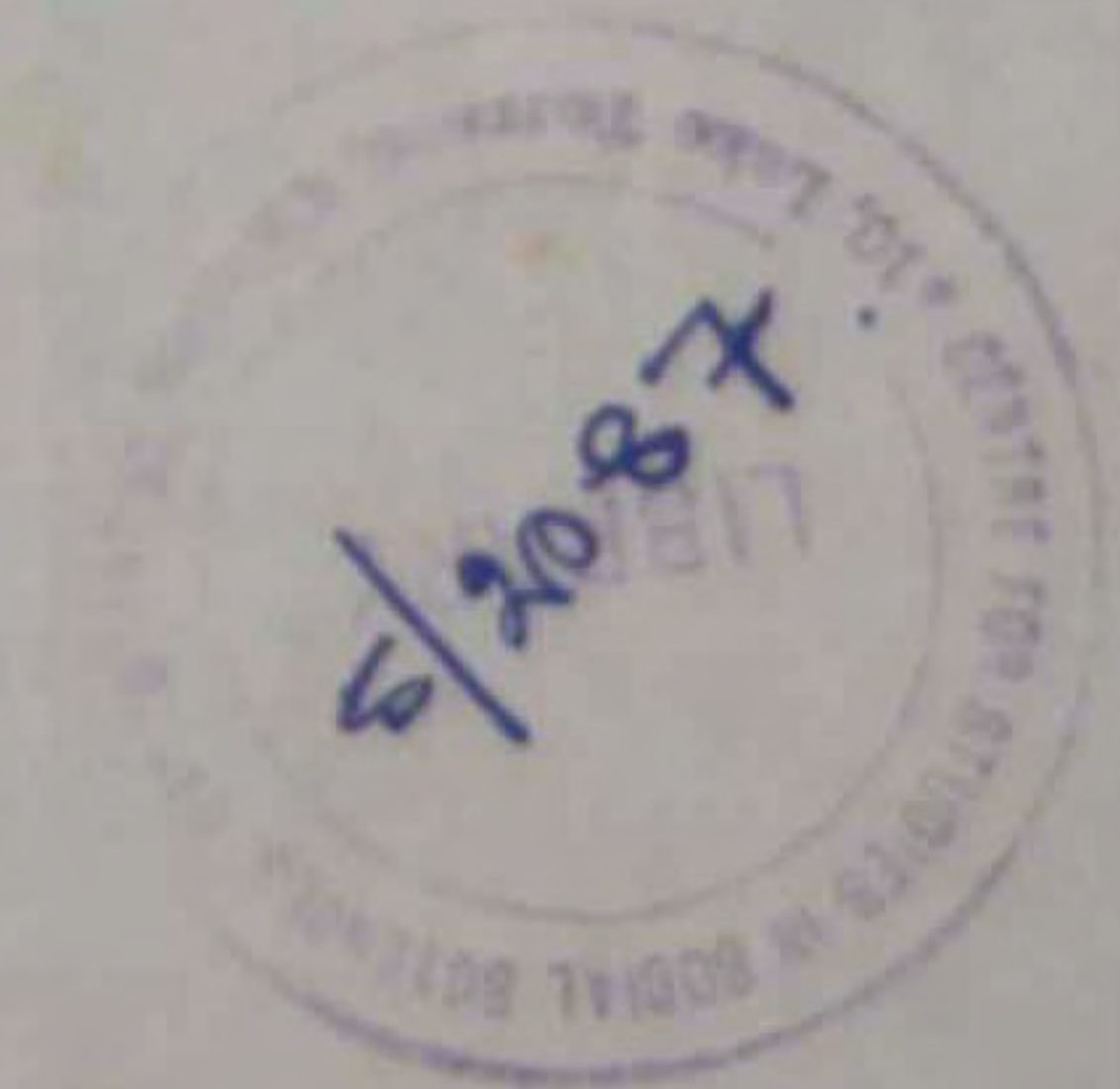


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The Tebhaga Movement in Bengal, 1946-47

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The Tebhaga Movement in Bengal, 1946-47

The most discernible characteristic feature of the standard structuralist history of the communist-led peasant movement known as the Tebhaga is the attempt to trace the genesis, development and the final articulation of the main demand concerning sharecroppers in terms of the broad contours of Bengal's agrarian history, particularly in terms of the specifics of the evolution of the system of sharecropping upto the mid-1940s. The movement culminated in a series of intense struggles and agitations in the undivided province of Bengal during the closing months of 1946, and its tempo was sustained, though not to the same extent in all the affected areas, throughout the harvesting season of 1946-47.

The representative structured accounts of this movement are built on the premise that the Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha (BPKS), the frontal peasant organisation of the CPI in Bengal, had espoused and articulated this long-standing issue into the mould of an organised movement. Beginning with this opening theme, they invariably go on to ascribe a certain degree of linear progression to the processes through which the economics of agrarian class formation is implied to have been embedded with the politics of mobilisation of those classes.¹ Hence, the very crucial role played by the middle-class intelligentsia consisting of activists and functionaries from the organised political parties remains thematically underexamined. In all these accounts, one finds that there is no attempt to identify those specific historical conjunctures at which the communist mobilisers intervened quite decisively into the ongoing political processes. Consequently, new twists and turns have been given or some fresh possibilities or tensions have been generated within the movements. Similar interventionist functions were discharged

at other levels by other organised parties/groups/forces such as the Muslim League, the Congress, the bureaucracy or the State in their respective capacities as adversaries and suppressors of the movement. A structural history of the Tebhaga movement has failed so far in identifying these specific conjunctures of intervention or mediation as separate and independent elements capable of determining the growth and outcome of the movement or even initiating the move to launch it at a certain particular point of time.

This is exactly what my narrative in this paper highlights. Tracing in detail the background against which the coming of the Tebhaga should be set, it scans through the available literature of the Communist Party in Bengal in a chronologically sequential order to establish the point that until the decision to launch the movement was taken in September 1946, there is no specific information available from the relevant data which could speak of any developments indicative of what may be called 'deliberate and conscious planning and preparations' for such a massive province-wide political agitation. Although it has not been projected quite unequivocally or spelt out in clear terms, the hitherto unclarified structural discourse on the Tebhaga movement poses the entire problematic in terms of a partly organised and partly spontaneous agrarian movement which emerged at that particular juncture as a natural sequel to what the BPKS had already done or was planning to do on the peasant front. The essential point that is lost sight of is the need to look into the history of the intervention on the part of those who participated in the movement from outside the local agrarian societies. Partha Chatterjee has emphasized the 'independent political role' of this middle-class intelligentsia in all the agrarian class-struggles that flared up in colonial Bengal from

the 1920s onward.² Pointing out the need to break out of the monistic and linear paradigm of historical understanding of the well-known movements of 'mobilisation' in the last decades of colonial rule in India, he has urged to go beyond the practice of using the 'intricate models for representing the political arithmetic of mobilisations' and the 'sophisticated conceptual toolboxes for disarticulating the political economy of colonial social formations'.³

It is here that the 'narrative mode'⁴ could lead to new possibilities by generating new questions and queries relating to the history of intervention by the organised political parties or by the state into the multifarious political processes which collectively signified what has come out to be accepted as the 'Telhaga Spree'. This is where I hope to break new ground.⁵

In constructing the present narrative, I have consulted three different types of sources :

- (a) Secret police records of the Special Branch (SB) & the Intelligence Branch (IB) of the Govt. of Bengal;
- (b) Daily newspapers and other organs etc., of the Communist Party in Bengal, and of its Central Wing;
- (c) Some of the Calcutta-based English and Bengali dailies run mostly by groups known for their 'pronounced hostility' to the Communists in Bengal (The data obtained from this category of sources have been used only as these have been found in the Communist Party's literature);

II

The decision to launch the Tebhaga movement in the harvesting season of 1946-47 was taken by the Bengal Provincial Kisan Council sometime in September 1946.⁶ Abdullah Rasul, who functioned intermittently as one of the office bearers of the Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha (BPKS) during the whole of 1930s and 40s, and who later has written a comprehensive history of the BPKS, covering its activities in the first thirty four years of its existence and concentrating mainly on the issues, achievements and problems as raised and recorded in the successive provincial conferences, has given us a thematic account of the circumstances in which this decision was finally taken. The end of the Second World War in Europe in May 1945, and the defeat of Japan four months later generated new enthusiasm among the peasants of Bengal who had all along rallied themselves round the Kisan Sabha's stand to support the Soviet and the allied powers against the fascist axis forces. From 1943 onwards the Kisan Sabha had been forcefully carrying out consistent propaganda campaigns among the peasants in favour of strengthening the struggle for the country's freedom by bringing about unity between the Congress and the Muslim League. It had always demanded the release of the Congress leaders which materialized after the war. At the same time, fresh negotiations began between the British Government on the one hand, and on the other, the Congress and the League leaders about the country's political future, like other sections of the people in the country the peasants too hoped that the imperialist rulers would take certain big steps to fulfil their class demands along with the national demand for independence. In the event of any non-fulfilment of these demands, they were prepared for a bigger struggle. But the leadership of the BPKS was lacking in class consciousness

required to feel correctly the pulse of the peasants who would have responded well to a call for launching such a movement. Owing to a confused assessment of the entire situation, it failed to rise up to the occasion.⁷

According to Rasul, the imperialist rulers then launched a counter offensive to deal effectively with the peasants who had been able to advance to some extent in securing some of their specific demands during the war years. The move to combat the Hajong agitators in Mymensingh district where the Tanka movement was going on for the past few years was a case in point. All kinds of repressive measures were taken, and this "barbaric coercion" met with "desperate militant resistance" from the peasantry there. The fact that the stage had been set for a showdown also became evident in other spheres such as the naval mutiny (February 1946) which shook the foundations of British power in India, and the very wide mass support it enjoyed left both the Congress and the League bewildered and scared. The existence of this enormous popular democratic force was felt unmistakably in the massive rallies and demonstrations organized in Calcutta in connection with the Indian National Army Day in November 1945, and the Rashid Ali Day in February 1946. But the leadership of the BPKS at its 9th provincial conference at Moubhog in Khulna district (held between 21st to 24th May, 1946) could not really take a proper perspective on this highly volatile situation.⁸ Quoting from the report presented by the Secretary of the BPKS at the conference, Rasul points out that the main proposal of the conference was about "the Permanent Settlement and the abolition of the Zamindari System", and a call, which was "more rhetorical than reflective of a correct and realistic outlook on the part of the leadership", was given "to prepare under the guidance of the Samity for the final battle against Zamindari exploitation in each and every village of Bengal". (the phrases in quotes are from the Moubhog report, p.21).⁹

It may be instructive here to note that as early as 1940 the call to launch a movement for securing a two-thirds share of the produce for the sharecropper was given at the Panjiya Conference (1940), the move for which might have also been guided, among other factors, by the Land Revenue Commission's recommendation recognising the legitimacy of this demand. The programme for the share-croppers' movement adopted at the Nalitabari Conference (1943) also emphasized the need to organize the share-croppers on the basis of this demand.¹⁰ From 1943 onwards the leadership of the BPKS began to function in a way which often pushed aside class issues in favour of other considerations, for instance in its proposals for stepping up food production in the country during that period. The only excuse that was given to justify such a stand was that the question of achieving broad national unity had become crucial in the period of the anti-fascist war. The vacillations of the BPKS leadership persisted, and it kept faltering in its attempts to chalk out concrete programmes of action even after the war came to an end.¹¹ It was admitted at the Moubhog conference that the Kisan Samities at the district and union levels were not functioning properly, and the whole organization needed more discipline. The root cause of all these shortcomings, it was pointed out in the Secretary's report, was "the liberal reformist tendencies" that became rampant in the war years.¹²

It is against this general background of political events and tendencies that the coming of the Tebhaga should be set. I have begun with a detailed analytical account of this background for two specific reasons : (a) I intend to start my narrative at this juncture where we find almost no signs of any preparedness for the struggle that was to come in about a few months' time; (b) It would not have been possible for me to build

up a separate narrative for the above mentioned political events and I have chosen to take the main arguments from Abdullāh Rasul's account as my entry point. In my narrative I will therefore try to trace the course of events which occurred in the months following the Moubhog conference. Let me first elaborate a little further on the conference itself :

"The Ninth Annual Session of the Bengal Provincial Kisan Conference was held at Moubhog, Khulna from 20th to 24th May. Krishna Binode Ray (B.R.5718 C.P.I.) presided over the open session of the Conference on 23rd May which was attended by about 3,000 people including 500 delegates (mostly C.P.I. members) from different parts of Bengal. Sajjad Zahir (C.P.I.) of the U.P., the Editor of Naya Zamana of Bombay, hoisted the red flag. Shib Varma of the U.P., the Editor of Naya Zamana of Bombay, hoisted the red flag. Shib Varma of the U.P., who opened the Conference, Prof. Amrita Lal Ghosh and the President in their speeches urged unity among the kisans, advocated the destruction of British Imperialism, demanded the abolition of the zamindari system and the return of all lands to the tenants without any compensation to the landlords, pleaded for the economic and social uplift of kisans, and warned the audience against the mischievous propoganda of interested persons that the Kisan Sabha was an organisation of the C.P.I. There were three sittings of the delegates session on 21st, 22nd and 24th May presided over by Bankim Mukharji. Muzaffar Ahmed the Krishna Binode Ray respectively. Resolutions were passed rejecting the Cabinet Mission's proposals, appealing to all political parties to unite and prepare the masses for a final struggle against British Imperialism and demanding the abolition of the zamindari system without compensation, the release of all political prisoners, repeal of tobacco and betelnut taxes and formation of a Provincial Food Board with representatives of all parties to advise the Government of how to deal with the food situation. It was also held that the Kisan Sabha should be free from any party influence.

