want Gandhiji to put an end to the system of exploitation, while the affluent class reckons him to be the protector of their interests... If Gandhiji could stand by the side of the public alone, his gospels could be successful. But in a bid to stand for both the sides he has been serving as the chief preacher and propagator of status-quo-ism. Hence his fight for principles and moral callings has been completely defeated."213 This bears ample testimony of PD’s critical appraisal of Gandhi’s role from Marxist perspective.

The point to be noted here is that PD did not reject Gandhi’s ideas altogether, but referred to the weakness of his ideas to rid society of the vested interests and reactionary elements. In practice, there were deviations when popular fury against the oppressive imperialist rule led non-violent movements lean towards militancy. Though, it would be unjust to put the responsibility of all these on Gandhi. There were cases when different sections of the masses reinterpreted Gandhi’s Swaraj to suit their own purposes. So, PD’s critical observation that the masses did not accept Gandhi’s teachings was not fully justified. In fact, what happened was undue change of the basic intent of Gandhi’s ideas in the way these were often received by the masses. So, there was a tension

between the Gandhian tenets and their public dimensions and practical aberrations for which Gandhi at times had to engage himself in fasts as a mark of moral protest. But this did not mean that Gandhi lost his moral battle. In fact, the values of truth, penance and purity of conduct are ideationally eternal. Thus viewed, intrinsic worth of Gandhi’s ideas could not be refuted nor could these be reduced to a philosophy of status-quo-ism.

As a Marxist, PD’s appreciation of Gandhian ideals was based on the premise that these could be realized in socialist society alone. He said, “But history will not discard Gandhi’s ideas—peace, truth, and non-violence—would be certainly established in egalitarian society with the abolition of capitalism.”214 It shows that he had respect for Gandhi, who had inspired millions to join non-violent stream of freedom movement, though he had a fundamental difference based on the future vision of society and the means—the form of struggle—to achieve it. While trying to understand Gandhi and his non-violent method of mass mobilisation, which at that time constituted a major stream of anti-imperialist movement in India, PD remained firm in his ideological conviction in the efficacy of socialist revolution.

In his letter dated 20.11.1949 PD categorically stated, “Everybody should have a clear knowledge about both violent and non-violent methods of

struggle.” It means that he was not willing to discard Gandhian non-violent method, but thought that in accordance with contingency, Gandhian non-violent method or armed struggle could be used. He said, “Particularly in our country where there is dearth of firearms we have to take full advantage of non-violent resistance. Now all familiar forms of non-violent struggle and technique of non-cooperation with which people were acquainted in the past should be improved and revived for practical application. Some have anti-revolutionary objection that these techniques smack of Gandhism and hence, reactionary and reformist in content. It is utter stupidity to take such a position. If strike can be used in Marxist programme, then it is meaningless to give up Gandhi’s technique of non-cooperation and satyagraha as non-Marxist. Besides, armed struggle can also turn into reformism and class-cooperation.” He further added, “We would plead for non-payment of government taxes, side by side with strike, peaceful procession etc. We will not exclude these from our agenda, for mass revolution can be started in this way if there is a comprehensive plan at the back of all these. Non-violent and violent forms of struggle cannot be completely separated. With the change of situation necessity of shift from one to the other might arise…”

These bore out PD’s deep revolutionary thinking that sometimes non-violent struggle might be unavoidable for both wrestling independence.  

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from the imperialist power and paving the way for socialism in India. This approach of PD was markedly different from that of ST, who viewed Gandhi and his doctrine from vehemently critical and negative attitude. As Prof. Buddhadev Bhattacharya wrote, “On ideological and political plane Gandhism and revolutionary communism as interpreted and preached by Tagore had no common meeting ground.”

“On the plane of anti-imperialist mass movements called by Gandhi”, however, “the RCPI participated in direct mass actions being guided by the Leninist principle of ‘March separately but strike together’.” Yet, on the whole, ST was unequivocal in his denunciation of Gandhi and his ideas: “Our task in India is to wage war mercilessly against Gandhism on all sides. Gandhism must be completely crushed.” It reflects the magnitude of indictment with which ST rejected the Gandhian principles lock stock and barrel. However, such dismissive attitude to Gandhian ideas does not square with the popular acceptance of Gandhi’s call for movement and fails to take into account tremendous inspiration and sense of empowerment that were generated amongst the masses. From that angle, PD’s critical appraisal of Gandhian ideas was more moderate, pragmatic and acceptable than that of ST.

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217 Quoted by Buddhadev Bhattacharya in his article in *Society and Change*, vol x, No.3, Oct-Dec 1995, p-5.
In November 1945 mass demonstrations and campaigns began in different parts of India in protest against the trial of the INA prisoners: Shahnawaz, Dhillon and others. It provided with fair opportunity for the revolutionary left parties including RCPI to organize actions. The conviction of Captain Abdul Rashid, charged in the 4th INA trial, also created a sensation for it infuriated the Muslim masses. With the intervention of the Muslim League the issue was politicized. From contemporary press reports Sunanda Sanyal and Soumya Basu in their study of the roles of the communists and the Muslim League during India’s partition in *The Sickle and the Crescent* have shown that the impact of Muslim League’s decision to start agitation on this issue in Calcutta was evident in the call for a general strike in which all political organizations were asked to join the demonstrations against the government.\(^{218}\) At that time PD led the RCPI to join the movement since most of the leaders of this party were either in jail, or they were released just before the INA demonstrations. It was evident from the leaflet ‘*Biplaber Bidyut Aloke Kolkata*’ (i.e. Kolkata in the revolutionary flash of thunder-lightning) written by him on the Rashid Ali Day.\(^{219}\) Through this he intended to convey the fighting spirit and solidarity among people against the imperialist British rule which the mass movement in Calcutta

\(^{218}\) Sanyal, Sunanda, and Basu, Soumya, *The Sickle and the Crescent*, Frontpage, Kolkata, 2011, p-128
\(^{219}\) This information has been derived from the undated pamphlet on PD by Prafulla Gupta, p-7. This pamphlet *Biplaber Bidyut Aloke Kolkata* dated 21 & 22 November 1945 is available in the IB file 250-B/45 RCPI (Serial No.237).
had forged. In the said leaflet he extolled the rally as the act of people’s rebellion in Calcutta. To quote from it, “The road to Delhi is the road towards independence. So, marching along the way we have to break the impediment that has been put by the road-block to Dalhousie Square — march to Dalhousie Square.” Noticeably this leaflet contains a reference of another contemporary leaflet issued by the RCPI namely *Consolidate the Victory* dated 23rd November 1945. The content of these seized leaflets found in IB files provides us with vital clue to PD’s intense revolutionary thinking.

At the end of 1946 RCPI met in its fourth annual conference at Udayrampur, Amtala in south 24 Parganas. We shall discuss the thesis adopted at this conference and its impact on PD’s ideas and activities later. But it is pertinent to note here that by this time his reputation as organizer helped him to acquire considerable influence in RCPI. According to IB File 316/28 and 316/28 (PF), as the de-facto leader of RCPI he led the organization in and outside Bengal during 1946-47. During this period he maintained secret and close contacts with other leaders of RCPI and formulated party’s programme and blueprint of its activities. He was even in the Central Committee (CC) and also a member of the Control Commission, which was set up by the CC to settle all party issues, hear appeals and to recommend action against individual

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120 Translated from the copy of the said Bengali leaflet in IB file 250 B-45 RCPI (Serial No.237), p-8.
committed a highway robbery." It made clear that by 1946-47 PD was able to establish his control over the party organization so much that he could act in self-styled manner by rallying a section of party members towards secret preparation for revolutionary uprising. Some in the party, however, believed that the differences which ultimately led to a split in the RCPI in mid-1948 could not be avoided, because ST did not intervene in time. PD by that time had established his control over party organization in a number of places. Police reports concerning RCPI activities in the late 1940s also confirm that PD did it by taking a radical position and talk of revolution that enthused the younger generation.

On February 18, 1946 the country saw a historic strike by the ratings of the Royal Indian Navy which created the possibility of unleashing the forces of revolution. It heralded a new era of joint struggles since at ports where the ratings had gone on strike common people immediately came to their support. This had immense implication from the angle of

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222 Ibid.
223 However, in the opinion of Dipto Bhanu Mitra, presently a member of the Central Committee of RCPI, it was possible for PD to establish his hold over the party through factional activities, which he introduced in the party since 1943-4. The faction of PD was pitted against ST as Shri Mitra told this researcher in a personal interview dated 16/8/2011 that during the Amtala conference in late 1946 there was an attempt to send ST from the Central Committee to the Control Commission of the party. It, however, could not materialize due to the opposition of the leaders of West Dinajpur. The above contention of Shri Mitra about the existence of factional politics in the RCPI gets partially confirmed from the distinction made by the IB, West Bengal in classifying files of RCPI (Tagore Group) from RCPI (Rebel Group) from 1941-42. Though, it may be stated that the difference of views between ST and PD did not become public until the Birbhum conference of the RCPI in April-May, 1948.
224 Mihir Bain, a known member of RCPI told the researcher in an open-ended interview dated 8/5/2011 at his residence that abstention of Saumyendranath Tagore in party’s conference in Birbhum in mid-1948 was a political blunder. It had a deleterious effect on party’s solidarity in the sense that the defeat of ST’s thesis virtually marked the split of RCPI. This opinion however reflects a string of thinking within RCPI. Mihir Bain might be influenced by his adherence to Sudhin Kumar group, a faction which had serious differences with the counter group led by ST.
fomenting wide-spread anti-imperialist protest in the country. To quote Subrata Banerjee, “By their death-defying action the naval ratings ...created an opportunity for the final assault on the tottering structure of imperialism. Indeed, it is no exaggeration that at that time the entire foundations of feudal-imperialist structure in India had been loosened.”

This attracted PD naturally to the storm-centres of the mutiny to help transform the revolt of the strikers into a large-scale people’s revolution. As he wrote on the significance of the naval mutiny in the addendum to the Bengali translation *Nau Bidraha* of Balai Chandra Dutt’s *Revolt of the Innocents* that “at the end of the war revolting attitude amongst the sailors, army, workers and airmen became quite manifest. The forgotten

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226 According to Prof. Ramkrishna Bhattacharya, a scholar and social commentator, the background of PD’s supplementary discussion on the history of the naval mutiny in the Bengali translation of Balai Chandra Dutt’s book was quite interesting. In late 1960s, PD happened to see *Kalloi*, a play on the said mutiny under the direction of Utpal Dutta of the little theatre group, which appeared to him gross misrepresentation. PD was critical to the role played by the CPI during the outbreak of the revolt as well as the opinions of Sahadat Ali, the leader of the revolted ratings in Castle Barrack, who later authored a book on the naval mutiny from which Utpal Datta had collected some materials for his play. PD questioned the very thought of Sahadat Ali that the ratings needed to engage in a guerrilla war, by asking how could such war be fought in water. So, with a view to exposing the loopholes of planning of the leaders who led the mutineers, PD decided to discuss in detail what he meant by ‘revolution’ with reference to the daring event of Chittagong armoury raid by a group of youths led by Surja Sen and how the attempt ended in vain due to lack of planning. In his writing PD also dealt with the situation caused by the mutiny in the RIN that went down soon due to lack of planning and foresight on the part of the ratings, the vacillation of the national leadership, although the conditions were ripe for revolutionary upsurge. That was the background in which he wrote the supplementary to the Bengali translation of Balai Chandra Dutt’s book entitled *Nau Bidraha*. Interview with Prof. Ramkrishna Bhattacharya at his Shyambazar residence on 18/04/2004. However, after going through PD’s writing in the book *Nau Bidraha*, the researcher has the feeling that the string of his thought had a self-critical dimension insofar as PD pointed finger to the deficiency of proper revolutionary leadership, sheer lack of firmness in all revolutionary parties, including the RCPI to which he belonged and the absence of true scientific thinking and consciousness amongst the participants in the revolutionary struggle at that time. However, it is important to note that PD wrote all these in late 1960s, when his thought underwent signal change. Seen in that background, it seems that in spite of transformation from radical leftist orientation of his thought and activities to peaceful social change, the impact of his ardent desire for revolution still remained at the back of his mind.
nationalist spirit and class-consciousness surged up again.” According to Prafulla Gupta, PD’s suggestions to the rebellious ratings were along the following lines: 1) come down from vessels immediately, (2) Do not waste time by staying in water; for Indian revolution cannot remain confined to few ships only, (3) Attack the European military barrack at Worli and devastate the rampart from the occupied ships, (4) come down on streets in bands and companies and get equipped with arms, (5) stand by the Mazoors in united manner, (6) arm the Mazoors, (7) capture the police stations, (8) call upon the Maratha soldiers for help, (9) capture the city and (10) establish ad-hoc revolutionary government to extend the revolutionary tide to the entire country. Yet, as pointed out by Prafulla Gupta, PD could not succeed in his attempt to win over the confidence of the aggrieved ratings. It was not his personal failure however, because at that time RCPI was but a very small party and therefore, a largely unknown political entity in Bombay in comparison to the Congress, the CSP, the Muslim League and the CPI. Like other smaller revolutionary parties, according to PD, the RCPI also suffered from the shortcomings for which it could not firmly lead the ratings. PD also regretted the


229 Durga Banerjee, who was in the student front of RCPI at that time, categorically stated in his book that both ST and PD rose in support of the strike of the naval mutineers, but their power was extremely limited. Banerjee, Durga, *Freedom Struggle and Progressive Democratic Movement in Birbhum*, 1999, p-25. Also see page 109 of *Pannalal Rachana-Sangraha* (1999). In the essay *Bharate Samyovadi Andoloner Dhara* PD repented for aimlessness of united mass agitations in India during the period 1945-47 and held RCPI responsible for its lack of strength and inability to communicate the revolutionary message to the rank and file.