The following were elected office bearers for the year 1946-1947 :-

Krishna Binode Ray - President.

Gopal Halder (B.R.3960) and Mani Sen* (? B.R. 8192) - Vice-Presidents.

Mansur Habib - Secretary.

Abani Lahiri (B.R. 5159) and Bagala Guha Ray (B.R. 5111) - Assistant Secretaries.

Bhabani Sen Gupta (B.R. 5840) - Treasurer.

During the Conference an Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition was held and lantern lectures arranged to explain to the visitors the utility of cottage industries, scientific methods of cultivation, cause of the last famine and the means to prevent it. About 250 volunteers wearing red caps and carrying lathis maintained order.¹³

What happened after the conference ? We shall now try to trace the course of the major events/developments in the next few months. We will in fact go backwards by a few weeks to have a brief idea of what was happening just before the conference. Our sources of data are the headlines of news-items and in some cases, 'gists of news-items', published in Swadhinata, the Bengali daily which was the organ of the CPI in Bengal. Appendix-1 contains the translated, and sometimes transcreated, versions of headlines of these news-items obtained almost for each day. The nature and extent of the coverage of news relating to specific local agrarian issues as well as wider political happenings with a direct or indirect bearing on the problems and prospects of peasant mobilization would become evident from the information charted there. (The arrangement of these materials has been made in a chronologically sequential

order as far as possible, and we have excluded certain dates against which no news relevant to our chronology of events/developments have been obtained.)

The chart shows clearly that the period covered therein was essentially a period of issue-specific localised agitations and movements organised in most cases under the banner of the local Kisan Samities. The following comprised the main issues picked up in accordance with the specific local conditions and problems :

- (a) Restrictions on fishing rights and occasional cordoning of rivers and other places of fishing; (There are reports about the fishermen's conferences and demonstrations in Pabna, Nadia, Howrah, Jessore, and other districts where grievances/accusations about a conspiracy to starve and oppress the fishermen were being raised;
- (b) Recurrent and prolonged instances of situations of food scarcity in various parts of Bengal; imminent famine and near-famine conditions, and growing instances of starvation deaths; (There are elaborate analytical reports on the existing food situations in the districts with enormous food deficits) fear of total and partial collapse of the system of rationing in different places;
- (c) Complaints about bureaucratic negligence for which rice and other foodgrains became scarce, dear, and inedible; local officers being hand-in-glove with

zamindars, jotedars, and other wealthy and privileged classes of rural people; coercion by the Department of Agriculture and other governmental agencies; corrupt officers making alliance with blackmarketeers, hoarders and profiteers to suppress movements for food and cloth; the bureaucrats enjoying considerable influence on the political executives, and controlling the elected representatives of the people

- (d) Oppression of sharecroppers by zamindars and jotedars; forcible occupation of sharecropper's lands; sharecroppers being evicted and forced to leave their native places;

Generally speaking, the policy of the CPI in Bengal, like elsewhere, was one of 'constructive criticism and co-operation'. At the district peasants conferences, repeated demands were being raised for the suspension of tax collection, and the reorganisation of food committees. Calls to fight famine and to demand abolition of the zamindari system were given. At the provincial level, too, the main concern seemed to be food shortage. Numerous instances of starving peasants doing 'satyagrahs' or gharaoing the local officers are found. After the widespread riots of Calcutta and Noakhali from around the mid-August, reports of local agitations are found to be decreasing in number for sometime. The main thrust of reports and commentaries was towards establishing the point that the Kisan Samities and the local functionaries and activists of the Communist Party were playing a special role in checking the rising tide of communalism.

It will be interesting here to consult some data from the I.B. sources to see what were the main issues espoused and techniques of agitation used by the peasant agitationists immediately after the period covered in the chart. In the extract from I.B. summary of secret reports about revolutionary matters for the fortnight ending 14.11.46 (Part-II, Sec.VIII on Kisan Sabha and other Peasant Groups), it was reported :

"A copy of Circular letter No.5, dated 6th October (in Bengali), issued by Mansur Habib, Secretary, 249, Bowbazar Street, Calcutta, was noticed in the post at Berhampore, addressed to the Secretary, D.K.S., Murshidabad. It directed the observance of Jute Day on 13th October and urged widespread agitation against the decontrol of the price of jute and in favour of fixing at a minimum of Rs.30 per maund. C.H.312 produces on 21st October a copy of B.P. K.S. Circular, dated 7th October containing the Kisan Council's resolution, dated 27th, 28th and 29th September. It advocates the formation of volunteer crops, watching of paddy godowns and taking charge of food. It also directs the District Committee to agitate on the basis of Moubhog demands (resolutions adopted at the B.P.L.S. Conference at Moubhog, Khulna), for importing rice from outside, confiscating surplus food distributing food in villages through kisan committees, introducing rationing and relief work, etc. It holds that the Interim Government is not a free Government but a fresh trap of slavery. District Committees have further been asked to organise the people and to agitate for the withdrawal of repressive laws, the restoration of civil liberties, non-interference with the mass movement by the Government, economic uplift of the people, abolition of the zemindary system, improvement of industries by allowing proper wages and amenities to the workers, extirpation of hoarding and black market, etc".

The above excerpt is, in a sense, a fairly representative statement of the stand taken by the Communists on the peasant front before the launching of the Tebhaga movement. It should also be remembered here that these issue-specific local struggles continued in full vigour even after the Tebhaga struggle was launched. In fact, these struggles were inseparably connected with what came to be collectively known as the Tebhaga spree in the countryside. This would also become evident from my narrative in the next section. But no specific information is available in the chart that points to any developments indicative of what may be called deliberate planning and preparations for the Tebhaga movement till about September 1946.

But it may be conjectured, and this point has been raised by a large number of living Tebhaga activists, that the need to fight out the communal menace was a very crucial determinant of the process through which the decision to launch the Tebhaga movement finally came. Observations made in the secret police sources would also support this contention. In the confidential appreciation on the activities of the CPI made by the Special Branch authorities, it was held as late as December 13, 1946 :

"Handicapped still in the matter of organizing Hindu and Muslim labourers and as they are estranged as a result of the communal riots, the leaders of the party, the Trade Union Front in particular, consider that the only means of stemming the tide of communal rancour and ill-will amongst labour is to stir up unrest and agitation over whatever issue may present itself and to bring about strikes whenever the opportunity occurs. The party is working out a comprehensive programme in that direction in order to convert communalism into a fight against imperialism and capitalism.

The Party has adopted a similar course of action, with the same end in view as described above, in regard to the agricultural masses in the mofussil districts of Bengal where the Party Units are directing popular agitation and against the landlords, zamindars and jotedars. The widespread agitation to get two-thirds of the produce for the cultivators in the districts otherwise known as the "Tebhaga movement", is a case in point".

III

Let us now try to form an idea about how the movement progressed in the districts. Although the Noakhali riots¹⁴ broke out in October, the Kisan Sabha held meetings in the villages, enrolled volunteers, and distributed leaflets calling upon the bargadars to store paddy in their own barns ("Nij Kholane Daan Tolo") and to demand tebhaga ("Tebhaga chai"). Between December, 1946 and January, 1947 the movement spread, although in an extremely uneven manner, to 19 districts of undivided Bengal.¹⁵ Sunil Sen has given an account of its progress, and decline in the whole province upto the month of April, 1947 when repression was going on in full swing, and the fear of eviction haunted the sharecroppers like a nightmare.¹⁶ The first part of the narrative showing the progress of this movement that I am going to present here is based on information obtained from the clippings of Swadhinata which have been made available for the first time from the IB's collection of newspaper materials on the "large scale agrarian upheaval planned and brought about by the CPI" in 1946-47. I shall first arrange this body of information in a chronologically sequential order. (But it must be mentioned here that Sen has also used materials

relating to just one or two of these dates). Information obtained from official documents kept in the above-mentioned IB series would also be used either to substantiate arguments built up in the party literature or to raise counterarguments to juxtapose with or to refute entirely or modify partially what the communist party sources considered to be the main course of the movement.

The series opens with an article entitled 'Why Should the Middle Class Support the Demand for Tebhaga', and the first news-item (entitled "Mymensingh D.M.'s Stern Warning : Agitation to Disturb Peace to be Severely Dealt with) there was taken from the daily, Nationalist (dated December 7, 1946). On December 3, it was reported :

"A stern warning that any agitation meant to disturb the peace and tranquillity of the district would be severely dealt with according to law was given by the District Magistrate last evening when he addressed representatives of various political parties. The District Magistrate said that he had received information that tension had been increasing for some reasons, one of them being the agitation asking the cultivator-bargadars not to give the jotedars half of the agricultural produce but only one-third. Representatives of the Communist Party taking part in the discussion supported the agitation while the Congress, the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha representatives disapproved of it".¹⁷

On December 8, a message from Mizaffar Ahmed, President, All India Kisan Sabha, and a veteran communist leader of Bengal to "the soldiers of the Tebhaga" was published in Swadhinata. He felicitated the sharecroppers on this occasion, and reminded them that this was just the beginning of a far greater struggle to be fought in future. He also emphasized the need to build up

and strengthen the organization of the Kisan Samity along with and through these struggles, and hold that nothing would be achieved if the peasants failed to do so.

But a detailed presentation of the major issues involved in the movement, and the hurdles to be crossed came in a lengthy article¹⁸ published on the same day. The movement was said to be going on in the following districts : Midnapore, Mymensingh, Jessore, Jalpaiguri, Dinajpur, Rangpur, 24-Parganas, Patna, Nadia, Howrah & Dacca. In about two thousand villages of these eleven districts, it was held, near about fifty lakhs of people, young and old, men and women, were carrying on this struggle under the leadership of fifty thousand volunteers. The main demands of the peasants were : (From now onwards I shall try to go by the language of the article as closely as possible, and the use of 'present tense' has been resorted to for this purpose for portions within quotes) (a) it must be ensured that the food crisis in the country is not deepened, and all obstacles in the way of reaping the harvest must be removed; (b) the peasants will continue to till the same lands in which they have sown seeds, and their minimum demand will be the two-thirds share of the produce instead of the customary half with which they remain unable to make ends meet; (c) the peasants will not pay more than five seers per maund as interest on paddy loan, will take the crop to their own barns, and will give the owners of land their proper dues after receiving receipts from them;

It was pointed out that "despite the vigorous propaganda campaign launched by the zamindars and hoarders, the imperialist rulers are well aware of the real significance of this movement. For this reason, while the Ministry and the political leaders are busy creating and solving the problems arising out of the communal strife, the 'colonial bureaucracy' (the exact Bengali word was

'Sasrajyabadi Amlatantra') and the police are making an all-out effort to nip this struggle in the bud. To achieve this end, they have imposed Section 144 prohibiting crop harvesting in Midnapore and Mymensingh, and have used the Bengal Ordinance to prohibit meetings and demonstrations in Jessore. Cases have already been framed against more than thousand peasants. Armed police pickets have been posted in the villages. Even the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal has started talking of the Tebhaga. It is being said that he has seemingly realised that the peasants can never spontaneously take part in such a movement which, according to him, is an outcome of sinister machinations of a particular political party. The district magistrates are of the opinion that they can't allow such a movement to continue at this harvesting time because it will lead to communal riots. A large number of political leaders belonging to the Congress and the League are just repeating these allegations. The rest of them have remained silent".

The article contained short episodes and snippets about the new enthusiasm and popular resistance and initiative that were described to be the hallmarks of the movement. It was also held that "the most crucial challenge before the newly awakened peasants would be to preserve communal harmony and to protect their share of produce simultaneously. On the other hand, the handful of zamindars, who earn about 10 crores of rupees a year as rent from the peasants, and who have seen that they can get at least 150 crores of rupees by selling hoarded rice during the famine years, are now trying to secure monopoly rights over the crop yields in addition to their shares of rent. Their aim is to bring the lands of their poor tenants and share-croppers in their own possession, and they have planned to achieve all this in the following manner: (a) the 'Uthbandi' or

temporary tenants are being evicted right now; (b) sharecroppers are not being granted paddy loans in accordance with the existing practice. Sharecroppers with one or two bighas of land are being induced to sell their lands, homesteads or to mortgage their bullocks. Thus the jotedars and zamindars are trying to bring all the means of production under absolute control; (c) finding no other way to snatch lands from those poor peasants who have tenancy rights, these zamindars and jotedars are filing suits against them for paying rent in instalments even when there are no arrears, and secretly holding auction of their lands which are then being brought to their possession; (d) all kinds of illegal exactions such as Kharcha, Tahuri, Parbani, Iswarbritti, various types of tolls, Khaliani, Jharani, Gadiselami, etc. are being realised in full swing, although such acts have been made punishable offence in a criminal court by the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1940; 100 to 300 percent of interests are being charged on paddy loans";

The concluding section of the article gave details of struggles and agitations of the Bengal peasants against this unbearable exploitation which now raised for them a life and death question. "In Mymensingh, they are taking out paddy from the government-owned barns for the famine-stricken people, while in Jalpaiguri, they are snatching paddy from the barns of the zamindars and jotedars to distribute it to the needy people at a controlled price. In Dacca, Bankura, and Jessore, they are getting enrolled as peasant volunteers in thousands to prevent blackmarketing of rice and paddy, and to distribute the seized food stuffs at the controlled rate. They are keeping watch on the hats (the weekly market places) in Dinajpur in order to force the wholesalers and others to sell at fixed prices. Such heroic agitations against all kinds of illegal exactions are going on in

the hats of the following places : Domar (Rangpur), Chungola (Khulna), Sahor and Jhikargacha (Jessore), Ghiorhat (Dacca), and a few other hats of Dinajpur. They are taking possession of waste lands, reclaiming and tilling them with their own implements in some other places. Disregarding all hindrances created by the zaminders, they have produced crops in the following areas: (The adjoining figures show the corresponding areas of land in bighas where crop has been produced)

<u>Name of the Area</u>	<u>Land in Bighas</u>
Tamluk (Mishnapore) -	4200
Thakurgaon (Dinajpur) -	334
Brahmanagar & Other Maujas (Nadia) -	50
Tonirgati (Khulna) -	150

The peasants of Rangpur, Khulna, and Comilla have revolted against the oppressive collectors of excise taxes on tobacco and betelnut, and have stopped payment of these taxes in various hats of these districts. They have also begun to protest against the increase in the Chaukidari tax in Barishal, Khulna, Jessore, Mymensingh, Dacca, and Jalpaiguri".

Commenting on the existence of anxiety and apprehension in certain political circles about the possibility of the demand for 'Tebhaga' acquiring a distinct communal overtone, Mr. Bankim Mukherjee, General Secretary, AIKS, told the correspondent of Swadhinata that this fear was totally unfounded. He cited the examples of the previous militant peasant movements launched to fight against the twin evils of high interest rates and the crushing debt burden in Tripura and Noakhali to establish the point

that in the latter case it was the refusal of the local Congress leadership to join hands with the Communists that left the reactionaries to play havoc there. It was his firm contention that keeping these hard facts of history in mind, the Congress and the League leaders should come forward to support the Tebhaga movement.¹⁹

Under these circumstances the repressive policies of the bureaucracy, and the silence maintained by all the major political parties appeared to be rather surprising even to Mr. Habibullah Bahar, a Muslim League member in the Bengal Legislative Assembly.²⁰ Stressing the need to frame a well-planned strategy by the Muslim League Parliamentary Party and the Government at this crucial juncture, he observed that "the bureaucracy has become overactive in handling the situation even without a policy guideline set by the Ministry. It seems curious, he added, to note that the police force, which failed singularly in controlling the Hindu-Muslim riots, has become so vigilant against hungry peasants and other people fighting for survival".²¹ In a joint statement, Mr. Mizaffar Ahmed, President, AIKS, and Mr. Krishnabinode Roy, President, BPKS, alleged that the Government had joined hands with the zamindars and hoarders in its bid to crush the movement. They also refuted the charge that the demand for 'Tebhaga' was in effect a communal design by describing it as 'false and motivated propaganda' of the bureaucracy.²²

It will be interesting to see how a special correspondent of Swadhinata made a review of the various news-items and letters published in some other Calcutta-based dailies which were known to be taking a pro-Congress or a pro-League stand. The report entitled "The Tebhaga Struggle of the sharecroppers in Bengal : Congress Leaders Support Zamindars : Repressive Policies

of the League Ministry" first dealt with the allegations made in Ananda Bazar Patrika about "the attempt to foment troubles through the movement. "Referring to a letter to the editor (dated Dec. 6, 1946) by Mr. Samarendra Lahiri, Member of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee (BPCC), it was held that his allegation that "the movement is being directed only against the Hindu jotedars and their Muslim counterparts have been spared is entirely baseless".

It was strongly argued that "there could be nothing objectionable in trying to persuade a Hindu jotedar to accept the demand for 'Tebhaga' in an area where there is no Muslim jotedar. The main point should be whether the Congress leaders would remain unwilling to advance this demand in many villages of Bengal where the number of Muslim jotedars is almost negligible". On the contrary, the correspondent noted, "it is the jotedar and zamindar friends of Ananda Bazar Patrika who are inciting people to behave communally". The main objection raised in Bharat, the pro-Congress paper, was that "the movement aims at waging a class struggle, and they have reminded 'Swadhinata' that it can never be advisable to resort to class struggle before the achievement of independence". Two counter-points were raised in Swadhinata". Is not the process through which the zamindars and jotedars are turning a peasant who possesses 5 bighas of land to one with just 2 bighas and finally to a landless peasant also indicative of class struggle? Why is then the landless peasant's demand for sustenance regarded as illegal by the Congress?" But the Jessore correspondent of Jugantar had overtaken all this by maintaining that "the movement would do much harm to the local peasant population which has become pretty well off during the past few years". The name of 'Hindusthan', the organ of Hindu Mahasabha, was mentioned quite satirically and their open support of the zamindars

and their parasites was described as natural. Lastly, the stand taken by Azad, which was the only newspaper among the ones that supported the Muslim League, was described as sympathetic to the cause of the sharecroppers, but at the same time it was criticised on the ground that instead of asking the Muslim masses to agitate against the League Ministry which sanctioned all the repressive measures against the peasants to appease the jotedars and zamindars, it had made an appeal to that very Ministry for justice. It was held that despite the anti-peasant policies of the League Ministry and the support of the zamindars and jotedars by the Congress leaders, the number of Congress and League supporters coming out openly in favour of the Tebhaga movement was on the increase. The example of the joint Congress-League-Communist meeting organised in the city of Dinajpur was cited in this regard. The correspondent of Swachinata ended by raising the question, "when will this protest become a united movement of the industrial workers, students, and peasants of Bengal?"²³

On the following day Swachinata's first editorial entitled "Resist All Repressive Policies" expressed the same hope to form a united front of all these democratic forces involved in taking the country out of the grip of the imperialist rulers and their lackies, the zamindars and jotedars in order not to let Bengal be ruined by famine. A call was given to launch an unmitigated campaign against the perpetrators of imperialist exploitation, and the inhuman repression of the imperialist police force which failed miserably in preventing riots, arson, looting, and mass killings, but was overenthusiastic about confronting the peasants who were fighting for their minimum democratic rights and human dignity. The role of the student community in this ensuing battle was especially mentioned.²⁴

Describing the movement as the first step towards an agrarian revolution in the struggle for independence, Mr. Annada Shankar Bhattacharya, General Secretary, Bengal Provincial Student Federation, held that the progressive student community was being misled by the malicious propaganda of the police and other vested interests. The heroic struggles of the peasant women and children, he declared, had left an indelible impression in the minds of all revolutionary students of Bengal and he extended on behalf of the student Federation an offer to send fraternal teams of student representatives to the movement areas to bring to the students authentic information of the developments. Another statement of the same nature was released by Mr. Bhowani Sen, Secretary, Bengal Committee of the CPI. He appealed to all trade union leaders and activists to support the peasants who were resisting repression by selfish jotedars and the police.²⁶

Meanwhile a press note was released by the Government of Bengal. This was described as 'an attempt to pacify both the warring sides'. The Government, it was stated, was conscious of the gravity of the situation, and a plan was being prepared to nationalise all rent-receiving titles in the province, and a bill was going to be introduced in the next session of the Legislative Assembly. Till then, it was hoped, both the jotedars and zamindars, and the sharecroppers would look after one another's interests.²⁷

More messages, resolutions, and statements expressing solidarity with the movement, and condemning the repressive action of the authorities were now being published, such as the statement issued by Dr. Abdul Malek, a Muslim League M.L.A. and one of the Vice-Presidents of the Bengal Provincial Trade Union Congress, and the resolution adopted unanimously at a general council meeting of the Bengal Provincial Trade Union Congress²⁸. Then came the

statement from Mr. Krishnabinode Roy who cautioned the peasants by asking them not to get hoodwinked by the deceitful jotedars and zamindars who were now talking of compromise, and in connivance with the local government officials, were now requesting the peasants not to harvest the crop till an amicable settlement was reached. Describing this new move as a device which may be used to destroy the movement, he made the point that the spontaneous movement was being organised and guided by the Kisan Samities and the Struggle Committees which alone were competent to negotiate on behalf of the peasants, and in all such cases, no settlements could be reached in disregard of the democratic rights and opinions of the peasants.²⁹

But a certain measure of hope did characterize the response of the leadership of the Bengal Committee of the CPI to the government's stand on the Tobhaga movement. Mr. Bhowani Sen came out with the contention that the government should now convince the people that it was sincerely interested in finding a just solution to the problem, and demanded that it should set free all the peasants who were arrested in connection with the movement, withdraw all the cases instituted against them, and remove the police camps and pickets posted in the villages to assist the jotedars in their efforts to suppress the agitating peasants.³⁰

On the next day a brief account of the sufferings of the peasants caused in the districts by inhuman repression and white terror unleashed on the part of the zamindars, jotedars, and the police was published in Swadhinata.³¹ The details of arrests, torture, etc. are given in Appenix 2. Most of the incidents reported were from Mymensingh, Dinajpur and Jessore.

News about the movement in the three north Bengal districts of Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri and Rangpur were also coming. The report entitled "Sharecroppers Begin to Harvest Paddy in Thousand Square Miles of Dinajpur : Tebhaga Struggle Spreads to 10 Unions of Rangpur & Jalpaiguri : Warrants of Arrest Issued Against 75 Peasant Leaders and Activists" gave an account of the incidents taking place in almost every union of the area extending from the western end of the Thakurgaon subdivision in Dinajpur to the two police Stations of Domar and Dimla in Rangpur, including the three police stations of Boda, Pachagar and Debigunj in Jalpaiguri. Guided and aided by about 10,000 volunteers who were armed with lathis, peasant were taking the harvested crop in their own barns.

In the Thakurgaon subdivision, harvesting was going on in 700 sq. miles, excluding the two police stations of Khamsama and Haripur, while in the Sadar subdivision, it was in progress in the two police stations of Koteali and Chirirbandar which together cover an area of 300 sq. miles. In Rangpur, the movement was in progress in seven unions in the police station of Dimla. Adhiars from the three unions of the Pachagar police station in Jalpaiguri were not lagging behind. They already stacked their barns in Ghagra union. Adhiars in other unions were waiting for the paddy plants to dry up, and they would begin to harvest the crop in the next three or four days. The harvesting was on in a union where peasants were organised under the banner of the Kisan Samity, and sharecroppers in the other three unions were waiting to see the outcome of this struggle.