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absence of matured level of thinking among the masses at that time: "The story of conscious armed struggle of the INA was merely a matter of emotional hype to the multitude. How many of the rank and file considered it in right earnest to be the kind of leadership strategy of direct war? Even in 1946, such a flicker of thinking was not within the bounds of comprehension of the masses." This was why he felt that although the situation was ripe for a national upsurge, particularly in the context of a series of militant struggles carried on from 1942, the round of efforts could not be materialized.

Thereafter he engaged himself in different other movements and agitations organized by the RCPI. His observation in *Bharate Samyavadi Andoloner Dhara* showed that he was not in favour of confining political programme into one day general strike. Rather he wanted to unleash massive forces for the establishment of revolutionary leadership of the workers on the masses. Yet, on 17th August 1946 when ST launched a historic strike of the Bank employees, PD thought that even if it was partially successful, it would tend to draw the partial force on the side of revolutionary path with stronger leadership and programme of struggle for establishing the combined reign of the peasantry and the working class. 

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230 Ibid, see *Parisistha* by PD, 1968, p-92-93.
Amidst all these activities, PD, however, failed to grasp the problem of communalism. Later he admitted this mistake and stated in *Bharate Samyavadi Andoloner Dhara* that pre-independence communal civil war resulted from the reactionary forces which were out to divide the people and strike at the root of mass movements. As a Marxist, he probably assumed that the problem of communalism would be automatically solved when imperialism, capitalism and feudalism would be defeated through relentless revolutionary struggle. But this hope proved to be unrealistic when the Muslim League under the leadership of Md. Ali Jinnah (1876-1948) launched the programme of direct action for the realization of Pakistan on August 16, 1946, a day before the strike called by the RCPI. Therefore, the very purpose of the strike for producing revolutionary solidarity among common people could not materialise. Instead, according to PD, "the ongoing mass movements in India at that time received a fatal blow due to internecine riots between the Hindus and the Muslims. Even the world-wide communist movements could not influence, let alone dictate the political situation much, although the power of the ruling class in India was not really impressive at that time."\(^{232}\) It would not be too much to say that in February 1949 when the violent uprising at Dum Dum- Basirhat areas was organised, communal animosity and strife had emerged as a serious problem. Under the

\(^{232}\) Ibid, p-111.

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changed circumstances, it became all the more difficult for success of any revolutionary communist uprising at that time. The bourgeois and the communal forces had gained footings and controlled the existing establishment.

Based on this complicated situation, RCPI had to chalk out its political line. In late 1940s PD’s influence had reached such a height in RCPI that the uprising at Dum Dum-Basirhat could be seen as the manifestation of aggressive militant mood of a section of party workers led by PD from 1946 onwards. Seen from that angle, it is justified to reckon the period from late 1946, the time of the fourth conference of RCPI, to be a distinct phase of his thought and actions.

Part-II

RCPI had its fourth party conference in December 1946. In the main political thesis of the conference, “Post-War World and India”, ST analysed the changing nature of competition and domination amidst the capitalist economies and political developments in Europe, specially the establishment of bourgeois regimes to stem the tide of proletarian revolution. He also highlighted the bourgeois class character of the interim government in India and proposed the formation of the ‘Mazdur-
Kishan-Panchayet Raj’ through the creation of panchayets after the Soviet model as ‘mass-instruments for seizure of power’.\textsuperscript{233} The gross deficiency of this thesis, according to PD, lay in the point that it could not make the strategy of the struggle clear.\textsuperscript{234} So, how to wage the struggle along with the related questions regarding what power to be seized with whose cooperation being missing in the thesis left PD considerably dissatisfied. These made him all the more desperate in the quest for a socialist revolution. It was clear in one of his emphatic propositions \textit{Samajtantrik Biplop Aji Noi Keno} (Why not socialist revolution today?) published in October 1947.

In this booklet, he stated that in the light of the lessons of history of Russia the revolutionary communists would be able to build up socialism in India accurately. Besides, the socialist revolution in India was bound to evoke another tide of world revolution. That would hasten the downfall of the British Empire. And this revolution would sweep across the entire Asia and middle-East and even Europe. To quote him, “In the prevailing situation, it is to be admitted that the world is prepared for another round of socialist revolution. So is India. She cannot move a step further without socialism. More delay means more agony and plight of the masses. All kinds of misery and decadence are the order of the day. The

\textsuperscript{233} Tagore, Saumyendranath, \textit{Against the Stream}, vol. II, Saumyendranath Memorial Committee, Shahibag, Ahmedabad, 1984, p-191-195.

climate is vitiated. All protests are getting pulverized. All senses of responsibility and social awareness are getting spoiled. Hence a moment cannot be wasted to stem this rapidly increasing rot in society in order to release the pent up forces of motion in society. Except socialism, there is no longer any way to get rid of those terrible symptoms of an all-pervading menace like infanticide, killings of women, torching the slums, attacks on helpless pedestrians, bribery, tyranny, extortion, hooliganism, smuggling, black-marketing etc which plague existing society. Hence, sooner socialist revolution, the better is the prospect. India offers the most suitable ground for socialism, since her poverty is so heavy and grave, and complexity of problems so intractable. It is not possible for capitalism to reduce the magnitude and severity of these problems. In terms of conditions, socialism has got no hindrance in India because the broader problems of peasant society or that of agrarian revolution could no longer be solved in capitalism; it can be solved in socialism. Therefore, the argument does not stand that peasants will not desire socialism or that they would oppose it. Besides, the lower middle class would not be able to survive in capitalism. Based on this analysis he

235 In PD's own words, “Chasider kono samogrik unnati ba mukti dhonatanter modhne nei, tar mukti aj prakitapakkhe mazoorer moto samajtanetre nihiita royuche; tai samajtantrik biplober pathe garib chasider egye ana moteti sakta hobena.” (The peasants got no improvement or freedom in capitalism. Like the labourers, their emancipation actually lay in socialism. Hence, it won't be difficult to bring the poor peasants on the path of socialist revolution) Bharate Samyavadi Andoloner Dhara, PD's Rachana-Sangraha, 1999, p-179.

declared that the ground was ready for staging a socialist revolution in the
country.

He, however, added that there were those who would point to the dearth of
organization, lack of socialist consciousness among masses as well as
revolutionary instruments of panchayets. But, there was no point in
lamenting over these deficiencies or to wait for a better preparation. So,
the need of the hour was to take socialism as urgent programme, instead
of taking it as a distant goal of future. Regarding the way of
accomplishing this task he opined that it could not be executed in
peaceful, piecemeal way but the whole of the state had to be smashed,
because the entire institution was corrupt. In its place people’s raj or
panchayet had to be established. To quote him, “The state is a mighty
armed party. Though this party consists of a great number of people, its
leadership and authority are completely held by the capitalists. This entire
party has to be dissolved...This work can never happen peacefully,
except revolution, so as to destroy only what is inevitable.”

Subsequently in another article Andha Sangram Noi, Samaftantrik Biplôb
Ghosona Korte Hobe (i.e. No blind struggle, declare socialist
revolution) published in the party organ Panchayet dated 7/11/1947 his
arguments were meant for reiterating the need of starting a socialist

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237 Ibid, p-84.
238 This article was written by PD in Bengali under the pseudonym Narayan Gupta. See the article in
the Panchayet, the organ of RCPI published in November 7, 1947, p-5, continuation in p-8 & 9.
revolution. To quote from this article, “Not through strike, but now mazoors and peasants must begin their struggle for taking the state power in their hands. Revolution is necessary for direct switch over to socialism....It is useless to cry for the mazoors who are shot in course of everyday conflict or when farmers are inflicted with firing...Scattered struggles are blind. Today all struggles want to meet with one mighty ocean, that is revolution—socialist world revolution.”

However, the most powerful and prolific exposition of his radical views around this time could be gleaned from the pamphlet *Chetana Prerona O Sanghat* (i.e. Consciousness, Inspiration and Conflict) published in early 1948. It proved that this was the phase of fruition of PD’s radical political thought. As he harped on the necessity of unleashing immediate action to generate real awakening in the life of the nation to rid society of corruption and other vices attached to capitalism and get over the limitations of so-called independence. To quote him, “Struggle alone can give birth to suitable moral strength and social awareness. The source of this strength lies among the masses themselves. Only revolution can wake up and harness that strength...” Hence his conclusion was to organize ‘action’ without further delay for implementing prompt transformation towards socialism. It indicated his keenness and ardent eagerness to take

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up the fundamental task of revolution—the smashing of the existing state structure and liquidating the reactionary forces by opening the onslaught in the form of revolutionary war under the leadership of people's power in panchayets. In the words of Prof. Baneswar Saikia, it was the "emotional-sentimental preparation for the next course of action." To PD the idea of action was not a piece of thought alone. Rather, as an activist, he moved further in this direction. By keeping the leadership of the open front of the Party in dark he started accomplishing the task with the help of his close comrades in the secret detachment. It became clear from the SB report, Calcutta dated 16/10/1947 cited by Prof. Manjula Bose in her book *Saumyendranath Tagore: Karme O Manone* (2007). This referred to his alleged involvement in gathering arms surreptitiously as preparation for some violent movement. The report further stated that ST, Sudhir Dasgupta and Provat Sen were not ready to accept such dealing with arms because they were sure of police repression in that case. From a secret letter dated 9/12/1947 written by the DIG, IB, West Bengal to the then Home Secretary, Govt. of West Bengal it also transpires that the police had received incriminating information regarding collection and possession of arms by the party comrades led by PD in view of some violent design. To quote, "They aim at bringing about an armed revolution in the country to replace the Congress

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341 Views expressed by Comrade Baneswar Saikia in an open-ended interview with this researcher at his Nowgaon residence, Assam on 16/06/2011.
government by a communist form of government. In furtherance of this objective, information had been received from time to time that arms were being collected and the members were being advised to keep arms in all centres. On 26/8/1947 an important member alleged to be Pannalal Dasgupta was arrested at Amingaon in Assam with one pistol, two revolvers, seventy three rounds of ammunition and three Mills bombs. He, however, escaped the next day from the police custody in a waiting jeep. He is still untraced and search is on. The only other incriminating information against the Party has come from Bombay. Sanat Roychoudhuri, Sudhir Dasgupta, Sudarshan Chaterji and Amar Raha were arrested in the last week of November 1947 as suspects engaged in arms smuggling.²⁴² This information is also corroborated by both Binayak Halder in his prolong introductory discussion in the enlarged and edited second edition of ST’s *The Soviet State –Its Character*²⁴³ and Prof. Manjula Bose in her book, *Saumyendranath Tagore: Karme O Manone*. On the basis of these reports Prof. Manjula Bose deduced that ‘it would not be unreasonable to infer that this attack on RCPI and its higher leadership was direct consequence of the programme of imminent armed struggle adopted by PD’.²⁴⁴

²⁴² IB File 1114-47, Serial No. 35.
²⁴⁴ *Saumyendranath Tagore: Karme O Manone* by Manjula Bose, Tagore Research Institute, Kolkata, 2007, p-150.
It was true that administration was alarmed by the nature of thought and activities of PD along with a section of RCPI youths whom he led. The reports in IB file 1114-47 and SB file 727 of police actions namely searches at different Calcutta centres in November-December 1947 for absconder PD amply proves veracity of this point. All these also indicated that a group of RCPI activists under his stewardship acted in undue haste in pursuit of an armed proletarian revolution. That was why even before placing the idea before the party’s forum to determine, PD, on his own, had already decided the line of actions in 1947. This was well ahead of the fifth conference of RCPI held in April-May, 1948. Naturally, there was lack of necessary political preparation for waging armed

245 IB File 1114-47, Serial No. 35, see p-24 & 63 for search on 4 Elgin Road, Calcutta on 1/12/1947 & p-87 for search on 5/1 Rammoy Road, Calcutta on 2/12/47.
247 This was common oft-cited allegation against PD. However his contention as revealed in Bharate Samayvadi Andolon Dehara was of great importance. There he argued that in the present epoch the revolutionary situation might last long, but under such situation if the fluctuation of mass consciousness was not properly grasped and used to further revolutionary cause, popular suffering and hardship would inevitably become entrenched and get prolonged. Therefore, he considered the leadership claim of the communist to be unjustified and wrong if they lacked the capacity and acumen to launch revolutionary offensive and make proper use of turns and twists of existing revolutionary situation with alacrity and promptness. p-139 (Pannalal Das Gupta Rachana Sangroha).
248 In fact, in 1947-48 PD as the secretary of the Central Committee and chief organizer of party’s myriad activities had acquired enormous hold over the Polit-Bureau of the RCPI, the highest decision-making body. So, it seems that probably he framed his programme under assumption of implicit support of the then Central Committee. However, one must carefully underline the expression ‘line of actions’, because ST also had given the call for revolution in May 1947. In an article published in Toilers’ Front he wrote “The hour has struck for the preparation of the Socialist Revolution”. So, there was not much difference between ST and PD on this point that the programme of the RCPI was the programme of initiating socialist revolution. Yet, there were significant differences with regard to the line of actions which they proposed. Unlike PD, ST did not clearly indicate his support for armed revolutionary line. From our reading of various RCPI literatures written by ST we may however deduce that as a Marxist ST believed in violent struggle by the masses to overthrow imperialism and to establish a democratic republic of workers and peasants. But based on the situation at the time of India’s independence he would prefer to guide the masses by means of drawing them into revolutionary movement through patient propaganda and thereby mobilizing them unremittingly into a broad based alliance, to carry on their relentless day to day struggle for economic emancipation and democratic rights, in comparison to rashly organizing any short-cut armed movement.
struggle against the interim government of the newly independent Indian
state. But PD probably thought that conditions of revolution had
ripened within the womb of the capitalist society given the explosive
situation in Burma, (now Myanmar), China etc. He would have been
content with nothing short of full independence and economic
emancipation of the masses, not a sham transfer of power. This was why
he decided to synchronize efforts to foment a revolution from within at
the time of suitable internal dislocation and domestic chaos arising out of
partition. But the subjective factor—the mood of the people and the
midwife of such revolutionary change—the political leadership were
conspicuously absent at that time. On one hand, the virus of
communalism overshadowed the body politic which hit hard on the
solidarity of the masses. On the other hand, common people in India were
in an ecstatic mood of celebration at the dawn of independence.

Besides, various left parties in India namely the Congress Socialist Party,
the Forward Bloc, the Revolutionary Socialist Party were ‘towing the line

249 PD himself admitted this mistake in the introduction of his Rachana Sangraha (i.e. Collected
writings), Nabapatro Prakashan, Calcutta, 1999. In his words, “Prostuti o parikathamo chara je biplab
sanghitha hote porena, se katha amra anekei bujheo bujhe utthe parini.”(Many of us tried but could
not completely realise that revolution could not be organized without adequate preparation and
infrastructural support.)

250 This was why it was written in the booklet Transitional Programme published by Provat Sen on
behalf of the RCPI sometime in late 1948-9 that “The strategic task of the present period confronting
the revolutionary party of the proletariat is to overcome the contradiction between the maturity of the
objective conditions for revolution and the subjective immaturity of the party and the revolutionary
vanguard.”(p-2) Clearly it was the view of the Tagore group of the RCPI, which stressed on the
socialist transformation of society through a process of persistent day to day struggle instead of waging
immediate fight for the conquest of power.

251 Namboodiripad, EMS, Bharater Swadhinata Sangramer Itihas (Chaturtha Khanda), National Book
Agency, Calcutta, 1997, p-942. However, Namboodiripad aptly mentioned that Gandhi remained aloof
from that celebration of joy due to partition and occurrence of fratricidal riots in Bengal.
of the Congress'. RCPI itself was not free from signs of left sectarianism as ST lamented in *Post-war World and India*. Also, there was no unity amongst leftist parties in India which could provide collective leadership and organize mass forces for bringing about desired national revolution for the achievement of full independence and establishment of exploitation-free society.

Unlike PD, a group of prominent leaders of RCPI was not inclined to the idea of immediate insurrection under the prevalent conditions at that time. Their point of view as reflected in the political thesis was "The mere presence of a revolutionary situation does not warrant an insurrection, an insurrection needs a mature revolutionary situation. A revolutionary situation and an insurrectionary situation is not one and the same thing. It is the art of the revolutionary leadership to differentiate between these two stages and to gauge the transformation of an immature revolutionary crisis into a mature revolutionary situation, ripe for a decisive struggle."  

So, they were of the opinion that under the then conditions which were not fully developed and matured, it would be dangerously premature to attempt an armed decisive struggle.

Henceforth, the intra-party disagreement between ST and PD on the call for impending revolution assumed sharper proportion. According to Prof.

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Baneswar Saikia, this discord was related to the "basically technical questions of timing and mode of revolutionary preparation." On analysis, however, it is revealed that their differences were pitched at a much deeper level, centering on the crucial ideological question of organizing armed insurrection and that too at the critical juncture of India's independence. Though here is no place for discussing the inner party debate in great detail, it is to be admitted that despite squabble at the level of party's top leadership, it was a period when the RCPI remained united. It provided the space for exchange of some of the most illuminating and rich ideas centering around the contending positions taken by twin stalwarts—ST and PD, both trying to come to grips with the reality on the basis of thorough examination of contemporary context and situational conditions of revolution.

This inner party turmoil became evident from ST's exhaustive theoretical analysis in *Khokami Rog* (i.e. infantile disease written in tune with V.I. Lenin's *Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder*) published from Ganabani Publishing House in April 1948. Here he minced no words in

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253 Views expressed by Prof. Baneswar Saikia to the researcher in an interview in his Nowgaon residence in Assam on 16/06/2011. Prof. Saikia is former secretary, Central Committee of the RCPI and a veteran member of the party since 1947.

254 The note of the publisher attached at the end of the book *Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder* stated that "It was intended to help the young Communist Parties find the right path of revolutionary struggle, correct the errors they had made in their first steps and acquaint the Communists of all countries with the wealth of Bolshevik experience and with the strategy and tactics of the Bolshevik Party." Progress Publisher, Moscow, fifth revised edition 1968, p-100. In this book Lenin discussed the issues whether revolutionaries should work in reactionary trade unions, whether they should participate in bourgeois parliaments etc. It is an exhaustive enquiry into revolutionary tactics with incisive analyses. Lenin was of the opinion that to help the 'masses' and to win support of the 'masses' the communists must 'carry on agitation and propaganda systematically, perseveringly, persistently and patiently in those institutions, societies and associations—even the most reactionary'.
castigating in harsh terms the nature of violent, 'adventurist' and 'impatient' 'petty bourgeois' follies being planned by some young hotheads in the name of revolutionary communism. Although nowhere in the book did he mention about the raging intra-party polemics in the RCPI, 'it was intended to attack stridently the activities of the secret department of the party run by PD and his clique.\textsuperscript{255} ST also quoted extensively from Lenin's \textit{Marxism and Uprising} to remind us that "To be successful, the uprising must be based not on a conspiracy, not on a party but on the advanced class. This is the first point. The uprising must be based on the revolutionary upsurge of the people. This is the second point. The uprisings must be based on the crucial point in the history of the maturing revolution, when the activity of the vanguard of the people is at its height, when the vacillations in the ranks of the enemies and in the ranks of the weak, half-hearted, undecided friends of the revolution are at their highest point. This is the third point. It is in pointing out these three conditions as the way of approaching the question of an uprising, that Marxism differs from Blanquism."\textsuperscript{256} Led by this clear theoretical underpinnings and critical appreciation of the then political situation and general mood of people, ST and his close following in RCPI were against the adoption of the ultra-leftist line of

\textsuperscript{255} Bose, Manjula, \textit{Sanmoyendranath Tagore: Karme O Manone}, Tagore Research Institute, Kolkata, 2007, p-152.

instant strike and armed uprising by a section of the party under the
leadership of PD in the period immediately following independence. PD,
on the other hand, wanted to strike at once. He said in his report, “Action
releases thought from its vicious circles and makes it possible to advance.
...Consciousness and inspiration have their roots in action. The crisis in
the realm of thought can only be solved by action and this action in the
all-pervading chaos of the present day world is nothing short of
revolution.” ST did not agree to this visualization leading to intense
intra-party dissension within the RCPI. It was in that background the fifth
party conference of the RCPI was held at Jogai village in Birbhum in
mid-1948.

Police files on RCPI on this period are replete with references to such
differences. For example we learn that in this debate over party’s stand
Tarapada Gupta, Provat Sen, Gour Pal, Satish Samanta, Sunil Maitra,
Sudarshan Chaterji, Kanai Pal were with Tagore while those who sided
with PD included Hiranmoy Ganguli, Prithis De, Dr. Jyotirmoy Gupta,
Mukunda Gupta, Sanat Kumar Dutta, Sudhamoy Dasgupta, Tarapada

257 The Political Thesis adopted at the Birbhum Conference, 1948, Edited and published by Polit-
258 However, there is an iota of dispute whether it was fifth conference of the party or not. PD in his
Bharata Samya vadi Anekoloner Dhara has certified it as the fifth conference (Rachana Sangraha, p-
113 & 116). But the researcher has gathered another report of the party conference written under the
caption fourth party conference which was held after 1948. In all probability that was the conference of
the RCPI at Burdwan convened by the RCPI group led by ST in which this faction reiterated its firm
confidence in the leadership of ST and resolved to renounce the idea of working up mass revolution at
that stage. However, if the united RCPI had its fourth annual conference at Udayrampur, Amtala, 24
Parganas (South) towards the end of 1946 as per the opinions of party comrades in general, and also
according to many others whom the present researcher met and asked, then the conference at Jogai
village in the district of Birbhum in April-May1948 was certainly to be reckoned the fifth conference
of RCPI.
Roy, Amarendra Kumar Raha, Manoranjan Sadhukhan, Sudhindranath Kumar, Tikendra Nath Siddhanta, Biswanath Singharoy et al. This reference also indicates that this strife did not remain confined within party ranks, but it became public. Therefore, it became easier for the police to apprehend what plan was undergoing. This was the beginning of police hunt for RCPI activists even prior to the occurrence of armed insurrection at Dum Dum Basirhat in February 1949. It created further misunderstanding between the two groups.