People were talking about the movement everywhere. The jotedars and the local authorities were on their guard. The police camp at Iswardoe was lying vacant. The entire force posted there had been sent to Rangpur and Mymensingh. Another camp was

opened in Thakurgaon. A large number of small and middle-ranking jotedars were opting for a mutual settlement of the disputes. The movement was acquiring a new momentum in the adjoining areas. Notices were served under section 107 on 31 adhiars in Chirirbandar. On the morning of December 20, Comrade Baroda Chakravarty, a leading pleader in the city of Dinajpur, Sachindra Chakravarty, another local legal practitioner, and Sunil Sen were served with warrants of arrest issued against the complaint lodged by Madin Sarkar, Gaur Baral and another jotedar of the area. Until now about 75 peasant activists and leaders were arrested or had been served with warrants of arrest in Dinajpur district.³²

Meanwhile Mansur Habib, Secretary, BPKS, also expressed satisfaction at the Government's recognition of the gravity of the whole situation, and its resolve to find out a proper solution to the problem. Repeating the same accusations regarding the repressive policies of the Government, and raising once again the demands for the release of all arrested peasants and the withdrawal of the police camps and pickets from the villages, he held that the heroic struggles of the peasants had left an imprint even on the bureaucratic caucus. There was now, he added, the need to legislate on this issue.³³ More significant was the statement made a few days later by Krishnabinode Roy. Referring to the rumours that non-bailable warrants of arrest on the adhiars were being issued in the criminal courts in response to the requests made to that effect by the jotedars and zamindars, and orders were being given to search their barns stacked with harvested paddy, he made the following observation :

"There is no need to look afresh into the intentions of the bureaucracy in Bengal. But it is indeed quite surprising to see the Ministry behaving this way. What are they doing? Are they expecting that the peasants will take the paddy to the barns of the much-hated jotedars in the same way as the Ministry has almost helped the hoarders in acquiring food stuffs for blackmarketing? Large masses of Muslim peasants have allied themselves with their Hindu and scheduled caste counterparts to put the question to the Ministers, whom do you represent, the handful of hated jotedars or the multitudes of hungry people? Muslim women are being tortured by the police in Rangpur -- will this be tolerated during the League Ministry's regime?³⁴

The Ministry was also accused of going back on his promises made before the elections, and of slaying the share-croppers whose attention was being diverted from the real issue by the tall talks about the abolition of the zamindari system.³⁵ They demanded an immediate enquiry into the conducts of a few magistrates and police officials who would have to be punished severely if found guilty of the charges brought against them.³⁶ All these demands and allegations were forcibly raised and substantiated in the first editorial of Swachhinata. It was observed :

"From the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal down to the small fries in the local bureaucracies, many Congress leaders and especially a large number of Muslim Leaguers are now trying to disregard the legitimacy of the 'Tebhaga' claim by describing it as 'a deliberate design' of the Communists. At first they wanted to spread the idea that this would eventually lead to communal riots, and this conspiracy was hatched in order not to let the common supporters of the Congress and the League ventilate against the repressive policies. But if the people of Bengal are not to be hoodwinked

by all this any more, and they can now see that those who have braved bullets and lathis, and have been arrested in thousands are all Hindu and Muslim peasants, all of whom are patriotic supporters of the Congress and the League. This heinous and malicious propaganda has made a section of the League supporters become dissidents".³⁷

The party literature on the main courses of events and tendencies covering the first few weeks of December appears to be somewhat propagandist in nature. At this time the movement was taking a definite turn in terms of what was happening in the districts, as well as the way in which the party leadership was trying to fit these developments into a structure of an organized political movement. The repetitive statements on the repressive policies of especially the local administrative authorities were probably meant to draw the attention of people of different persuasions to what the party sources were trying to project as 'a non-party issue' born out of chronic social and economic maladies for the cure of which a united struggle was required to be launched by all parties concerned genuinely with the uplift of a large section of the province's agrarian population. The Communist Party's analysis of the role of the Muslim League Ministry was made at two different levels. At one level, this was regarded as 'inherently hostile, and 'structurally populist' in the sense that the openly declared intentions of the Government would necessarily differ from what it could finally come to achieve due to both certain structural constraints and compulsions and its own designs or machinations. But at another level, it was hoped that perhaps the Ministry could still be induced or forced to take certain steps which would favourably deal with the demands of the movement. At the former level, the policy and actions of the Ministry were taken as both

determinants and outcomes of the actions of the bureaucracy about which one can deduce, directly or otherwise, a sustained argument and exposition running throughout the literature used so far. At the latter level, policies and actions of the bureaucracy have been differentiated, at least in principle, from what the popular Ministry might be expected to do. Repeatedly, one finds an appeal being made to the Ministry which, it has been maintained again and again, should become properly aware of the fact that its image was being tarnished by the crafty and irresponsible bureaucrats. There is this two-tiered categorization/understanding/analysis in the cases of other major political parties also in the sense that 'more favourable' and 'less favourable', 'more supportive and more sympathetic' and 'less supportive and less sympathetic', and 'obstructing' or 'hostile' responses or roles have been attributed to different sections of their leaders, activists and supporters. Perhaps there was a conscious move to explore all possible avenues of legal action, to try to neutralise, as far as possible, the counter offensive of the opponents and adversaries of the movement.

In a sense the climax to all this was reached when a group of peasant and communist leaders went to meet the Prime Minister of Bengal, Mr. Suhrawardi, to draw his attention to the fundamental demands of the Tebhaga movement. The group included the following persons : Mizaffar Ahmed, Bankim Mukherjee, Krishnabinode Roy, Abdul Rezzak Khan, Khoka Roy and Bhupen Gupta. They urged Mr. Suhrawardi to promulgate an ordinance in favour of the demand for 'Tebhaga, and to withdraw all cases and warrants of arrest issued in connection with this movement. He was also given a briefing about the misdeeds of the district authorities, and was shown in what ways it would be illegal to apply the Special Ordinance against this movement. Recognising the legitimacy of the

demand for 'Tebhaga', the Prime Minister admitted that vested interests were creating obstacles in the way of passing such an ordinance, and said that the Government was concerned about protecting the sharecroppers' interests, and to that effect, methods were being considered for taking away lands from the jotedars who would keep their lands idle after refusing to give them to the sharecroppers, and distributing those lands among the deserving sharecroppers. Mr. Suhrawardy told the leaders that orders had already been given not to use the Special Ordinance in suppressing the movement, and he was planning to tour the affected areas in Mymensingh to investigate in person the charges brought against the local authorities. On his request to depute one of the representatives to accompany him, it was decided that Bhupesh Gupta would go with him, and a team of representatives from the Mymensingh Kisan Samity would also be present.³⁸ But nothing much was to be expected out of all this, and the fact that the agitationists had grave doubts and serious misgivings about the policies and actions of the Ministry became crystal clear in Bhowani Sen's article (entitled "The Tebhaga Struggle Has Struck at the Roots of Slavery and Famine : The Feeling 'Land in Mine' Has Inspired the Peasants in Fighting this Democratic Battle") on the following day.³⁹ Reiterating the demand for taking concrete measures to stop oppressing the peasantry, Sen maintained :

"It is being said on behalf of the League leaders and the Ministry that the peasants should create no troubles at the moment with regard to their demand for 'Tebhaga' because they must remember that the Government has already supported the move to abolish the zamindari system, and has agreed to legislate in favour of the sharecroppers' rightful share of the produce. Even the Congress leaders are repeating these arguments for the time being, and are advising the peasants to

let the jotedars take the harvested paddy to their own barns. But the peasants are not to be tricked this way..... If the intentions of these leaders are genuine, why don't they hesitate to crack down on the peasants fighting for their legitimate demands"?⁴⁰

On January 4, speaking at a public meeting which was attended by 25,000 people at Serajganj, Pabna, Mr. Fazlur Rahman, Minister for Land Revenue & Jails, announced that the Bengal Government would bring forward at the next Budget Session of the Provincial Assembly a Bill to prevent the eviction of bargadars (Sharecroppers) and to make provision for them to get two-thirds of the harvest, the jotedars getting one-third. The Minister said that the Bill for the abolition of the Permanent Settlement would also be brought forward at the same session. Regarding the question of payment of compensation to zamindars, it was held that it would not be just to deprive them of compensatory benefit as a large section of the middle class, who were entirely dependent on this system, would be thrown out of employment. He appealed for the co-operation of zamindars and Taluqdars. The move, he added, was not directed towards the annihilation of the landholding class but to seek the agricultural improvement of the people of the province.⁴¹

The move was analysed in the Communist Party circles as a sign of the fact that the Government had become rather unnerved by the intensity and speed with which the Tebhaga movement was spreading in the districts. It was also inferred that there was a tussle going on between the progressive and the reactionary sections of the League for the course of action to be taken to tackle the problem. On January 5, Maulana Abdullahil Baki, M.L.A. from Dinajpur and a big jotedar, Maulabi Mafizuddin Mohammad, M.L.A. from Dinajpur, and Mr. Hasan Ali, Chairman,

Dinajpur District Board, met Mr. Suhrawardy to prevail upon him to take stern actions against the movement. No assurance was given to them. On the other hand, Maulabi Madar Bax and Maulana Abdur Rashid Tarkabagish, both M.L.A.s. from Rajshahi, and Mr. Nuruddin Ahmed, ex-secretary, All Bengal Student League, tried to make him understand the need to legislate immediately.⁴² Appreciating this tacit support expressed in favour of the sharecroppers by some Muslim League leaders and followers, it was pointed out in the first editorial (entitled "Tebhaga & the League supporters of Bengal") of Swadhinata :

"the League Ministers are making verbal promises about the need to end repression on the Tebhaga movement, but are turning a blind eye to the misdeeds of the local bureaucratic authorities. Seeing all this, the bureaucrats have come to the conclusion that this expression of sympathy and support on the part of the Ministry for the cause of the Tebhaga is nothing but a political gimmick, and its real intention is to look after the interests of the zamindars and jotodars as long as possible".⁴³

It was also held that apart from ruining the peasants, these developments have also induced the Muslim peasants to hate the Muslim League, and the need of the hour was to launch an active protest movement by all these Leaguers who claim themselves to be protagonists of the toiling peasants to block the ways of the oppressive bureaucrats. The devoted followers of the League, it was reaffirmed, should waste no time in putting their best efforts to win the Ministry to the cause of Tebhaga to justify their genuine concern for upholding the image of the League in the eyes of the Muslim peasants.⁴⁴

In the political Circular No.1/47 (dated January 10, 1947) addressed to all provincial and district committees of the CPI, Mr. P.C. Joshi, General Secretary, summed up the existing state of affairs, and outlined the course of action to be followed.⁴⁵ Explaining why a solidarity campaign was required, he wrote :

"The movement is at a critical state. January is the harvesting time and the party that gets the harvest wins the battle. Since the end of December a ruthless terror campaign has been let loose on the peasantry. The peasants are fighting back by spreading the movement wider and wider. All the news that our Bengal daily Swadhinata carries to them of the solidarity campaign would greatly encourage the fighting peasants, all their organisers and bring to them a sense of the common movement. Besides a well-conducted solidarity campaign would act as real pressure on the League Ministry and this is very necessary and urgently called for.

If you run a solidarity campaign it will do you good because it will enable you to inspire your own comrades and galvanise your own base by telling them of the great news that it is the Tebhaga struggle and the great work our Bengal comrades are doing together with thousands of militant peasants who are being organised through the very struggle.

Thus solidarity campaign must be launched not only with a sense of duty but as a means of fighting disruption, confusion and vacillation among the people where you live and work by telling them of the Tebhaga struggle and its significance. What is possible in Bengal's village is possible everywhere. Thus example of the Bengal peasants should be glorified and held up for emulation".

He also dwelt upon the difficulties involved in this venture :

"I know there are plenty of difficulties in the way of organising a really effective solidarity campaign; lack of civil liberties, curfew etc, etc. But every unit of the party has to do what it can despite the difficulties because these difficulties have become a normal part of the situation today.... Below I give some suggestions

- Hold public meeting wherever possible.
- Where no meetings are possible, call closed-door meetings or at least a meeting of the executives of all the mass organisations we can move and where even executives cannot meet, get statements on behalf of the office-bearers of as many mass and other organisations as possible.
- Delegate an effective comrade to report in support for the solidarity resolution and get as many non-party people as possible to sponsor if in non-party organisations. In fact it would be better if initiative comes from non-party people themselves".

And finally the main imperatives were spelt out :

"Organise out a campaign among workers and peasants to write good solidarity letters, from their own hearts, to the struggling peasants of the Tebhaga areas. Don't coach them up or indoctrinate them. Similar activity should be organised among women and students and particular efforts should be made to get messages of solidarity from progressive Congress men and Leaguers....

Through the Kisan Sabhas, we must launch the broadest possible campaign not only by popularising the demands, the heroism of the peasants, Hindu-Muslim Unity, but say that Noakhali was the crime of rural vested interests and Tebhaga in 11 districts is the answer of the awakened peasant, his alternative path - joint struggle and not fratricide. It is the starting of Tebhaga that saved the whole of Eastern Bengal from becoming one huge Noakhali. We must explain the significance, that the press played up Noakhali but suppressed Tebhaga.