The chances of reconciliation between ST and PD became remote because ST, the supreme leader of RCPI stayed away from the fifth all-India conference of the party held in Birbhum. Its reason could be attributed to the clash of personalities as well as ideology between ST and PD. Even PD did not directly attend the conference, though he was the linchpin in taking the calibrated step in organizing the conference to get his thesis formally approved by the party. It revealed the level of tussle between these two top leaders. However, ST and PD both had sent their representatives to the conference. As per available data while

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259 According to Mihir Bain, an important member of the central committee of RCPI, even though comrade Sudhindranath Kumar remained on the side of PD, he was not unanimous with the political line of the thesis accepted by the majority in the Birbhum conference of the RCPI. Views expressed by Mihir Bain in an interview held at his residence in Howrah on 8/5/2011. Also Nirmal Bhandari, a veteran member of the party told the researcher in an interview dated 14/5/2011 that ‘Sudhin Kumar considered the armed action of the RCPI group at Dum Dum-Basirhat area as premature venture that shot up state’s repression on the party to a great extent’. Taken together these views, it seems that even after the split in RCPI, the faction led by PD was not a rigidly united group in the sense of all members sticking to the same stand. It means faction within a faction so far as PD’s group was concerned.

260 IB file 3474-49.

261 This information was received from Amiyo Mukherjee, Nalhati, Birbhum.
Sudhamoy Dasgupta presented the Thesis on behalf PD, Khemesh Chatterjee, a close following of ST put forward a Counter-Thesis in the said conference. According to the party sources, it was PD’s insurrectionary thesis which received majority endorsement, much to the chagrin of what might be called moderate revolutionary stance adhered to by ST’s camp.

According to IB file 316-28, the followers of PD who were in a majority in the secret conference succeeded in having their thesis carried and they broke away from the parent organization. Not only that, but the selection of the venue of the conference—the farmyard of one Haripada Mondal in Jogai village in Birbhum, the stronghold of PD was suggestive of his strategic calculation to arrange the conference at a relatively unknown village site to evade police surveillance. Yet, in the context of vigorous intra-party feud, it also seemed to be a political move on the part of PD who designed it purposely to rally the party to his line of thinking. Hence,

This information, though unverified, has been received from Amiyo Mukherjee, a veteran communist worker based in Nalhati, Birbhum. He told the researcher in a telephonic interview dated 18/06/2011 that apart from Haripada Mondal, a peasant member of the party, Trilochan Mal, Shyam Bhandari and several other local comrades were also present in that conference. In Prafulla Gupta's writing, however, we find the reference that the delegates of the conference who came from Bombay, Madras, Assam, Bihar etc. had gathered at the well-protected broad farmland of a local peasant in Jogai. At that time it created such hype that thousands of peasants under Muraroi PS anxiously looked to the RCPI conference in Jogai. Gupta, Prafulla, Comrade Pannalal Dasgupta, Naya Duniya, Calcutta, 1953, p-60-1.
as far circumstantial findings, it seems that PD probably contrived to engineer majority support for his thesis and thus won ‘the battle of wit’ against ST. This, in fact, paved the way for the split in RCPI and led to the formation of a breakaway group—RCPI (RG), i.e. Rebel-Group, as christened by Police, to differentiate it from the original party under ST. We, however designate this faction as RCPI (IR) i.e. immediate revolution, on the basis of the call given by PD. It was this contentious point on which the party was bifurcated because perception of ST and PD differed significantly on this matter.

To quote ST, “While declaring that the objective revolutionary situation exists, we, Revolutionary Communists, must at the same time forcefully warn the masses against any conception that from this flow automatically the death of the bourgeoisie through a few premature offensive by the proletariat.” This was the position of the Tagore group in Birbhum conference of RCPI. ST stuck to the postulate that the conditions were not yet conducive to radical action or insurrection in India at that time because “The mass backing of the bourgeoisie is not yet fully negated….The disintegration of the machinery of the Government has not

263 It was based on the views of Niranjan Halder, an ex-journalist of Ananda Bazar Patrika, who knew PD closely. In an interview dated 23/11/2003 he told the researcher that like other the communist parties, the RCPI too was stricken with severe internal politics. If one gets into the nature of such politics, it would be clear how PD could remove ST from the leadership position of the party. However, the tassel between ST and PD within the RCPI was not to be seen as individual friction but as of two distinct lines of thought and action. It further transpires from theoretical understanding of the functioning of the Marxist parties that following the principles of democratic centralism, the overwhelming support for PD’s thesis in the Birbhum conference helped ensconce PD’s supremacy in the RCPI in mid-1948.
yet set in...and though the process of disillusionment of the masses has begun, it has not yet taken the form of an active opposition to the bourgeois Government....To attempt any insurrection, local or otherwise, under the present conditions would mean that the vanguard of the working class will be isolated and its revolutionary will paralysed.”

Therefore, the immediate tasks before the Revolutionary Communist Party were (1) “To explain patiently, systematically and persistently the errors of the bourgeois Government”, (2) “To weld the class-conscious proletariat in the Revolutionary Communist Party” etc.

The apparent loophole of this position has been that it remained nebulous about the nitty-gritty of revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist regime already installed in India, which bent on using mighty state power to counter radical political opposition. Thus, ST’s thesis failed to grasp the challenge of the day—how to resist such onslaught on communist movements and moreover, to strike back. It was extremely preposterous to think of the possibility of bringing about a mass revolution in the country by weaning the masses from the political fold of the nationalist bourgeois leadership under the auspices of a tiny party already torn in internal bickering even in distant future.

PD’s views, on the contrary, as reflected in Birbhum thesis (following the place where this thesis was presented) were not only different but conspicuously radical in the sense his approach was permeated with the
spirit of urgency to plunge into actions, i.e. attack on the Indian state. He
said, “The bourgeoisie are today totally fascist. Hence there is no scope of
development of mass struggles within the boundary of bourgeois law.
Revolutionary mass struggles have therefore to develop today by
breaking the barriers of law. Therefore, the word ‘struggle’ today does
not connote the same old meaning. Today it means ‘radical action’, which
does not depend on legal scope for its development but is from the very
beginning revolutionary.”264 In the same vein PD further observed,
“Talks, arguments, conferences cannot end capitalism and it is action or
revolution that can and must bring about the ‘miracle’ and save us from
these ever-increasing entanglement, irreducible petty quarrels, insoluble
problems, deadening complexities and a devastating decadence all
round.”265 Hence, the sanguinity that led him to uphold “there is no other
alternative and there is no time to lose. In this over-all picture of war and
world-wide civil war, the issue at stake is as clear as anything. It is simply
capitalism versus socialism. There is very little scope for hazy ideas or
vacillation. The objective maturity for world revolution has come to such
a desperate state that its subjective recognition is simply bursting forth
from all corners of the world.”266

264 The political thesis of RCPI adopted at the fifth conference in Birbhum in 1948, Polit-Bureau, RCPI,
Red Front, November 1949, Foreword, p-iv.
265 Ibid, p-10.
266 Ibid, p-11.
From above we get to know about PD’s characterization of the Indian state and government. He did not naively say that independence was fake that gave way to corrupt and decadent system of capitalism in India. But importantly he compared the post-independent situation in India to the ‘fascist rule’ marked by “complete absence of the democratic liberties and the ruthless suppression of all mass-struggles”. Indeed, after independence anti-strike laws and other repressive measures were enacted by the Congress government in the name of security of the new-born nation-state. All these were pointer to the glaring fact of denial of the democratic promise pledged to the nation and the underlying class character of the interim regime. At this the fiction of the state above the classes had completely disappeared and the democratic mask of the independent Indian state was off. So, the conclusion was obvious that the first stage of revolution was not yet over because bourgeois-democratic revolution had not been fully completed according to the Leninist conception of revolution.

While accepting it, PD’s views in the Birbhum thesis was clear that “it was not a revolution that got the power for India but it was certainly the fear of a revolution that compelled the change.267 The peaceful transfer

267 In Birbhum thesis PD alleged that in August 1947, power had been transferred to the hands of ‘imperialism’s allies in India’. See Reprint of Birbhum thesis in Red Front, November, 1949, p-28. Also subsequently in Bhorote Sanyavadini Andoloner Dhara PD reiterated that even smaller capitalists know that capitalism in India could not survive when imperialism would be pulverized in the world. Hence, whatever ill-feeling they might have towards the big capitalists, gradually they would be compelled to lean on to the side of imperialism. Rachana Sangraha (1999), p- 194. But Prof. Bipan
of power was preceded by revolutionary mass struggles and followed by counter-revolutionary violence in the country......The post-war revolutionary crisis therefore is not eliminated by this transfer of power but it has been deepened."268 So, in that context his prescription was to embark on an all-out political struggle in which no separate stage could be maintained. As he enunciated, "It is no longer a question of finishing bourgeois-democratic revolution or building up of any hypothetical ‘New Democracy’, but a straight road to power of the working class and the peasantry to achieve nothing short of socialism."269

Clearly, he was thinking on the line of ‘growing revolution’270—a flicker to begin with, which would metamorphose into proletarian revolution, instead of the sequential idea of socialist revolution preceded by the bourgeois-democratic stage. To quote him, “The fundamental task of revolution—the smashing up of the existing state form—will not, in the order of things today, be achieved necessarily through a process where there has to be a period of dual power between the decrepit bourgeois

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268 The political thesis of the RCPI adopted at the fifth conference held at Birbhum in April-May, 1948.
269 Ibid, p-11.
state power and the growing organizations of toilers. Communistic movements in the world after the Second World War have confirmed that in the context of all-round chaos and disintegration, revolution tends to seize power wherever it can and no question arises of any dual power within the territory involved;”

Birbhum thesis amply proved PD’s revolutionary bona fide. The scheme of immediate action which he propagated was expression of natural communist zeal for guiding the masses on the path of radical action. As he stressed, “Faced with political struggle, we cannot leave it to an automatic fatalistic development, which tends to be its course in the absence of conscious direction. It should be taken, guided and even initiated with a prepared outlook, with deliberate conscious activities so that these struggles may spread and rise to higher planes” It was in tune with “the most fundamental axiom of Marxism that consciousness and action—revolutionary theory and practice—were inseparable.” However, questions might arise from the point of the then context in India. The dawn of independence in August 1947 synchronized with a period of transition and jubilation as well as new hope for the masses as moulders of free India. It produced quite an opposite effect compared to widespread scenario of mass discontent as evident in the country in 1945-

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272 Ibid, p-29
46 period. This crucial change in mass psychology was missing in PD’s thesis. It also did not adequately dwell on the strategy that lay underneath the measures taken by the interim government to earn political legitimacy. From candid review of the contemporary situation it seemed that probably he had drawn an over-general conclusion that objective and subjective conditions were ready for starting an open revolutionary offensive against the newly independent Indian state. This exposed the hiatus between reality and his visualization. Despite continuous suffering of the masses due to critical economic situation of the day, it was to be noted that immediately after 1947 there was no outbreak of popular resentment on nation-wide scale against the new government either on the agrarian question or the question and consequences of the capitalist path of development and political question of framing the constitution.

In his thesis PD refuted ST’s charge of ‘Blanquism’ on the ground that “no mass action is Blanquism and no conscious effort for mass action under the present volcanic condition, a condition of an unprecedented civil war now raging in the world, can be dubbed as conspiracy or Blanquism”. But what was paradoxical about it was contrary ground reality—absence of participation of the mass of workers and peasants in

273 This refers to the trend or the idea in the French socialist movement headed by the revolutionary Louis Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881), a French utopian communist. It consisted of elements that ignored all contacts with the masses, took no account of the concrete situation essential for the victory of an insurrection and induced its adherents to employ the tactics of a handful of conspirators instead of those of a revolutionary party.
action as evident in the armed rising in DumDum –Basirhat area in February 1949. It was the fundamental weakness of the thesis in which PD held, “It matters little with how much clarification the masses are in action, and they are in action here and there; the imperative duty of the revolutionaries is to seize the opportunity, spread it and link it up with all the revolutionary forces in the country and the world.”