..... The essential point is that solidarity has to be worked up among different sections of the people and the inspiring example of Tebhaga struggle widely popularised. It will act as a good tonic to our own morale and get very good response and enable us to take the story of a great struggle to the people which would have a very great effect when the daily press contains no more news except of Hindu-Muslim conflict and petty political quibbling".

His (Joshi's) translated article entitled "The Tebhaga Struggle is the Beginning of an Agrarian Revolution" conveyed the same appeal to "all patriotic and democratic citizens of the country".⁴⁶ The salient features of the movement and its special significance in shaping the country's political future were analysed in quite the same manner. It was especially mentioned that a general spirit of defiance and resistance at the grassroots level was spreading like wild fire even among the peasant women who were also fighting shoulder to shoulder with the men. Like the lathis (sticks) used by the young peasant volunteers, brooms in their hands were also terrorizing the hired hooligans of the zamindars.⁴⁷ The memoirs and reminiscences written later by some local leaders and activists contain many such episodes of localised popular resistance.⁴⁸

On January 17, it was reported in Swadhinata that at the meeting of the Provincial League Working Committee held at Calcutta on January 14 & 15, the Ministers were rebuffed severely by the jotedar members of the Muslim League for their (the Minister's) acceptance of the legitimacy of the demand for 'Tebhaga'. On account of the pressure exerted by the jotedar members who constitute the majority in the committee, it was decided that members would be at liberty to support or oppose the movement in their individual capacities. But the Government was vehemently criticised for having made policy statements without consulting the Committee.⁴⁹

Even the information obtained from confidential government sources show that as far as the government was concerned, much was left to the discretion of the local authorities. In his secret instructions given to the District Magistrates and the Commissioners of the Divisions, Mr. P.D. Martyn, Additional Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal, Home (Pol.) Department, observed :

"Considerable unrest is prevailing in certain parts of the province as a result of what is known as the tebhaga movement and the following instructions are issued for the guidance of officers responsible for the maintenance of law and order and the handling of this problem.

The movement, largely sponsored in its present form by the Communist Party, aims at securing for the bargadars a two-thirds share of the produce, the remaining one-third share being left for the landlords. Meetings and demonstrations have been organised to press the claims of the bargadars and in some districts reports have received that the bargadars have already taken steps to appropriate to themselves a share of the crop larger than before.

Despite the activities of the Communist Party the dispute between the landlords and the bargadars is, fundamentally, an economic matter and the officers responsible for law and order not directly interested unless it is necessary to prevent a breach of the peace and interference by them must be reduced to the minimum.

Thus officers of Government should not be persuaded to interfere and use force to prevent the bargadars from removing more than what is alleged to be his rightful share from the field or from taking the crop to his own house rather than to the house of the landlord. The remedy for such alleged breaches of an agreement is not the use of force by the police but the recourse by the party seeking relief to such legal action as may appear to them to be appropriate".

The bureaucracy was provided with the following guideline :

"Active interference by the officers of Government is, in fact, only warranted when such action is clearly necessary to prevent a breach of the peace, when such action has to be taken by you and your officers your attention is drawn to the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code and particularly to Section 144 and to the advantage of making use of the provisions of that section; the provisions of the Bengal Special Powers Ordinance are considered to be inappropriate for the handling of this problem and should not be employed.

It is needness to emphasize that, in order to ensure that the disputes between the landlords and bargadars do not lead to a breach of the peace, every possible opportunity should be taken to bring the disputing parties together and attempt to arrive at a compromise which will result in peaceful relations being maintained".⁵⁰

IV

To take stock of the progress of the movement, and to prepare for a greater struggle, the Bengal Provincial Kisan Council met at Calcutta from January 10 to January 14. The main proposal on "the peasants' struggle for crop, land, and independence" stated that although the peasants had achieved victory in the first phase by taking harvested paddy to their own barns, much still remained uncertain in the days to come when the threshing and distribution of paddy would be undertaken against heavy odds created by the hostile zamindars and jotedars, and the bureaucracy. The charter of demands put forward by the Council before the Ministry included the following items : (a) To promulgate immediately an ordinance recognising the demand for 'Tebhaga' in the current year's harvest instead of the existing 'adhi' system; (b) To make legal arrangements for paying rent in cash at the current rate instead of paying it in kind; (c) To adjourn all the pending and future cases of eviction; (d) To legislate to enable the landless peasants to occupy and cultivate waste lands; (e) To make arrangements for returning all lands transferred during the famine years; (f) To remove all the police camps from the movement villages, and to lift all prohibitory orders passed under sections 144 and 107 on meetings and demonstrations; (g) To hold immediate enquiries into the cases of police firing and oppression, inflict punishments upon the culprits, and provide compensation to the affected peasant families; (h) To withdraw all the cases and warrants of arrest served on the peasants, and to release the arrested peasants unconditionally; and (i) To provide compensation

for loss and damage caused by arson, looting and destruction of crops.

It was admitted that there was urgent need to turn the "spontaneous peasant uprising" into an "organised movement", and for that purpose, it was necessary to build up 'peasant armies' in the village.⁵¹ The attention of the organisers and peasant agitationists was drawn to the following problem :

"Owing to the absence of organised peasant armies, it has been difficult to take right decisions in times of crisis. For this reason, enemies are able to attack and oppress the peasants every now and then. On the other hand, important organisational functions like enrolment of new members, and collection of donations and subscriptions are being badly neglected. Hence every district committee is being directed to form a peasant army organising committee consisting of three to five competent workers".⁵²

Elaborate plans were chalked out for raising such armies from among the more militant peasant cadres in the affected areas. But nothing concrete was achieved even in Dinajpur, one of the areas in north Bengal where the movement had perhaps reached its culminating point.⁵³

Meanwhile quite a few incidents of police firing had occurred, and passion was running high in the Communist Party circles. Abdullah Rasul has prepared a list of peasants killed in various cases of police firing during the Tebhaga movement.⁵⁴ Here I am reproducing just a part of this exhaustive list covering the incidents that took place till about the time we have reached in the present narrative.

<u>District</u>	<u>Place of Incident</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Name of Persons Killed</u>
Dinajpur	Chirirbandar (Thalargach)	4.1.1947	Samiruddin, Shibrum Majhi.
Rangpur	Dimala P.S. & Khaga Kharibari village.	23.1.1947	Tatnarayan Barman
Howrah	Jamira	6.1.1947	Pran Krishna Manna

It is at this point of time that the draft of the proposed bill on the Tebhaga was published in the Calcutta Gazette on January 22. This is where the second phase of the movement began.⁵⁵ Roy held that the retention of harvested paddy in the hands of the sharecroppers was the key-point during the first phase. But now a new mood set in Sen wrote :

"As soon as the draft of the Bill was published, the adhiars became confident. This could have brought back peace in the countryside, but the jotedars, who at first had become confused and demoralised, began to declare that they would try their best to persuade the Ministry to withdraw the Bill. They thought of crushing the adhiars' confidence by threatening them with dire consequences. But in reality the outcome came out to be just the reverse. The movement then began to spread in a big way to distant areas where the Kisan Sabha had no existence and the Communist Party didn't have any base".⁵⁶

According to Roy, it was during this phase that the Kisans themselves spontaneously evolved the slogan "Take back the undivided paddy from the landlord's barn to the grower's barn". Peasants from villages untouched by the activities of the Kisan Samity would appear at the Kisan Sabha office and ask for 'conditions' which they would have to "fulfil" in order to obtain a hukum that they would start Tebhaga in their area.⁵⁷

Sushil Sen, who was the Secretary of the district Communist Party in Dinajpur, makes the following observations about this new and militant phase of the movement which is known as the 'Kholan Bhanga' (Breaking the Barns) movement :

"The news that the Govt. was planning to legislate on the Tebhaga made the adhiars from the unorganised areas quite restless. Earlier they had taken the paddy to the jotedar's barn under compulsion, and they now became afraid of not being able to recover their rightful shares from the jotedars' barns. This apprehension induced them to come to the Kisan Samities in large numbers".⁵⁸

But frequent raids of the villages by armed police parties were continuing in full swing. As many as 35 police camps were opened in the whole district. A reign of terror and repression had been let loose.⁵⁹ On the other hand, the jotedars were also planning an offensive. Towards the close of the first phase they began to strain all their resources to find out the weak spots in the movement. They saw that the towns had not been mobilized in support of Tebhaga, and the Press had remained silent about it. From the third week of January, they started holding their own conferences, mobilised public opinion in towns and organised publicity in the Press. In fact, this was the phase when the jotedars and the bureaucracy, with the support of the League Ministry and without the least opposition from the Congress leadership, used their entire state machinery for the suppression of the Tebhaga struggle and the extermination of the Kisan Movement and the Kisan Sabha.⁶⁰

Another statement about the problems and prospects of getting the Tebhaga Bill passed in the Legislative Assembly, made in the usual form by Mansur Habib, Secretary, BPKS, was published in Swadhinata around this time. Pointing out that the main shortcoming of the Bill was that it didn't give the adhiars tenancy rights for the lands they cultivated as sharecroppers, he talked of 'a conspiracy hatched by the Hindu and Muslim jotedars' organizing themselves to annul the Bill or to amend it in their favour. For this purpose, they were utilizing the services of those M.L.As who act as their spokesmen in the legislature, and were also getting much publicity in the Press.⁶¹ A call to intensify the movement was also given so that the Ministry could understand the depth of popular and democratic support the movement was enjoying.⁶²

But the administration was obviously dealing with the problem rather differently. In his secret letter (dated February 5, 1947) to the District Magistrates and the Commissioners of the Divisions, Mr. P.D. Martyn, Additional Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal, Home (Pol.) Department, issued fresh instructions in clarification and elaboration of the previous instructions given on January 18, 1947. It was stated :

"The previous instructions were never intended to imply that District Magistrates and other officers responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the districts, were to be entirely denied the use of provisions of the Bengal Special Powers Ordinance in the handling of incidents which, quite obviously, could not be considered to be in any real sense connected with the Tebhaga movement but which were clearly nothing more or less than mob violence or goondaism.

Admittedly, disputes of a agrarian character can most appropriately be handled, where the direct intervention of the police becomes necessary, but the use of the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code and the Indian Penal Code. Such was sought to be made clear in the instructions referred to above, in which it was emphasized that for the handling of incidents arising out of the Tebhaga movement the ordinary law, and not the Special Powers Ordinance, should be employed.

Subsequent to the issue of these instructions, however, cases such as the following have been brought to the notice of Government :-

- 1) A Krishak Samity party, controlled by the Communists, looted paddy from the house of a zamindar.
- 2) The inhabitants of a particular area, in which considerable unrest was prevailing as a result of the Tebhaga movement, were attempting to paralyse Government and set up a parallel Court; in addition an individual had been arrested and kept under confinement; it was further strongly rumoured that a very big meeting had been arranged and there was information which pointed to the fact that if force was sent the public road and communications would be cut and the telephone lines would be interfered with.

A leaflet had been issued by a Krishak Samity which might be regarded as an incitement to mass violence and which applauded the fact that a subdivisional officer and police had been forced to retreat before the cultivators.

Instances such as these cannot, and should not, be linked with the Tebhaga movement and be sought to be handled as if they were part of an economic and agrarian agitation. Such instances are clearly breaches of the ordinary law unconnected, or so loosely connected, with the Tebhaga movement that it would be unsound to assume that the methods laid down for the handling of that movement should be applied to such situations.

In a word, where it is clear that there is a threat directed against law and order and that the agrarian movement is, at best, purely incidental to that threat the powers given by the Special Powers Ordinance can and should be employed if it is considered that the powers given by the ordinary law are likely to prove insufficient".

The I.B. sources reported a number of incidents in connection with what may in their language be described as a growing tendency towards committing overt acts, leading to a definite breach of peace and public safety. A few of the incidents between 18th January and 5th February were :

Khulna :

- 1) Dumuria, 23.1.47 - A big mob under the lead of Bistu Chatarji looted paddy and other household things and when prevented by Police the leader fired twice with a unlicensed gun necessitating police to fire which resulted in the death of 2 rioters.
- 2) Ohhankhola Hat, 4.2.47 - C.P.I. men assaulted a prosecution witness and snatched away his cycle.

Wynensingh :

- 3) Durgapur - (1) 22.1.47, Hajong mob of 4000 under communist had trespassed the thana compound.
- Durgapur - (2) 26.1.47, Another such mob of 1000 trespassed thana compound and damaged the records of the local post & telegraph office.
- Durgapur - (3) 31.1.47, Hajong mob attacked the the police search party and killed 2 constables.

Jeessore :

- 4) Narail - 23.1.47, Keshab Mitra who refused to allow 2/3rd of the share of the land produce to the cultivator was battered to death.

Dinajpur :

- 5) Baliadanga, 29.1.47 - 125 C.P.I. men attacked and assaulted S.P. and the police party while conducting a search in the house of a CPI member.
- 6) Sonla Dogach, 30.1.47 - Bhola Nath Seth was badly assaulted, his paddy looted.
- 7) Maheshpur, 3.2.47 - 200 C.P.I. men with bows, etc. raided the house of Nripen Ray and looted paddy.

A couple of days later it was maintained :

Secret information has been received that the C.P.I. encouraged by the partial success of the unorganised Kisans in the Tobhaga movement in several districts of Bengal is trying to start a militant organisation of its own. They want to organise the Kisans into a

disciplined volunteer organisation to be built up as an instrument for any future fight with the Government. The scheme includes the proposal to form a partisan cadre composed of the best volunteers of the organisation who would be armed with axes, spears and other weapons in order to fight the police. These volunteers will also be advised to snatch police muskets which would be ultimately used against the police.

It is also reported that secret groups entrusted with the task of collecting arms and explosives and of keeping them in safe places are being formed. Selected volunteers will be trained in the use of arms and explosives.

In view of the growing unrest in the country, not only among the peasants and the labourers, but also among Government employees and the Armed Forces, the C.P.I. thinks that an opportunity will present itself very soon for the realisation of its ideal of the seizure of power by armed revolution. The C.P.I. is therefore very earnest in going ahead with these secret activities.

(These observations were forwarded to all Superintendents of Police and Additional Superintendents of Police in charge of D.I.B. for information. They were requested to intensify efforts to obtain the maximum amount of information concerning the activities of the C.P.I. in the districts from existing sources and to obtain new sources of information.⁶³)

The information contained in the Communist Party sources would give us an entirely different picture of what was happening. It seems pretty obvious that the provincial leadership was not really feeling very enthusiastic about the response of the League Ministry to the main economic demand of the movement. But at the same time they were all the time carrying out a sustained propaganda campaign against the reactionary elements in the Muslim League and the Congress, and

the bureaucracy'. An appeal was being made continually to what was being described as 'the progressive section within the League and the Congress'. Raising the demand that the Bargadars Regulation Bill should be passed immediately, it was reaffirmed:

"The duty of the peasants is absolutely clear at the moment. It will be suicidal to think that the battle for 'Tebhaga' has ended or the struggle for land is going to be very simple. The jotedars and the bureaucracy will now launch their counter-offensive by arming themselves with new and more powerful ordinances. At first they will try to nullify the Bill totally. Failing to do this, they will try to take away, totally or partially, the benefits and advantages that have been given to the sharecroppers in this Bill. They will then go on to pressurise the house to accept those clauses of the Bill that are entirely detrimental to the interests of the sharecroppers."⁶⁴

The need of the hour, it was stated, was to find out concrete ways of uniting all 'the leftist elements within the League and the Congress' to block the ways of the scheming and shrewd bureaucracy which is trying to divide the League into two factions warring with each other over the Tebhaga issue. The Congress was urged to support the Bill on the ground that otherwise it will come to sever all connections with the Muslim and Scheduled Caste peasants.⁶⁵

The Communist MLAs sought to introduce a number of amendments in the Bill. These were :

- " a) The sharecropper cannot be evicted from the land he is tilling if the owner of the land does not cultivate it himself or gets it done by one of his family members;

- b) If a sharecropper has been tilling a particular plot of land for the last three years, and the owner of that land has not cultivated it even once in the last five years, the sharecropper will then enjoy absolute immunity against any kind of eviction. At the same time there should be no eviction on the ground that the sharecropper has misused the land in any way or has not cleared the due shares of the owner;
- c) The compensation payable to the evicted sharecropper should never be less than the amount of the crop harvested in the year of eviction or its equivalent in money terms;
- d) The sharecropper will be under no obligation to take from the owner of land the implements or manure required for cultivation;
- e) It will be at the discretion of the sharecropper to decide as to where the crop would be stacked - he may take it to his own barn or let the owner take it to his own;
- f) The jotedar must give a receipt for his share of the crop;
- g) Cases of eviction cannot be framed on the charge that the sharecropper has failed to give the owner his share for the crop harvested in 1946".⁶⁶

It was alleged that a large number of the League and Congress members were trying to keep the Bill pending in the name of sending it to the Select Committee because they were afraid of opposing it openly for fear of losing support from the Muslim and Hindu peasants. Yet there were many who believed in the democratic principles, and it was necessary to prevail upon them. There should also be a general democratic movement outside the Legislature to create a favourable and positive public opinion.⁶⁷

It becomes quite difficult to extract from the materials available in the Communist Party sources the point that the movement was becoming more militant in nature. In fact, one finds, and this is obviously expected, that the claim of the administration regarding militancy has been refuted. Referring to the secret circular dated 5.2.47 I have already used in this narrative, it was categorically pointed out;

"We can throw an open challenge to the Govt. to show us that even a single house of a zamindar has been the target of any kind of looting, or a single jotedar has been murdered in any of the arrears where the movement is going on under the banner of the Kisan Samity. In none of these areas of organised movement, the current agitation has turned out to be anything but a movement which has crossed the known limits of economism".⁶⁸

The movement had indeed reached a turning point. The course of events was changing very fast. Both the warring sides were trying their best to take the necessary preparations that would enable them to face all eventualities. It seems fairly obvious that the leadership of the BPKS was not in a position to control the entire course of events in the sense that chanelising popular enthusiasm that was generated in areas where the movement

was spreading rather spontaneously proved to be a crucial task. One gets ample evidence of it in the contemporary party literature. In some areas, especially in the three north Bengal districts of Dinajpur, Rangpur and Jalpaiguri where the movement till then had become most organized in its programmes of both action and campaign, serious complications were developing due to increasing communal tension which was to rise to uncontrollable heights in the months to come. The party activists were finding it immensely difficult to unite the Hindu and Muslim sharecroppers against the jotedars, a large number of whom were Muslims. Souri Ghatak, who was a government service-holder and was entrusted with the duty of looking after the underground unit of the Communist Party in Thakurgaon subdivision (Dinajpur), has given a vivid account of this plight of the local activists of this area during this time in his novel, Dui Desh (Two lands).

The counter offensive of the jotedars aided by state repression was in the offing. It was under these circumstances that the movement now began to spread in full vigour to some of the districts in lower Bengal. In the secret police sources, one finds a concerted drive for collecting as much information as possible about what was happening. But much of this information available in the I.B. sources is scattered and hence its chronological presentation becomes rather fragmentary. But all this would really constitute the subject matter of a separate narrative for which we can have two opening themes : (a) the agitationists would maintain that despite rampant repression, the people were achieving impressive victories in a few areas; and (b) the administration would hold that the Communists were responsible for fomenting troubles to bring about "a large scale agrarian upheaval in the province". Either way it was now becoming apparent that a more unified and well-coordinated strategy was required on the part of both sides if they intended to confront each other in a more organized manner.

References

1. See for instance Hamza Alavi's 'Peasants and Revolution' in Peasant Struggles in India, (ed.), A.R. Desai, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1979, pp. 701 - 706 & D.N. Dhanagare's 'The Tebhaga movement in Bengal, 1946-7' in his Peasant Movements in India, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1983, pp.155-179. Also see Adrienne Cooper's 'Sharecroppers and Landlords in Bengal, 1930-51. The Dependency web and its Implications' in The Journal of Peasant Studies, Vol.10, Nos.2 and 3, Jan/April, 1983, pp.227-255.
2. Partha Chatterjee, Bengal 1920-47 Vol.I. The Land Question, CSSSC Monograph 4, K.P. Bagchi & Company, Calcutta, 1984, pp.210-211.
3. Ibid, p.213.
4. The concept 'narrative' has a distinct thematic connotation which I have borrowed from Lawrence Stone. Here 'narrative' is taken to mean the organisation of material in a chronologically sequential order, and the focusing of the content into a single coherent story, albeit with subplots. According to Stone, the two essential ways in which narrative history differs from structural history is that its arrangement is descriptive rather than analytical and that its central focus is on man not circumstances. It therefore deals with the particular and specific rather than the collective and statistical. Narrative is a mode of history writing, but it is a mode which also affects and is affected by the content and the method. (Lawrence Stone, The Past & the Present, Routledge & Kegan Paul, Boston, 1981, p.74)
5. I must also refer to the very authentic and exhaustive writings of Sunil Sen on the Tebhaga. Sen, who himself was a distinguished participant in this movement, has also narrated and analysed his data in terms of situating the movement within the known orbit of the changing agrarian relations, and has not attempted at constructing a separate history of the political crosscurrents resulting from acts of intervention on different planes. There exist, of course, a large number of compilations of memoirs and reminiscences by Tebhaga activists, and these collections undoubtedly generate vital source materials, but no attempt to write a systematic history of the movement is evident in them.

6. Abdullah Rasul, *Krishak Sabher Itihas - History of the Kisan Sabha* (Nabajatak Prakashan: Calcutta, 1969), P.151. & Sunil Sen, *Peasant Movements in India* (K.P. Bagchi & Co. : Calcutta, 1982), p.106. Sen himself was an activist connected with the Kisan Sabha's work in the North Bengal district of Dinajpur, and took part in the Tebhaga Movement there.
7. A. Rasul, *op.cit.*, pp.145-146.
8. *Ibid.*, pp.146-148.
9. *Ibid.*, p.148.
It could in fact be maintained that more attention was paid to the interests of the non-peasant owners than those of the peasants, and this was reflected in the appointment of a Committee which was expected to handle the problems that might crop up between the peasants and the middlemen if the proposals for the abolition of the zamindari were to be codified under a law, and this was done without taking into account the legal considerations and possibilities that were to be created. *Ibid.*, p.150.
10. *Ibid.*, p.148-149.
11. *Ibid.* pp.149-150.
One can read between the lines here a distinct shade of opinion that Rasul ~~Sabha~~ has expressed about the impact of the 'People's war' line followed by the Communist Party which in turn had led to certain compulsions and tension that the party had to pass through with regard to its position in the nationalist struggle as well as other specific agitations aimed at social and economic transformation of the society.
12. *Ibid.*, p.151.
The bracketed portions are quoted from the original report.
13. Extract from Intelligence Branch (hereafter I.B.) summary of Secret reports about revolutionary matters for the week ending on 13.6.1946. This was the gist of the report of the Superintendent of Police, Khulna and K.L.56 (presumably the code name of the local D.I.B. watcher/compiler) 27th May.

14. As it has already been shown that communal tension was mounting since the Calcutta riots of August, 1946, and grave doubts and apprehension existed in the minds of many people as to the feasibility of uniting the Hindu and Muslim peasants to work for the common cause of the Tebhaga. (Abdullah Rasul, op.cit., pp.151-152). It has also been maintained by some communist leaders and activists who were connected with the movement in different capacities that the decision to launch the movement at that crucial juncture could in fact be regarded as one of the main weapons with which the Communist Party had sought to stop the rising tide of communal menace from spreading in the rural areas. It was envisaged, and the subsequent developments proved how correctly that was done, holds Golam Kuddus, who extensively toured the affected villages during the peak period of the movement as a correspondent of Swadhinata, that the evils of communal frenzy could take almost no roots in the areas where the movement became strong.
15. Sunil Sen, op.cit., p.106.
16. Sen., op.cit., pp.106-117.
17. Nationalist, December 7, 1946.
18. The article entitled "Today's Struggle for Harvest & Tomorrow's Struggle for Land will combine into a Struggle for Freedom" was written by Krishna Binode Roy, President, BPKS, Swadhinata, 8.12.1946.
19. Swadhinata, December 8, 1946.
20. Swadhinata, December 12, 1946.
21. Ibid.
22. Swadhinata, December 12, 1946.
23. Swadhinata, December 13, 1946.
24. Swadhinata, December 14, 1946.
25. Swadhinata, December 15, 1946.
26. Ibid.