It revealed that though in theory his thesis spoke of action emanating from vast mass of people, this did not happen in practice, because the masses hardly got adequate time to face the ruling class in India after transfer of power had taken place, not to speak of their preparedness for armed fight. Instead, the revolutionary activists of the party—were pressed into ‘action’ for playing the actual double role. They were to demystify the masses of bourgeois-individual values—‘liberal corruption’ as he put it, and to act as the conveyors of the revolutionary socialist message to the workers and peasants, and simultaneously, they were also to be the direct fighters for revolution. Ironically, since most of the participants in Dum Dum uprising belonged to the age group of 18 to 25 years, they could not make out what they were fighting for because they were more concerned with

the action part than theoretical intricacies of Marxism. This was another contradiction, which PD and his lieutenants—Amar Raha, Tantu De, Mukunda Gupta, Hiranmoy Ganguli, to name few, had to face but could not do anything because in their effort to start action they had to

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It was the view expressed by Robi Roy in an interview with the researcher dated 22/3/11. Robi Roy was a young member of PD’s group, who directly participated in armed action in Dum Dum-Basirhat area on February 26, 1949. Besides, in main case diaries (IB File 702/49(9A) we find judicial confessions of several youths who first met at Tala park with haversacks but were arrested and later handed over to police by local people, namely Krishna Hari Mitra et al who intervened in the matter on apprehension of alleged connection of those youths with the action. In one of such confessions given before B.L. Saha, Magistrate, Alipore on 17.3.1949, Ranjit Ganguly, an accused young man told that after passing Matric in 1947 he was biding time without getting any job. But he knew Ashok (Ashok Biswas) of Anath Deb Lane. It was Ashok who had drawn him to the party by telling if he could join them for simple works of meeting and posterising to be done outside Calcutta. Even he was given money for buying a pair of skate shoes. It shows how youngsters were manipulated into joining the group just before commencement of the secret armed operation, and as such these youths had no clear idea of it. Also see press report of approver Sushil Bose’s deposition during cross-examination in course of trial as published in Amrita Bazar Patrika dated 19/11/1953. There the witness said, “He had heard of Karl Marx but had no clear idea of his philosophy of communism. He had not read any book of Karl Marx...He had no clear idea of the communist conception of revolution.”
rely mainly on this inexperienced army of middle class youths.²⁷⁶ So, while their actions—armed robberies and murders²⁷⁷ did not constitute revolution, PD naively hoped that these would sensitize and revolutionise the masses and would bring them on the path of revolution since “there was no hope of peaceful recovery from the crises under capitalism”. So viewed from the angle of the young cadres of his revolutionary brigade to whom PD addressed primarily, his thesis was, at best, an emotive statement couched in Marxian trappings.

However, the 1948 conference was a landmark in PD’s political take off as a communist revolutionary. It was so not only because he succeeded in

²⁷⁶ According to Prof. Baunwar Saikia, those who participated in revolutionary action as members of the RCPI faction led by PD in 1948-'49 were young and middle class cadres. Views expressed in an interview with the researcher dated 16/06/11. It provides us with the real social base of the revolutionary communist movement sought to be organized by PD.

²⁷⁷ In pursuit of its programme this time a number of cases of robberies were reportedly committed by the group. According to IB, CID, (WB) File KW702-49(237), serial 95/10, the members of the group led by PD were responsible for commission of 23 murders, 7 cases of robberies and 29 other offences including arms loot and theft of motor cars to promote their operations during the period from 1949 to 1951 (P-10 of the said IB File). However, as per the report published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* dated 22.04.1953 about the dacoity and murder charges against RCPI members, the allegation of the prosecution (i.e. government) against PD’s group was that it committed about 30 dacoities in course of which they looted over Rs. 9 lakhs, killed 18 persons and injured many others with various fire arms. Hence a separate gang case was instituted against the group led by PD in Alipore Session judge’s court in early 1955 and it delivered judgment in September 1956. Besides, we find from IB File 702-49 (237), Serial No. 95/9 that one dacoity case viz. Burrabazar Central Bank dacoity case allegedly committed by the same group involved in Dum Dum-Basirhat raids was heard under R. K. Dutta Gupta, the judge of the First Tribunal. The date of conclusion of hearing of the armed raid case and the dacoity case were 16.11.1954 and 17.1.1955 respectively; On 7 May 1955 the judgement was delivered in which PD was convicted u/s 121 IPC. The same file also contains the lists of the accused in two other dacoity cases namely Serampore India Jute Mill case (Hooghly) and Shibpore Imperial Bank Dacoity case (Howrah) in which RCPI (IR) members had played active part. So, this is as per the official record. What PD, however, told in his reply as emerged from his statement was his plea that none of their actions were purported to indulge in violence for the sake of violence or any self-interested motive. So, against the charges of the prosecution, he contended, “I do not mean to say that all that I did or thought, learnt or taught in my life were all correct or faultless. I have no such pretension. But I hold that its worth will not be determined by any code of abstract ethics but by the necessities it fulfilled in the larger destiny of the country…” [Statement of Com. Pannalal Das Gupta before the Special Tribunal in April 1954, published by RCPI, p-4]. It amply showed an altogether different aspect of the story that the commission of robberies by the RCPI group led by PD was to be judged from the point of revolutionary political objective ‘to usher in new laws based on new order of society’ and not by ‘imputing motives’ other than political.
carrying substantial section of the party\textsuperscript{278} to take to his line of thinking but also, from the point of putting his ideas into practice in terms of organizing ‘action’. His political thesis clearly indicated the nature of action he had envisaged for immediate implementation. RCPI now stood as a divided house with ST enjoying the confidence of the groups of Bombay, Madras, the United Province and Bengal minus Calcutta, while PD holding sway over the RCPI groups of Assam, Bihar and Calcutta.\textsuperscript{279} The impact of this sharp split on RCPI was considerable diminution of its strength\textsuperscript{280}, which was inadequate for the task of putting into effect the radical programme formulated by PD. According to Manjula Bose, although some important leaders of the party’s Calcutta unit like Provat Sen, Khemesh Chatterjee were still with Tagore, majority of young members and many of the old apparatchiks felt inspired by PD’s bold line. Therefore, their overwhelming support went to his favour. Also when Provat Sen became the secretary of RCPI in 1948, the factional differences in the party had ossified to such an extent that it was not possible for him to create an amiable ambience of friendly debate.

\textsuperscript{278}Sushil Bose, a member of PD’s group and participant in the armed action on February 26, 1949 reportedly told in his confessional statement before the First Tribunal, Alipore that “the strength of Panna babu’s party was greater than that of Tagore.” Report of the RCPI Rebel Group members on trial as published in \textit{Amrita Bazar Patrika} dated 20/11/1953. However, it may be noted that Sushil Bose was approver in the Dum Dum-Basirhat raid case and he changed his views several times in different phases of the trial.

\textsuperscript{279}IB File 316-28, see the report prepared by the Central Intelligence Office dated 26\textsuperscript{th} May, 1948.

\textsuperscript{280}This finding is based on police reports. However, we have indicated earlier that internal dissension especially discordance in leadership perception which ultimately tore the RCPI into two main factions in mid-1948 could not be viewed merely as signs of weakness. Rather the debate and polemics produced fine viewpoints that contributed to the strength of the left movement as a whole.
between the two contending groups.\textsuperscript{281} Moreover, we learn from contemporary police reports that Calcutta was a very strong unit of RCPI both qualitatively and quantitatively.\textsuperscript{282} Therefore, PD could possibly utilize the party organization and the strategic location of this city for initiating preparatory works towards local seizure of power through sudden armed insurrection.\textsuperscript{283}

A point to be noted here is that towards the end of 1947 the CPI also shifted its position radically and came to the conclusion that the Indian independence was a sham. Their new slogan was ‘\textit{yeh azadi jhooti hai}’ (this freedom is a farce). To them, Congress had gone over to imperialism and feudalism, Nehru had become a stooge of Anglo-American imperialism and the government was ruling in a fascist manner.\textsuperscript{284}

Hence, in February 1948, the second congress of CPI espoused an attacking ultra-left line in contrast to its ‘class-collaborationist’ and ‘anti-revolutionary stance’\textsuperscript{285} pursued earlier under the tenure of Puran Chand Joshi, the then the General Secretary of the CPI. It was evident in the newly adopted political thesis of the CPI which raised the slogan of

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{IBFile1948} IB File 316-28, see daily report on the political situation in West Bengal dated May 26, 1948.
\bibitem{trial1948} Later during trial of Dum Dum-Basirhat raid case, facts were revealed corroborating the point that the faction of RCPI led by PD had secret shelters at different locations in Calcutta for keeping arms and ammunitions which were carried by party comrades in taxis from Calcutta to Dum Dum and Basirhat on the day of the action.
\bibitem{leadership2007} This was the allegation against the leadership of the CPI under Secretary Puran Chand Joshi by the new leadership under BT Ranadive.
\end{thebibliography}
overthrowing the Nehru government and argued for the path of promoting in India a ‘People’s Democratic Revolution’. This was indicative of the communist challenge that communism in India was entering a phase of direct confrontation with the bourgeois regime, which greatly inspired the Indian communists and substantial section of the younger generation, its major support base. The actual beginning of the proposed revolution in West Bengal, however, took some more time as the thesis was to be further developed by the West Bengal Provincial Committee according to the specific context of the state. Yet, it was these circumstances coupled with the armed peasant struggle in Telengana, which had been going on against the Nizam of Hyderabad since 1946, but now directed against the Indian government, that paved the way for possible convergence between CPI and the splinter group of RCPI led by PD. This was evident from latter’s conversations with the representative of CPI as delineated in Bharate Samyavadi Anodoloner Dhara. The spirit and argumentative texture of the entire conversation make it an interesting read.

Some relevant points discernibly emerge from this dialogue which are worthy of attention. First, the whole conversation was based on the predominant argument that the prime necessity of the day was to seize

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286 Police reports on RCPI attitude to India’s independence show that like CPI, RCPI reproved independence and held counter-demonstration to the celebration of independence. Anti-government utterances in the street-corner meetings held under the auspices of RCPI (RG) gave expression to its intense dislike to the nature of independence achieved through compromise with the British imperialism and indigenous bourgeois class.
power of local area forcibly by resorting to armed insurrection and to back up that programme by arms and ammunition.\(^{287}\) According to PD, it was the most important issue and component part of the revolutionary communist struggle in that stage and context of the country. Hence, he repeatedly urged the communist interlocutor to make the strategy and tactics of the Communist party clear\(^{288}\). Secondly, in response to the crucial question put by the communist representative about the path of revolution in India, PD’s rejoinder made it plain that “By and large, we have to tread along the lines of revolution in China.”\(^{289}\) However, on this point the difference between CPI and RCPI (IR) turned out clearly. Unlike RCPI group led by PD, CPI representative laid emphasis on organizing revolution in the line of Russian experience. However, one may pertinently bring in mind that after the victory of the Chinese revolution, even the Communist Party of Soviet Union favoured the Chinese model for India. And the Andhra leaders of Telengana struggle were pressurizing the then leadership of the CPI to follow the Chinese line.

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\(^{287}\) In *Bharate Samyavadi Andoloner Dhara*, PD as the representative of Revolutionary Communist group said in no uncertain terms, “Aj jadi biplobi sakhiolike banchite hoi tibe tader anchalik khamata dakhal kontei hobe...Echara aj communist andolan banchite parena...Ajker parishhitte astra kathata na bhaba biplober katha na bhobari samil.” (Today, seizure of local power is a must for the survival of the revolutionary forces. It is the life-blood of Communist movement. In the present circumstances, to think of revolution without arms is almost equivalent to thinking of no revolution at all.) *Rachana Sangraha*, Nabapatra Prakashan, Calcutta, 1999, p137.


\(^{289}\) Ibid, p-135.
Thirdly, another important point raised in this conversation was the objection of the CPI leadership to the RCPI (IR) that the latter suffered from ‘petty-bourgeois impatience’ and that revolution could not expedited by sudden action at will. While replying to it, PD’s argument was that rapid preparation for revolution was woven into the definition of the revolutionary task itself to hasten the desired transformation. In his words, “You must define the task before you take up the task.” But the most important point from the perspective of the showdown in Dum Dum-Basirhat in February 1949 was evident from his comments, “Apnara asen ar nai asen amra amader patho egaboi.” It shows the level of brinkmanship and determined resolve which PD inculcated in his group.

Since the bid to forge a united programme of action which would be common to both the parties had failed, RCPI (IR) under PD’s stewardship started moving alone. Later on this point the political report of the Central Committee of the RCPI said, “The CPI with its long history of struggle only from below utterly neglected the struggle from above to supplement it. And the RCPI took due note of this lack and went ahead with preparations for the struggle from above but neglected to raise the struggle simultaneously from below….a revolutionary unity of these two sections of leaderships could in a large measure have corrected each

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290 Ibid, p-139.
291 Ibid, p-143. (We would go for the set course whether you come or not.)
other's mistakes, (and) made up the shortcomings of the entire struggle. But that was not to be. The repeated attempts of RCPI at united effort were met by the CPI with arrogance..."292 Thereafter mainly under the influence of the idea of the revolutionary communist struggle in China led by Mao ZeDong(1893-1976), PD organized the violent action in Dum Dum-Basirhat area on 26 February 1949. He admitted this in the introduction of his Rachana Sangraha (i.e. collected writings). Thus, the Marxist phase of PD's thought and activities culminated in the armed rising of a section of discontented workers. They were mobilized by the splinter group of the RCPI led by PD in Dum Dum-Basirhat area in 24 parganas on February 26, 1949.

The event began in the morning with 'simultaneous armed blitz' on the Dum Dum Aerodrome, nearby ammunition factory, and the engineering workshop of Jessop and ended in Basirhat, a sub-divisional town, about 30 miles away from Calcutta.293 There this group invaded the police station near treasury—all on the same day on February 26, 1949. It showed the scope of the sweeping operations, and its alacrity and suddenness that caught the administration unprepared. It was evident from the delayed response in the mobilization of police reinforcement to intercept the group. Initially PD's group had succeeded by swift incursion

293 The Amrita Bazar Patrika 27.2.1949. The news struck the headline as "Pitched Battle With Terrorist Gang Near Calcutta".
in penetrating deeper without much resistance toward the principal area of liberation struggle—some villages of Basirhat leaving riverine lane of Ichamati as exit route and moving further into Sundarbans inhabited by long-exploited low-caste peasants. This signaled initial success of the tactics—(hit, move and consolidate) that PD had planned following the Chinese communists.

However, this rising ultimately failed with steep retreat of the group after getting disconcerted before the ‘pitched battle’ with police force. The battle at the site of Basirhat treasury lasted for only 25 minutes pointing how PD’s radical plan went awry with the crushing defeat of the group in the unequal but daring fight against the disproportionately powerful Indian state and its law-enforcing machinery.

Later investigation of this case revealed that it all began with the planned move of pushing certain issues of labour discontent to creating an exploding situation in the factory of Jessop & Company, a big engineering firm located at Dum Dum at the outskirts of Calcutta. Though there were certain grievances amongst the workers, the trouble was deliberately fomented by the RCPI group led by PD to mobilize them

294 In his discussions in Bharate Samyavadi Andoloner Dhara PD disclosed Basirhat to be the principal area which they wanted to liberate from the hold of the Indian government. See PannalalDasgupta Rachana Sangraha (i.e. Pannalal Dasgupta’s collected writings) Nabapatra Prakashan, Calcutta,1999, p-146.

295 Biresh Bhattacharya, an active member of the group which participated in Dum Dum-Basirhat uprising told the researcher in an interview dated 14/6/2011 that their plan was to form people’s army in different villages in Sundarbans and thus to create liberated zones in those areas because in Basirhat town proper there was no peasant habitation. So, they eyed on the peasant areas lying further inside for political support.

296 The Amrita Bazar Patrika dated 28.2.1949. Also see IB file 702/49(81) serial 95/328, p-1j.
for the politically decisive action. PD testified it in Bharate Samyavadi Andoloner Dhara wherein he elaborated how it was designed first to invade the barrack of the armed constabulary at Belgachia. According to this blue-print, the Nager Bazar junction would have to be blocked to make passage for arrival of this group of activists at the Jessop factory for arming the workers for conducting attack on a number of places including nearby branch ammunition factory and Dum Dum jail to set free the prisoners and to enlist those willing to join the political mission for further invasion on Dum Dum Aerodrome. The culminating point of these armed operations would be Basirhat. The insurgents would be required to occupy that town followed by the seizure of local power. "The plan was that after occupying Basirhat, they would extend their jurisdiction over villages, teach the peasants the use of firearms and raise a local army which would help them to establish their own government——

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297 In the judgment of the Second Tribunal constituted to try the Jessop raid case, for example, the meeting of the aggrieved workers on 19 February 1949 was mentioned in which leaders of RCPI (IR) had participated. It was the run up to the horrible massacre in the Jessop factory on 26 February 1949. Besides, the findings of IB file 702/49(81) serial 95/328, specially the notes of the then Superintendent of Police, 24Parganas shows that discontent of the workers was not the primary cause of the violent massacre in Jessop factory. It was planned by the RCPI (PD's group), which controlled the workers' union of the said factory. According to police, the discontent of the workers of the factory rather gave the scope to the party to stage the outrage for political mileage; it was to show acts of heroism and to impede the functioning of the factory which was doing important works on behalf of the Indian government like construction works of the fertilizer factory in Sindhri, Teesta Bridge etc.

298 However, we come to know from the confession of the approver during trial before the First Tribunal, Alipore, that the previously set programme of raiding the Belgachia police armed camp was finally abandoned as it was apprehended that owing to the arrest of two party members at Tala Park on February 25, 1949, the project might have been known to the police. See the report on the trial of this case in Amrita Bazar Patrika dated 31.3.1953

According to PD, it would be an attack based on ‘real revolutionary cooperation’ between the workers and peasants, and to be led by the workers in conformity with the Marxist plan of putting the industrial proletariat to exercise its predominant influence over the entire movement. Therefore, man-power of the Jessop factory and more importantly, fighting attitude of the workers were taken to be the most crucial factor for the entire operation. Obviously, the accomplishment of the set tasks depended on the proper mobilisation of the workers of the Jessop factory in which RCPI (IR) had a powerful union and workers’ panchayet.

It showed the nexus between the party and the workers for which PD chose to concentrate in Dum Dum areas, instead of attempting to organize an uprising on a national scale.

The action began in the morning of 26 February 1949 by hurling bombs and battering to death four European officers of the factory. Of them three, namely F. G. Turnbull, and A. Dwyer, both foreman of the Assembly Shop, and F. C. Brennon, foreman of the Press Shop were killed and their dead bodies were thrown into incandescent furnace by the

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300 Dum Dum Basirhat Raid Case, Amrita Bazar Patrika dated 27.03.1953.
302 In IB file 1804/48 KW we find in the statement of comrade Balaram Chatterjee of Krishnanagore, Nadia that RCPI (Rebel Group) thought that organization of all India form was not possible in 1948-9 due to governmental repression. Hence, they were in favour of concentrating their strength on isolated places where they had strong bases. They wanted to bring about part of revolution through spectacular acts so that political inspiration could spread to the masses in other parts of the country. But while supporting the cause and necessity of the action Chatterjee considered the time to be inopportune because general mass were not politically mobilized and ready for the decisive fight[This was found in the report of Deputy Inspector General IB dated 9.12.1949].
violent workers. Mr. F.A. Augier, also a foreman was stabbed and later he died in hospital. At that time this incident created immense sensation among the public as evident from different news paper reports. After this incident Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy made urgent statement in the Parliament and the State Assembly respectively. ‘They told that the CPI (undivided) and RCPI were separate parties though they worked unitedly on certain occasions. It was exactly what happened in Dum Dum event.’

However, the point to be noted here is that in the 244-pages long judgment delivered by N K Ghose, judge of the Second Tribunal, PD’s name did not figure. He did not directly participate in the violent massacre. If we take into account the course of violent massacre in the factory, it would appear that the relations between the workers and the management became so strained over time that the former were prepared to resort to violence which ultimately burst out in the form of rampage and murderous assault, thus giving it a semblance of labour outrage. Rather these diverted the attention of the workers from joining the armed struggle that RCPI (IR) had contemplated under PD’s leadership. To reiterate, the avowed objective behind the insurgency was to create

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303 Translated from Hastantar Swadhinatar Ardhasatak (Prathom Khanda) by Shankar Ghose, Ananda Publisher, Kolkata, 1999, p-208. Shankar Ghose was a reporter of the Hindusthan Standard published from Calcutta (now Kolkata) at that time.

304 The Second Tribunal was constituted by the Government of West Bengal as per Notification No. 4633-J dated 22.8.1952 under provisions contained in section 3 of the Tribunals of Criminal Jurisdiction Act 1952 (WB Act of xiv of 1952) to try the case arising out of disturbances in Messrs Jessop & Co. Dum Dum on February 26, 1949.
liberated zone in remote peasant areas and gradually develop that small power for full-blown socialist revolution in India. Seen from that angle, the violent massacre in Jessop factory was completely unwanted. The judge held that “these gullible simple workers were mere tools in the hands of their so-called leaders”\textsuperscript{305}, thus hinting at the plot denoting RCPI connection. Yet, the verdict shows that it was basically an overt act of extreme labour discontent over certain unrealized demands.

Prof. Sekhar Bandyopadhyay also held the same view. According to him, it was basically a labour trouble in the new political scenario after independence. In Decolonialization in South Asia: Meanings of Freedom in Post-independence West Bengal 1947-52 Prof. Bandyopadhyay has shown that the post-independent scenario in West Bengal was rife with series of knotty problems, which got aggravated due to inability of the new and inexperienced government to handle them. The signs of social discontentment were most apparent among the working class who began to militate against the volatile state of affairs. According to him, a remarkable feature of industrial unrest at that time was physical assault on European engineers. He cited a number of instances of such unrest. Of all these, “The worst case of physical attack on European supervisory staff was the one orchestrated by a rebel group of the RCPI at the Jessop factory in Dum Dum on 27\textsuperscript{th} February 1949...what was most politically

\textsuperscript{305} See p-240 of the judgment by N. K. Ghosh, Judge, Second Tribunal, Alipore in IB File 702-49(233A), serial 95/354.
significant about this incident was the violent death of four Europeans, which caused concern in England and the issue was raised in both houses of the British Parliament. The British legislators were reassured that this had 'no anti-British significance', but this anxiety could have far-reaching repercussions for diplomatic relations and foreign investments. The Jessop incident, therefore, became a major headache for the government and the police, who were intent on preventing any recurrence of such attacks on Europeans, as this would have serious adverse effects on the country’s economic and foreign relations. It clearly showed that in India all was not quiet in industrial front. Besides, the horrible murder of Europeans assumed exaggerated significance since in this case the matter evoked international concern.