27. Swachhinata, December 18, 1946.
28. Swachhinata, December 19, 1946.
29. Swachhinata, December 20, 1946.
30. Swachhinata, December 21, 1946.
31. Swachhinata, December 22, 1946.
32. Swachhinata, December 22, 1946.
33. Swachhinata, December 23, 1946.
34. Swachhinata, December 27, 1946.
35. The joint statement by Jyoti Basu, Rupnarayan Roy & Ratanlal Brahma, three Communist M.L.A.s in the Legislative Assembly, Swachhinata, December 27, 1946.
36. Ibid.
37. Stop Repressing the Peasant (first editorial), Swachhinata, December 30, 1946.
38. Swachhinata, December 30, 1946.
39. Swachhinata, December 31, 1946.
40. Ibid.
41. Hindusthan Standard, January 6, 1947.
42. Swachhinata, January 8, 1947.
43. Swachhinata, January 10, 1947.
44. Ibid.
45. A copy of the circular entitled "On Immediate Solidarity Campaign with Tebhaga Struggle" was intercepted at Jessore Post Office by A.S.I. Jatindranath Ghosh of Jessore D.I.B. on 17.1.47.
46. Swachhinata, January 13, 1947.
47. Ibid.

48. Two collections of such memoirs and reminiscences may be mentioned here - Uttorbanger Adhikar Bidroha O Tebhaga Andolan (Adhikar Revolt of the North Bengal & the Tebhaga Movement), Dhananjoy Roy, (ed), Calcutta, 1984 & Tebhaga Rajat Jayanti Smarak Grantha.
49. Swachinata, January 17, 1947.
50. Letter No.66 - P.S. dated January 18, 1947.
51. Swachinata, January 20 & 21, 1947.
52. Swachinata, January 21, 1947.
53. Sunil Sen, Agrarian Struggle in Bengal (People's Publishing House; New Delhi, 1972), pp.60-61.
Sen has described how the attempt to open up a 'Special training camp' with Mr. Ananta Singh from Calcutta as the instructor was nipped in the bud around mid-February because the police had got the information before hand.
54. Abdullah Rasul, op.cit., pp.282-284.
Rasul's ~~xxxx~~ article entitled "The Newly Awakened Peasants of North Bengal After the Tebhaga Struggle" published in Swachinata on February 9, 1947 very aptly portrays the feelings prevalent among the peasant activists and other agitationists at that time about the significance of these incidents.
55. Krishnabinode Roy, "Bengal Tebhaga Movement - Biggest Kisan Struggle of Recent Times" in People's Age, Vol.V, No.46, May 18, 1947, p.8 & Bhawani Sen, "Banglaj Tebhaga Andolan (The Tebhaga Movement in Bengal)" in Tebhaga Rajat Jayanti Smarak Grantha, the article was originally published in Communist, in September 1947, which was an English monthly run by the CPI, p.12.
56. Ibid. (Sen)
57. Ibid. (Roy)
58. Sushil Sen's article in Dhananjoy Roy, (ed.), op.cit., pp.6-7.
59. Ibid., p.8.
60. Ibid. (Roy)

61. Swadhinata, January 27, 1947.
 62. Ibid.
 63. I.B. note-sheet on Secret Information dated 17.2.47
(Prepared by S. Choudhury for M.M.L. Hooja, Special
Superintendent of Police, I.B. West Bengal).
 64. Swadhinata, the article "Pass the Bargada Bill : The
Police Raj Legitimised", February 2, 1947.
 65. Ibid.
 66. Swadhinata, the article "The Tobhaga Bill will Be Taken
Up in the Legislative Assembly Today : Amendments Proposed
by the Communist Members", February 11, 1947.
 67. Ibid.
 68. Swadhinata, the editorial "The circular for limitless
Repression", February 27, 1947.
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Appendix-I

<u>Date</u>	<u>Headlines of News-items</u>
3.5.46	(1) Constructive criticism and co-operation : Communist Party spells out policy on Congress and League programmes. Call to form an all-party ministry to fight famine.
	(2) Release of prisoners demanded in meetings. Students rally at Jessore, Gairala, Jalpaiguri and Narayanganj.
4.5.46	(1) Bureaucratic negligence costs 15 lakh maunds of paddy annually. Canal digging movement in Dacca villages.
	(2) Suspension of tax realisation demanded (Tamluk, Takapara, 28th April)
5.5.46	(1) Widespread scarcity and epidemic in cyclone-hit Netrakona. Dearth of government relief (Mymensingh, 29th April)
	(2) Problems of homeless villagers. Government dilly-dallies to compensate and return land. Statement of League leader Habibullah Bahar.
6.5.46	(1) Bail refused for publishing stories of oppression. S.D.O. hand-in-glove with gun-totting zamindar in persecuting subjects. (Karimgunj)
	(2) Storm and flood cause irreparable damage to standing crops in districts. Rice selling at Rs.20/-. Widespread starvation breaks out. Katiadi (Kishoreganj) Rangpur 2nd May, Dacca 29th April, Bahimabad (Dacca) 28th April, Noakhali 1st May.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Headlines of News-items</u>
7.5.46	<p>(1) Forceible occupation of sharecroppers' land. Oppression by landowners in Jalpaiguri. (4th May)</p> <p>(2) Problem of evicted farmers. Decision to render 15 thousand farmers homeless.</p> <p>(3) Nadia district fishermen's conference demands rights over water. (Swarupgunj, Nadia, 4th May).</p>
9.5.46	<p>(1) Disastrous factionalism while famine looms large. Tamruk farmers in distress. (a) Food dear despite starvation (b) Government attacks farmers (c) Bureaucrats and contractors become desperate (d) Sharecroppers forced to leave village.</p> <p>(2) Zamindars cordon off the padma. Conspiracy to starve fishermen (Kustia 4th May).</p> <p>(3) Restrictions on fishing in the Hooghly. Withdrawal demanded by Howrah Fishermen's Committee.</p> <p>(4) Zamindars become desperate. Mass complaints against subjects for not paying due taxes in Rangpur (Rangpur 6th May).</p> <p>(5) Massive rally by 5,000 farmers at Rajshahi. Seventh District Farmers' Conference.</p>
10.5.46	<p><u>Editorial :</u></p> <p>(1) Famine imminent throughout Netrakona sub-division. Floods and hail storm cause widespread destruction to crops. Starvation stalks every home.</p> <p>(2) Burdwan in the grip of famine. Farmers flee villages. Thousand maunds of foodgrains become inedible in government godowns.</p> <p>(3) Landowners take revenge. Sharp protest by 3,000 farmers in Dinajpur. (28th April)</p> <p>(6) United movement against leaseholders' oppression. Rajshahi district Magistrate assures investigation.</p>

Headlines of News-itemsDate

- 11.5.46 (1) Starving farmers offer 'Satyagraha' before District Magistrate's residence in Notrakona. Food in short supply. Rationing in Noakhali and other places on the verge of collapse.
- (2) Fear of the collapse of rationing in a week. One lakh maunds of rice immediate need for Sirajgunj. (Calcutta 7th June)
- (3) Prices go up by ten rupees in two days. No supply from government. (Brahmanbaria, 3rd June)
- (4) Rice prices go up by leaps and bounds at Chittagong.
- (5) Ration shops go without food grains. The plight of flood-hit Teesta Port Union (Gaibandha, Rangpur).
- (6) Fear of widespread starvation within a fortnight. Kustia needs 2 lakh maunds of rice immediately.
- (7) Oppression to realise agricultural loan. Distressed farmers face to face with famine.
- 12.5.46 (3) Extortion halted at Kesarhat. Manager investigates. Bows to public demand (Rajshahi 9th May)
- (4) Analysis of election results (2) Farmers and labourers consolidate support for Communists. Reactionaries to benefit from Congress-Communist feud. (P.C. Joshi)
- (6) Government order to hand over goods to monopoly dealers. Conspiracy to cripple cooperative societies. Strong protest by Manikgunj weavers.
- 13.5.46 (3) Starvation leads to suicide (Dacca 4th May).
- (4) Famine conditions in Chandrakona (Midnapore 30th April).
- (5) Paddy seeds scarce (Midnapore 9th May).

<u>Date</u>	<u>Headlines of News-items</u>
	(6) Waste of 3,000 mounds of paddy apprehended. (Raipura, Dacca, 11th May)
	(7) Coercion by Agricultural Department. Farmers suffer losses. (Birbhum 8th May)
	(8) Running about to repay Government loan. (Midnapore 10th May)
	(9) Oppression in Feni to realise loan (7th May).
	(10) Collection of Tobacco Tax. Government employees harass farmers. Repeal of tax and fixation of minimum price demanded at Maldah agitation (th May).
	(11) Possession of 1700 bighas of arable land for Hooghly Motor Co. 'Satyagraha' to be launched against official decision.
14.5.46	(1) Farmers cannot be evicted for new port in Calcutta. Diamond Harbour Peasants Conference calls upon patriotic forces.
	(2) Corrupt officials and 'Communal' magistrate conspire to harass landless farmers.
15.5.46	(1) Government circular to destroy weavers' co-operative. Line clear for blackmarkoting. Dacca leaders protest.
	(4) Midnapore Peasants Conference demand halt to paddy transfer from district. (Tamluk 10th May)
16.5.46	(1) Hooghly District Peasants Conference resolve to fight famine and end zamindari system.
	(2) Ispahani Co. shifts crops from famine-hit Ghatal. Decree issued to realise farmers' loans and auction land. (Midnapore 12th May)
	(3) Release of prisoners demanded at Dinajpur Peasants Conference (13th May).
	(4) Land refund case. Farmer humiliated (Barisal 13th May)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Headlines of News-item</u>
17.5.46	<p>(3) Fishermen attacked with guns and lathis. Zamindar's manager and musclemen oppress villagers in Jessore.</p> <p>(4) Relief operations. People's management sought. Joint demand by Congress-League-Communist Party (12th May).</p>
18.5.46	<p>(1) Three years stock of rice becomes inedible in Government godowns. Rice selling at Rs.26/- in Dacca. Calcutta swarmed by distressed. (Mymensingh, 14th May)</p> <p>(2) More inedible rice in government godowns. Prices continue to rise in blackmarket. No provision for government relief (Tamluk 16th May).</p> <p>(5) Goons set fire to houses. Forcible occupation of land and crops. Brutal oppression by zamindar at Hasanpur (Sylhet). Prime Minister cabled (Karimgunj, Sylhet).</p>
20.5.46	<p>(1) Hundreds of distressed raid magistrate's court in Netrakona. Demand suspension of tax collection, and land transfer. Claim food and medicine.</p> <p>(2) Extensive relief demanded for Bengal. People's Relief Committee appeals for United effort.</p>
21.5.46	<p>(1) Rice selling at Rs.35/- Dacca hard hit (20th May).</p> <p>(2) Distinguished citizens and political parties in Birbhum demand immediate release of prisoners. (Birbhum 17th May)</p> <p>(3) Barisal District Peasants Conference demand abolition of zamindari without compensation. Food stock amounting to 3 lakh maunds demanded. Claim fixation of minimum jute price. (Barisal 15th)</p>

<u>Date</u>	<u>Headlines of News-items</u>
	(4) Zamindar crushes peasant movement. Conspiracy to imprison leaders. (Mymensingh, 18th)
	(7) Farmers worst affected by communal riots. Police posted in Jessore village. Congress-League silent.
22.5.46	(1) Poverty drives aged village bard to suicide. Heart-rending incident at Telechara village in Kishoregunj.
	(3) Truck loads of rice leave Budget Budget under cover of darkness. Rice selling for Rs.20/- in black market.
23.5.46	(1) Burdwan District Peasants Conference demands 15 bighas land per family. Irrigational provisions to tackle famine. (20th May)
	Abolition of zamindari only way to prevent famine. Comrade Khoka Roy's address at Jessore District Peasants Conference. (Narail 16th May)
	(3) Food deficit 38 lakh maunds. 15 lakh bighas of unarable land in 24 Parganas. Blackmarketers active. Rice continue to rot in government godowns.
	(4) Paddy cultivation severely affected. Mismanagement by zamindar's employees. Scarcity in Surama Valley (Sylet).
26.5.46	(3) Barisal declared surplus district. Government procurement and distribution policy fails. Rice selling at Rs.18/- in deficit areas.
	(4) Kishoregunj: deficit district. Civil supply unable to provide food. 2 lakh men on the Jorge of starvation.