In response to the obvious question as to what motivated the workers to conduct such attacks, Prof. Bandyopadhyay observed, “perhaps a more cogent motive behind such attacks was an attempt to reclaim the right of citizenship as the workers interpreted it....In other words, the old days of controlling labour would not work anymore in the new days of freedom, which had transformed the workers into citizens and their European bosses into enemies of their freedom.” Clearly, Prof. Bandyopadhyay

306 However, the then SP, 24 Parganas of West Bengal stated in his secret note that racial prejudice was presumed to cause the violent attack on the European officers of Jessop factory vide IB file702/49 (81) serial 95/328.
308 Ibid, p-42.
did not think that the Dum Dum-Basirhat case was manifestation of left radicalism in West Bengal. But Dum Dum-Basirhat case was not merely an event of labour trouble; rather it appeared to be part of a bigger plot to make a revolutionary rising by PD. It was evident from the simultaneous occurrence of armed attacks on a number of strategically important places—Dum Dum Aerodrome, Gourepore outpost, Basirhat police station, treasury etc. From the Main Case Diaries we find precise details, unearthed by thorough investigation, as to how these attacks were carried out. For example, according to the Main Case Diary (hereafter CD) 1 of Dum Dum Police Station (hereafter PS) on 26 February 1949, the officer-in-charge A. K. Sengupta along with Sub Inspector Mukul Ranjan Dutta and some armed constables of the said PS first arrived at the Mechanical section of Jessop factory at about 11.32 AM shortly after hearing a number of successive explosions coming from there. In the factory they found Mr. Augier and Mr. A. K. Das were lying on the floor of the general office in a pool of blood. Subsequently, they received the information over phone that a serious breach of peace was taking place in Aerodrome. On arrival they learnt that a gang of young men numbering 10 or 12, armed with sten guns, rifles, revolvers, bombs and crackers had raided the place by throwing bombs. They shot the sentry constable of the airport gold vault guard, injured the flight supervisor of the British
Overseas Airways Corporation with a revolver, set fire to a two-engined airplane of the Air (Survey) Company in hangar No. 10 and caused other damages. The raiders also looted 7 police rifles from the gold guard and decamped. It was ascertained that the raiders proceeded towards Barasat along Jessore Road in cars. Meanwhile, police reinforcement including Superintendent of Police 24 parganas, Reserve Inspector (RI), Alipore and others had come down to the airport. The SP directed the SI, Dum Dum PS to chase the raiders. On the way, they received information that the armed group had also raided the police outpost at Gourepore. At 14.40 hours the force under the command of SI, Dum Dum and RI Alipore reached Basirhat and learnt that the raiders had already attacked the police station there. When they marched on to capture them, the latter opened fire from different sides. After about 20 minutes of gun battle several police personnel were severely wounded and the raiders had fled in different directions in small batches.309

Similarly one can look into the main case diaries of Basirhat PS since Basirhat was the principal area of the operation. According to CD1, at about 14-15 hours Narendra Narayan Bose, the SI of Basirhat Police Station heard a great noise of simultaneous arrival of a number of motor

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309 Main Case Diaries Dum Dum PS case 28(2)49, IB File 702-49(9A) serial 95/94, see p-1-15 of CD1. According to IB file 702/49(81) serial 95/328 regarding progress report of police investigation of the armed raid, when retreating the raiders had split into several batches. One batch of about six crossed the river at Akherpur to the north of Itindaghat and proceeded on foot. Another batch of six left towards south in a boat towards Pantitarchar about 4 miles from Itindaghat. Another group of suspects tried to escape by down train but was intercepted later.
cars\textsuperscript{310} inside the thana compound, followed by repeated gun shots and cries. SI then rushed to his quarters and to the sub-treasury to inform that the thana had been raided. He directed the treasury guards to be in readiness against possible attack. Under his command the treasury guards counter-attacked the raiders from different directions. At that stage the raiders retreated behind thana and went towards Itindaghat. Before that they looted arms from the malkhana, set fire to the thana building, and threw bombs at the sub-treasury causing damage to the wireless station.

According to the CD, the raiders were about 30 in number and they were variously armed with sten guns, rifles, pistols, revolvers, hand grenades, bombs, high explosives etc.\textsuperscript{311} This causes the impression that it was basically a sporadic violent attempt at seizure of power by a small group of communist youths. Viewed thus the attempt fell far short of a radical uprising of the masses of workers and peasants.

The leaflet styled as Lal Nishan (i.e. Red Flag signifying the introduction of communist revolution) which was distributed during this operation by the members of PD’s group and later seized by the police\textsuperscript{312} and exhibited in this case also made plain the political purpose of the action.

\textsuperscript{310} From Main Case Diaries Basirhat PS case 6(3)49, IB File 702/49(40A) Part 1 vide CD1 we find that the raiders had seized the cars of SDO Gour Chandra Mondal, Chairman of Basirhat Municipality namely Sudhindranath Mazumder and Head Mistress of Basirhat Girls’ H.E School Srijata Smriti Sen in the road near Harishpur at a distance of about one and half miles to the west of Basirhat PS. The latter were going to attend a function at Dhanyakuria HE School. The raiders forcefully commandeered their cars and made them accompany to the Basirhat thana.

\textsuperscript{311} Main Case Diaries Basirhat PS case 6(3)49, IB File 702/49(40A) see p-80-81 of CD1.

\textsuperscript{312} In the IB File 702/49 (40A) containing main case diaries at Basirhat PS on 26.2.1949 and 27.2.1949 we find specific reference of this Bengali leaflet entitled “Lal Nishan-Sangramer Dak-Biplabi Samyavadi Dal”, ending with the slogan “Inchib Zindabad”. See CD 1&2.
According to IB File 316/28, PD reportedly drafted the leaflet. It was meant for promoting political propaganda against the existing order of society and government to which PD posited his revolutionary programme and sought to justify his call for action. The main CDs of Basirhat PS also show that the raiders shouted the political slogan—“Kishan Mazdoor Zindabad”. It proves doubtlessly that it was not simply an armed adventure or a case of terrorist attack, though, in effect, it did create panic in the industrial arena due to horrible violence and its tragic consequences in Jessop that remains one of the most unheard of incidents till date. However, the places of attack, and the political manuscript, posters etc, later recovered by police, and explicit political slogan of attackers furnish evidence, both material and circumstantial, that the activists espoused the cause of the peasants and labourers, the most exploited classes lying on the threshold of revolt in the then conditions prevailing in the Indian state. It was this general political understanding, which they subscribed under PD’s orientation of thought.

With the arrest of most of the activists of this group by the end of 1951 and military crackdown on RCPI (IR) in Assam, this particular phase of

313 See notes on the activities of PD alias Bara Babu, @ Narayan Gupta, @ Naren Jana in IB File 316-28.
314 CD 1 of the IB File 702/49 (40A), Main case diaries, Basirhat PS case No.6.3.49.
315 In Amrita Bazar Patrika dated 27.2.1949 the headlines struck as Pitched Battle with Terrorist Gang near Calcutta. Later in police files we also find mention that the RCPI group in collaboration with CPI was pursuing a common revolutionary programme and that both these parties had taken to organized terrorism and violence.
action finally became a closed chapter. It emerged from police inquiry that the workers of Jessop factory were to join PD's group in the decisive struggle for a revolutionary rising. But this did not happen. The plan was to mobilize the aggrieved workers and peasants and build up a team to be guided by the party workers in organizing armed actions for seizure of local power in the far-flung peasant areas of 24 parganas in Basirhat and sundarbans. As such, it was not conceived of as labour riot. On the contrary, it had radical political objective of capturing political power in rural areas and with quick mobility extend this grass-roots base of revolutionary power to other areas to develop nationwide revolutionary upsurge for socialism. Evidently, that did not materialize, but the incident wrote a prelude to a new era with further such possibilities of communist uprising.

Certain important points emerge from analysis of this event of armed rising. First, simultaneous and rapid occurrence of the attacks on specific time and date with the armed strength of the R.C.P.I group was indicative of its highly planned move and mobility. According to PD, 'these were intended to meet the least resistance, secure initial victory over the enemy and thus to gain certain advantages at the outset. But there is no place of

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316 From supplementary CDS of the case at Basirhat PS we learn that some employees of Jessop & Co. had directly participated in the armed action on February 26, 1949, Nikhil Bhattacherji for example. But workers of the factory did not join PD's group en masse. However, it is learnt from the progress report of the cases [IB File 702/49(81)] that thirty workers of Jessop factory suspected to be part of the complicity were arrested by the police.
conspiratorial secrecy in the course of carrying forward revolutionary flow thereafter.\textsuperscript{317} So, it was a means, or rather a tactical line taken to organize revolutionary action so that this action could boost up the morale of the masses. In fact, Dum Dum-Basirhat was not a guerrilla war, rather a frontal onslaught on the Indian state not for any partial demand like land, but directly for ushering in revolution in India. Later in 1951 in an interview to an IB Inspector PD opined that Dum Dum-Basirhat action was an expression of people’s inner urge for a revolution to secure social justice and to put an end to the existing social structure\textsuperscript{318}. Hence, actions were purposely directed at the armed components of state power, not any individual capitalist or feudal lord. Yet, as direct and open confrontation with the state could be highly damaging, probably the tactics was taken to storm surprisingly and mount attacks simultaneously ‘to scatter away the enemy’s concentrated strength, to heckle the enemy forces thoroughly and ultimately to put the last nail on its coffin’.\textsuperscript{319} Besides, Basirhat being a borderline area was a strategic choice. The idea was that the government in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) would not cooperate with the Indian government to oust the communist rule if installed at the place.\textsuperscript{320} It bore out fine calculations that went into planning the attack.

\textsuperscript{317} Translated from \textit{Bharate Samyavadi Andoloner Dhara} as incorporated in \textit{Pannalal Rachana Sangraha}, Nabapatra Prakashan, Calcutta, 1999, p-156.

\textsuperscript{318} Recorded views of PD in an interview with IB Inspector, IB File 316/28, serial Nil/28.

\textsuperscript{319} \textit{Aftar Dum Dum-Basirhat}, RCPI, 1949, p-33.

\textsuperscript{320} However, on request from the West Bengal police East Pakistani authorities took steps for concerted action in arresting some of the raiders who fled across the border and took shelter in the villages in
In reality, however, we find that the attackers were guided more by the short-time idea of plundering arms and acts of arson with a view to engaging in clash with the police than following the communist line of paving the way for mass uprising. They regarded this approach as politically correct and hence from the beginning, bent on armed struggle as prelude to mass revolt to overthrow the ‘bourgeois government backed by imperialist and feudal forces’. Main CDs in the IB File corroborate how the idea of arms training was systematically implanted by PD and his associates in the minds of the youth through secret indoor meetings and discussions confined to the members of the group. People were not taken into confidence on the plea of maintaining secrecy except some spade works to mobilize the workers in Dum Dum Jessop factory, and

Satkhira under Khulna district. Police report specifically mentions instances of such mutual cooperation though formal extradition proceedings were yet to be initiated at the level of central government. Subal Mukherjee, a member of PD’s group told the researcher in personal interview dated 12/6/2011 that there was a common saying in the party “maro kam, tara karo besi” meaning chase more than kill so that after flight of policemen their left off weapons could be collected. In Dum Dum-Basirhat rising main CDs in different IB files are replete with reports of looting of firearms by this group by attacking sentry constables and police guards.

The idea of armed rising is not alien to communism. In Soviet Russia, for example, Revolutionary Military Committee was set up in October, 1917. But its task was to arm the workers for revolutionary uprising. This did not happen in case of Dum Dum –Basirhat uprising that remained confined to the refrain of armed conflict divorced from mass of workers and public at large. Although in Bharate Samyavadi Andoloner Dkara PD spoke of two general formulations on which a combined mass front could be constructed, one being the militant anti-government attitude among the poor, and the other—the vision of future society representing their real emancipation from exploitation (See PD’s Rachana Sangraha, p-180), in practice, we hardly find comparable efforts which could succeed in winning over the vast masses of workers and peasants as steps towards Indian revolution. Instead of rousing the masses ideologically, the idea of immediate armed struggle was invoked to justify action in haste.

However, one must remember the political situation of the day. The CPI was banned and police repression was at its height. So, there was hardly any scope to openly propagate the ideological line of revolutionary communism among the masses. It is learnt from the news paper report of approver Sushil Bose’s deposition before the First Tribunal published in the Amrita Bazar Patrika dated 27.03.1953 that “On the instruction of Panna Babu, the members of the party were given practical training in the use of firearms. Binda Singh gave the recruits training in Belgachia, Dhakuria, Uttarpara, Dum Dum and Basirhat...The immediate object of the training was to counter the activities of the Government in the procurement of paddy.”

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peasants of some villages in and around Basirhat in which Tarapada Roy, Bimal Mitra et al had taken leading part. In contrast to Assam where the same group worked vigorously for the rights of small peasants and agricultural labourers, in Bengal PD's group did not pay sufficient attention to the land question in the countryside. It seems that the task of politicization of rural people was never seriously undertaken. As such, the vast majority of masses remained unaware of the radical political intention of this group. That was why, the members of the public and the local folk did not respond to political slogan chanting by the group, which marked extremely restricted character of the movement.324

Besides, prima facie the phenomenon being a one-shot attack at specific pockets hardly cast light as to how PD, the chief mastermind thought of spreading the struggle across the horizon, especially in those places where the party had no base. It was probably assumed that if revolutionary impulse could be generated through daring acts at one pocket, it would act like tinder to permeate the spark to other parts of the country. What was even more striking was that barring senior members of the leadership, most of the participants lacked in-depth understanding that revolution in the sense of conscious actions by masses themselves could

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324 However, according to the political report adopted at the meeting of the Central Committee of RCPI(PD's faction) in February, 1952, the failure of RCPI was not due to lack of response from the masses. Rather, the failure was primarily due to over-enthusiasm 'that swept away all sobriety in estimation of forces' as well as organizational deficiency 'to coordinate the masses, sustain their energy and mood and lead them forward resolutely.' *The Task Ahead*, a RCPI publication, Calcutta, 1952, p-8.
not be brought about simply by engineering violent raids on government establishments. The confessions of the arrested young members of this group evinced that many of them did not have clear idea of the goals to be realized or the implications of the political line pursued by PD, the generalissimo at the top leadership. There was no serious programme to politically educate the cadres and imbue them with communist ideology in tune with Indian conditions. Besides, the way the officers of the Jessop factory were attacked gave rise to the surmise that the motive behind the action was to create extreme panic. No wonder, the then Superintendent of Police of 24 Parganas wrote in his confidential note that 'the armed raid was a political stunt by the members of the PD's group to get satisfaction out of those deeds of heroism and daring acts, to stop works in Jessop, to destroy the morale of the police force in the province and to compel the administration to accord more importance to the party'.

However, it should not be glossed over that the angry workers of Jessop factory were politically mobilized to take up arms against the managers not with the intention of exacting any concessions, but rather to destroy, forever, the rule of the industrialists and the institutional framework of the post-independent Indian state which supported them.

However, judicial confessions of a number of youths arrested in connection with this case confirm that there were floating elements in

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325 Supervision note of the Superintendent of Police, 24Parganas in IB file 702/49(81) serial 95/328.
PD's group who had only vague ideas of communism. Instead of acquainting them with the essential ideas of the doctrine, their energies and youthful bravado were harnessed for establishing a preconceived brand of revolution. As such, roles of the activists were pre-fixed, more like tools of actions controlled by the supreme commander of the group, namely PD: All these showed gross lacunae inherent in the very conception of revolution as PD conceived of it.

Secondly, use of modern fire arms was another noticeable feature of the operation. PD believed and he also repeatedly said that because of excessively repressive policies of the Congress regime struggle of the masses could not but be armed. Hence arms would be necessary, as also military leadership and people's militia. In this PD was particularly inspired by contemporary armed revolutionary struggles against Anglo-American imperialism in Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, Greece and China. Hence, use of modern arms was natural corollary of that line of thinking. Needless to say, the blueprint of the fight was very important in this case. It meant designing with an eye to minute details of the attack as well as equipping the revolutionary vanguards technically regarding the knowhow of modern warfare. Evidently, "the RCPI paid more attention to the technical side than to the political and organizational side of the preparation of the bases of the struggle. Fully conscious of the inadequacy of the political and organizational preparations the RCPI
estimated that the inadequacy could be made up by the tactics of attacking the state power from the very beginning. The clear aims of the struggle, from the very beginning, would rally vast masses and also keep them united."326

But the impact of emphasis on this aspect of the activities of the party was not wholesome. On one hand, it might be argued at the level of generality that emphasis on arms indicated less reliance on the masses and their power. On the other, storage of sophisticated arms created undue excitement within the party, especially amongst the younger section. It was responsible to a considerable extent in pushing the party towards sanguinary path of armed fight. Mihir Bain, a member of the Central Committee of RCPI opined that the idea of armed revolution poured so much enthusiasm in the younger section that without this action probably PD's group would have broken up. Else, it would have anti-social manifestation.327 So, weapons instead of adding strength ultimately turned out to be a predicament for his group.

326 The Task Ahead, the political report adopted by the Central Committee of RCPI, Calcutta, February, 1952, p-12.

327 Views expressed by comrade Mihir Bain in a personal interview with the researcher dated 8/5/2011. However, the point to be noted here is that Mihir Bain was not a member of the RCPI at the time of Dum Dum attack. He joined the party much after the incident. But since he was a follower of Sudhindra Kumar’s line in the party, it may be inferred that the views expressed by him trickled down from such sources and ranks of the party who could not subscribe to ultra-leftist detraction of party’s activities. Also Pasupati Mitra and Nirmal Bhandari, both belonging to PD's group informed the researcher in separated interviews that quite a sophisticated weapon were collected through secret channels by PD himself and his colleagues in the party. Even robberies were resorted to procure arms. Also according to police report, 316-28 part vi, PD succeeded in smuggling quite a lot of firearms from military and purchased weapons even from ordinary smugglers. These arms included dynamite, grenade, detonator, brain guns, sten guns etc., not traditional type one shot guns.
Also regarding foreign, particularly Chinese influence on PD’s thought, we may say that by accepting the externality outside India as given reality he saw no need to evolve a fresh view of the political situation in India. The Birbhum thesis bore out this fallacy. The talk of internationalism reverberated in the thesis was also indicative of a stereotyped approach which held PD’s conception hostage to the categorical imperative of communist paradigm without thinking in terms of India’s conditions or of an independent local model. There were wide differences between India and China. For instance, the Chinese polity had a loose centre, whereas the British had developed a centralized administrative structure in India. Besides, unlike India, there were various zones under war-lords in China. This apart, overwhelming majority of China’s population consisted of peasants. So, the Peasants’ problems became a veritable issue in the Chinese revolution and strength of the peasants constituted the principal force of this revolution. Also, the ways of country-wide mobilization of peasantry in China under Mao ZeDong’s leadership was unique. Unlike China, Capitalism in India was dispersed throughout the country. There was more talk about socialism in India while the freedom movement assumed an all-pervasive form. Yet, India’s situation widely varied from that of China. It was simply incredible for the splinter group of RCPI led by PD to follow the Chinese model in toto. So, what was necessary was to ponder over modalities of revolution in Indian context. But his
experiment at revolutionary rising in Dum Dum-Basirhat areas indicated that he lacked comprehensive thinking. In a nutshell, it was an impetuous action to undermine the state and its administrative apparatus within a small pocket, a bid to cause transient disruption without deeper consideration. No wonder, it ended abortively at the primary stage of the ‘rebellion’,\textsuperscript{328} signaling inherent defectiveness of PD’s thought.

Thirdly, an interesting point about Dum Dum-Basirhat action was why it was initiated with undue haste. In PD’s words, \textit{sedin ba takkhuni ekta kichu karar janno patir kono tagid chilona—shramikder chapei amader prostuti sampurna na koreo agrasar hote hoyechilo}.\textsuperscript{329} That was to say, the party (i.e. the faction of RCPI led by PD) had no urgency to plunge into action immediately or on that day. Rather, it was compelled to advance with incomplete preparation under the pressure of the workers. It made clear that the plan of uprising was chalked in a way to synchronize with the revolt of the Jessop factory workers shortly after retrenchment.

\textsuperscript{328} In terms of conjunctural analysis in which social revolution is understood as rapid and basic transformation of a society’s state and class structures by a conjunction or combination of two coincidences: coincidence of societal structural change with class upheaval and the coincidence of political with social transformation besetting the state, all failed attempts are called rebellions (i.e. revolt of the subordinate classes), not revolutions. Since the violent revolutionary attempt by PD’s group at Dum Dum-Basirhat in February 1949 did not lead to a ‘rapid’ restructuring of state power, it would seem that in Skocpol’s terms the action of the group of RCPI activists was not a revolutionary movement at all. So, it must, post facto, be labelled as a futile rebellion of little revolutionary consequence. However, in the communist revolutionary heritage in post-independent India, the Dum Dum-Basirhat action is reckoned for its fighting spirit, enthusiasm and impetus that it had generated. Although the author of \textit{After Dum Dum-Basirhat} (September, 1949) writes, “One should not be mechanical to think that any future action must be similar to that of Dum Dum-Basirhat”, yet, revolution understood in terms of a process advancing through trials like fight and fight again when failed, the importance of the action can be realized in the light of the experiences it left for the posterity.

order was issued by the management. Clearly he wanted to use existing labour discontent in the factory as a mass-base of the planned insurrection, not as imposition of the struggle from above on the masses. Of course, it was due to the pressure of Jessop workers' union that the brisk arrangements were made and consequently, action could not be well-organised.

However, it was not fully correct that there was no urge for immediate action. It was because PD was known for his thesis of immediate socialist insurrection. As the author of the book *After Dum Dum-Basirhat*(1949) said, “To wait for a better preparation, better days or better circumstances so that one single successful blow can be hurled against the enemy tantamount to sheer stupidity or a mere flippant thought or a subterfuge. It is scientific and workable to strike and strike instead of waiting for one and final blow...Hence, let there be an all-out attempt for such abound preparations and, wherever and whenever possible hit today. One such act will pave the path for greater act and series of acts.” It squarely unveils the level of eagerness intertwined with the idea of spreading the revolutionary atmosphere in the country that shaped the plan of immediate action in Dum Dum-Basirhat.

330 The company put up the retrenchment order in the afternoon of 24 February, 1949. In *Bharate Sanyodani Andoloner Dēra* PD said that the workers of Jessop factory knew that the RCPI would take it as a challenge and every worker would participate in the decisive action against the management's decision. PD's Collected works, p-149.

331 *After Dum Dum-Basirhat* published by RCPI, 1 September, 1949, p-9. It was presumably written either by PD or Amar Raha.
Now we have to explain why we may consider Dum Dum-Basirhat action as the culmination of PD’s radical political thinking and functioning. This action was the manifestation and implementation of his avowed stance of imminent strike for revolutionary seizure of power. In this sense his radical communist commitment found its fruition in this action. It created a stir and made a history in which PD became a known figure. Although his effort failed dismally, he regarded this action to be very important in terms of its impact and lessons. But he did not get scope to organize further action since all his attempts to regroup in the light of anti-imperialist struggles abroad (Korear Dak i.e. Call of Korea written at the time of North Korea’s revolutionary fight against American imperialism) came to an end in 1951. He was nabbed in Calcutta by the Intelligence Branch on 2.7.1951 and put to trial leading to his conviction of transportation for life on 7.5.1955 for waging war against the Indian state and commission of other offences. Importantly, by this time his political views underwent crucial transformation. Therefore, Dum Dum event in real sense signified the apex of his radical political thought. However, it was not an isolated event; rather in the contemporary context

332 Korear Dak (November 1950) was written by PD under the pseudonym Narayan Gupta. It is a thin booklet containing 26 odd pages. It begins with the following praising words, “Korear janasadharan o tader neta communist-ra je bhobe moria hoye larai korche—tara eka eka prithibir jaboipya dhanatantri saptaratihar biruddhe je bhobe dariche tar tulana itihase melena.” (Quoted from Korear Dak, p-1). It means that the death-defying resistance put up by the Korean people and their communist leaders against the entire camp of world’s capitalist powers had no parallel in history. It was purported to resuscitate the lost zeal of his group-members after failure of DumDum-Basirhat insurgency action.

333 PD was also convicted under section 400IPC for being a member of a gang associated with committing dacoities and sentenced to 7 years of rigorous imprisonment in the gang case on 22.9.1956.
of all-pervading crises in India and abroad, the splinter group of RCPI led by PD considered it expedient to take up the programme of immediate socialist revolution to be finalized by mass insurrection. Seen from this angle Dum Dum-Basirhat action was the outcome of gradual escalation of his radical political thought.

Thus it is clear from above how PD's inclination towards left ideology motivated him to join RCPI led by ST. While in 1938-39 he worked as a communist organiser in the countryside of Birbhum, developments in the 1940s paved the way for his assuming the leadership role in the party. His differences with ST were basically related to the interpretation of the Indian situation and timing of organising a mass revolution. This resulted in the division of RCPI in 1948 after Birbhum conference. The victory of PD's thesis gave way to Dum Dum-Basirhat action in February 1949. Analyses show that it was an impetuous action without deeper consideration of its implications. This resulted in the disorganization of PD's radical programme. He strongly felt following the catastrophic developments that Indian realities would not allow a fruitful application of the principles of Marxian revolutionary politics. So, Dum Dum-Basirhat uprising was not the appropriate way to accomplish revolutionary transformation of the Indian society.