- | <u>Date</u> | <u>Head lines of News-items</u> |
|-------------|--|
| 27.5.46 | <p>(1) Nadia District Peasants Conference demand return of land and compensation. Claim ownership right of sharecroppers over land.</p> <p>(2) Unpublished news of communal riots in Burdwan village. *Intentional police negligence*. Hindu - Muslim tension of the eve of election *Irresponsible Press.</p> <p>(3) Widespread famine conditions in Dacca and Mymensingh.</p> <p>(4) Three thousand strong Bankura District Peasants Conference. 500 labourers attend in procession.</p> |
| 28.5.46 | <p>(1) Farmers swear to save Bengal from famine. Provincial Peasants Conference at Moubhag. Unprecedented awakening cuts across classes. Peasants owing allegiance to Congress and the League urged to unite to abolish Zamindari without compensation.</p> |
| 29.5.46 | <p>(2) Famine in Noakhali. 15 lakh maund of foodgrains need of the hour. Government godowns empty. Rice costs Rs.40/-.</p> <p>(3) Chittagong District Peasants Conference calls to fight famine and abolition of Zamindari.</p> <p>(5) <u>Bengal Civil Supply</u>. Wilful conduct by 16 ICS and 21 white army officers.
* ICS Raj * Business ambitions of Food Brand * Farcical distribution system * Protector as despot.</p> <p>(6) Jessore riots a contrivance of the police and the rich.</p> <p>(7) Wearing shoes by subjects angers Zamindar. Police investigation ends with 5 hour stay at Zamindar's residence.</p> <p>(8) Worse conditions than previous famines feared at Madaripur. Statement by President, Peasants Association.</p> |

<u>Date</u>	<u>Head lines of News-items</u>
	(9) Rice costs Rs.22/- at Netrakona. People famine-stricken.
	(10) Immediate rice supply demanded in general meeting at Sarisbari. Rice selling for Rs.30/- (Mymensingh).
	(11) Crops damaged at Barbatta in Mymensingh. Peasants Conference demands 1.5 lakh maunds of paddy.
30.5.46	(1) Over thousand maunds of rice and wheat left to rot (Howrah).
	(5) 22 maunds of inedible rice auctioned at Barasat. Various pleas at Ispahani's godown.
	(6) Landless farmers of Mymensingh. Criminal case filed against villagers for demanding compensation. Official assurance reduced to force (Chatrapur).
	(8) Police on rampage in the wake of riot at Kalna. Bid to incite riot by communal elements and landowners (Nabadwip 27th May).
31.5.46	(2) Food deficit in Mymensingh 80 lakh maunds. Anti-hoarding drive throughout district necessary.
	(3) Landless farmers of Rangpur. No government compensation. Certificates issued by Zamindars. Cabinet's attention drawn to redress grievances. (Rangpur 20th May)
	(4) Rioting in Jessore a conspiracy by police and vested interests. Statement by all-party Peace Committee after visiting affected areas.
	(6) People's Relief Committee demands all-party Regional Food Board.

DateHead lines of News-items

- 1.6.46 (1) Landless farmers of Sylhet. Fifteen hundred men lose crops for want of compensation (Sylhet 26th May).
- (2) Relief money converted into government loan. Midnapore hit hardest. (Midnapore 25th May).
- (3) Bengal Provincial Peasants Conference. Anti famine drive - Call to observe anti famine week from 2nd June.
- 2.6.46 (2) (First Editorial) Loan for share-croppers.
- (3) Secret government circular to reduce food allotments in rural areas. Bid to bluff by showing old stock instead of current procurement.
- (4) Congress leaders anxious over food crisis in Bengal - Kiron Shankar Ray.
- 3.6.46 (1) Call to resist famine at Midnapore District Peasants Conference. Call for final assault for land and freedom. (Midnapore 2nd June)
- (2) Restrictions imposed on fishing in the Hooghly. Protest meetings by fishermen at different places - Phuleswar (Howrah), Konnagore (Hooghly), Chariyal (24- Parganas).
- (3) Reorganisation of Food Committees. Bid by Circle officer to establish supremacy. Misdeeds of Barisal district authorities. (Barisal 29th May).
- (4) Disastrous conditions in east Bagura following damage to crops. Rice above Rs.30/- in market. (Bagura 29th May)
- (5) Rice both scarce and dear. Scarcity in Bhojeshwar pvt (Faridpur, 29th May)
- (6) Rice transported from districts. (Khulna 29th May)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Head lines of News-items</u>
4.6.46	<p>(1) Prime Minister accepts the charge about rice disappearing from market. Mr. Suharawardy addresses meeting at Chandpur. Accuses Government of creating panic.</p> <p>(2) Four and a half yards of cloth provided to districts in Bengal over the last one year. Ten yards total allotment. Who will account for the balance ?</p> <p>(3) Dacca District Magistrate's attempt to ignore famine. Joint protest by District League Secretary and Communist Party workers.</p>
5.6.46	<p>(1) Nine cases against forty communist party workers in Rangpur. Officials ruthless to suppress food and cloth movement.</p> <p>(2) Rice continues to be clear in districts. No market supply. Meetings against insufficient government stock.</p>
6.6.46	<p>(1) Black marketeers control 70% of Dacca. False promises to check famine.</p> <p>(2) Government stock of 20 thousand maunds for 22 lakh people. Rice costs Rs.35/- reports Noakhali Congress President. (Calcutta 4th June)</p>
7.6.46	<p>(1) Civil Supply Agents auction off 50 thousand maunds of inedible food grains. Famine imminent.</p>
8.6.46	<p>(1) Need for all party participation to halt famine underlined. Civil Supply Department strongly criticised.</p> <p>(5) Violence in Barisal village. Police opens fire. One dead. Conspiracy to weaken Peasant Committee influence in the Arakans. (Barisal 6th June)</p>

<u>Date</u>	<u>Head lines of News-items</u>
9.6.46	(1) Congress Committee urges for unity against hoarding and black marketeering. Food problem assuming alarming proportions in Bengal. Congress regrets League's unwillingness to cooperate : Statement by Sri Surendra Mohan Ghosh.
	(2) Famine hits Bengal again. Bureaucrats control League Ministry. No indigenous planning. (Bhabani Sen)
11.6.46	(8) Birbhum Peasants Conference calls for united action for freedom and land. Mass scale movement demanding irrigational facilities and resistance to famine launched.
12.6.46	(1) Six starvation deaths in Birbhum. Mother of five commits suicide in Farna. Rice costs Rs.50/- in Dacca. (Bankura, 10th June)
	(3) Communist leaders proposes all-party food policy to Food Minister.
13.6.46	(1) Erroneous official declaration of food prices. Government negligence led to price rise: comments the Statesman.
	(6) Landowners oppress sharecroppers. (Tamluk 8th June)
14.6.46	(1) Mr. Suhrawardy accuses profiteers of causing price rise in Press Conference. Government spokesman supports procurement policy.
	(2) Bengal Committee of Communist Party appeals to observe Food Day on 25th June.
	(3) Authorities unwilling to declare Bankura famine-stricken. Peasants continue to be harassed for tax realisation. Official irresponsibility over loan distribution and relief. (Bankura 10th June).

<u>Date</u>	<u>Head lines of News-items</u>
	(4) Food grains transported secretly from Jalpaiguri Rice costs Rs.20/- Rs.22/- in deficit areas. (Jalpaiguri 9th June)
	(5) Peasants squad attacks Dacca village. Attackers take the name of League (Dacca 8th June).
	(8) Police help to occupy land. Consequences of Agriculture Development Plan of Bengal Government.
	(9) 8 lakh maunds deficit at Netrakona. Afflicted in thousands on way to cities (Netrakona, Mymensingh 11th May)
17.6.46	(2) Sundarbans Peasants Conference demand special laws to protect farmers right. (6th June, Diamond Harbour)
	(4) 20 truck loads of paddy seized in the Sundarbans. Official agents and officers negligence to confiscate. (Kakdwip, 24 Parganas 15th June)
	(5) Rice disappears from Khulna villages, Official indolence raises suspicion. (Khulna 10th June).
19.6.46	Traders connive to hike price of rice in Barisal and Jessore. Move to legalise high rates. Authorities apathetic. (Barisal 15th June)
21.6.46	(1) Two crore Bengalis face famine. (By Krishna Binod Ray, President, Bengal Provincial Peasants Conference).
23.6.46	(1) Disastrous proposal to lift control in deficit districts. Magistrates holds meeting at Governor House. Bureaucrats concerned to gap press. Prime Minister expressed desire to grant license to traders.

DateHead lines of News-items

- (3) Prevention of famine responsibility of Peasants Conference. Resolution adopted at Central Peasants Council.
- (a) Food Policy of Central Government
 (b) Duties of Peasants Conference vis-a-vis food problem (c) Native states. (d) Cabinet Mission (e) Elected provincial ministries
 (f) Abolition of zamindari (g) Minimum Wages Bill (h) Struggle of Indians in Natal.
- 24.6.46 (1) Food situations in districts of Bengal (2)
 Landowners and traders close ranks in Jalpaiguri Sharecroppers' loan stopped.
- (1) Section 144 imposed on sharecroppers in Nandigram. Conspiracy to grab land in connivance with police and musclemen. (Tamluk 22nd June)
- 25.6.46 (1) Ten thousand Hindus and Muslims attend Dacca District Peasants Conference. Communally infamous Raipura witness scenes of unity (Dacca 19th June).
- (2) Peasants, labourers and coachmen go on strike to protect crops. Demand relief and agricultural loan in Susang. (Susang, Mymensingh 22nd June).
- 26.6.46 (2) Food situations in districts of Bengal (3)
 Hoarders and millowners hold 40 lakh maunds of surplus food in Dinajpur. Government procurement flops. No loans available for sharecroppers.
- 27.6.46 (2) The men who fought snakes and tigers to reclaim farms. Sharecroppers get no loans in the Sundarbans - incur the wrath of moneylenders. (Khulna).
- 28.6.46 (1) Starvation drives cultivator to suicide in Arambagh. Aged farmer attempts suicide. Reveals pathetic story in hospital.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Head lines of News-items</u>
	(3) President addresses 15000 farmers in Mymensingh. Intensified movement to compel government accept people's food policy.
29.6.46	(1) Grievous starvation deaths in Noakhali village, native place of Food Minister Khan Bahadur Gafran. Grief-stricken family members testify. (Report by Subhash Mukherjee) Choumuhali 25th June.
	(2) <u>Food Policy of Congress Ministry</u> Procurement and rationing in deficit provinces. Field day for profiteers in surplus areas.

July, 1946

2.7.46	(3) Mankai Peasants Conference resolve to oppose move to render 20000 homeless. Congress, League and Communist leaders appeal for united struggle. Provincial Congress and League Secretary extend support.
3.7.46	(1) Decision to ban famine news. Possibility of Governor applying special powers.
	(3) Tamruk farmers rise against famine. 1000 bighas brought under cultivation.
4.7.46	(1) Illegal transportation of rice banned in Susang. Loans realised. Civil Supply officials forced to come to terms with striking farmers, labourers and coachmen. (Mymensingh 2nd July)
	(2) Market agitation at Birbhum. Reduction in toll collection from farmers promised. (Ahmedpur, Birbhum, 28th)
	(3) Starving men assemble before magistrate's residence. Demand to stop rice transportation rejected. Authorities firm on taking legal action. (Bankura).

<u>Date</u>	<u>Head lines of News-items</u>
5.7.46	(2) Meetings at Siliguri, Kishoregunj, Susang, Nalitabari, Faridpur and Barisal demand food.
7.7.46	(1) Who is responsible for the collapse of procurement policy in Bengal ? (2) Chief agents refuse to buy crops even at nominal rates. (3) Government must accept responsibility to solve agricultural crisis. Krishnamachari Committee proposes changes in agricultural system. (4) Instance of 'two-third' fall in prices of rice. What has Mr. Suhrawardy got to say ?
8.7.46	(1) Starving men gharao SDO at Barasat. Threatens to take up matters in their own hands if food scarcity continues.
10.7.46	District Magistrate/gharaoed by hungry men at Kishoregunj. Forced release of 9000 maunds of foodgrains from government godowns. (4th July)
11.7.46	(2) Brutal police assault on farmers at Domjur. Policemen Break into houses. Even children and the sick not spared. (Howrah 9th June)
12.7.46	Government surrenders to husking mill owners at Chittagong. Rice looted along the tracks of Assam - Bengal railway - Millowners at liberty to sell rice at Rs.18/-, Government steamer used for secret business transactions - Prices not controlled by Government. Magistrate threatens to deal firmly for criticising Government policy. (Chittagong 7th July)

DateHeadlines of News-items

14.7.46

Thousands of fishermen march to the Padma. Protest against atrocities by zamindar. Memorable night of 28th June. Report by fishermen's leader Surendra Chakrabarti.

- (2) Livelihood of 10 lakh Bengal fishermen threatened. Brutal oppression in Congress leader Kiran Shankar's district. Resolution for province-wide struggle.

15.7.46

Food situations in districts of Bengal (5).

Despite food stocks farmers die of starvation in Jessore. Outcome of appeasing blackmarketeers.

21.7.46

Arbitrary ways of Censorship Department. Press gagged by Government of Bengal.

22.7.46

Food Committees suspended. Bureaucratic irregularities alleged. Autocratic orders by Burdwan District Magistrate. (Burdwan, 20th July)

23.7.46

Fishermen boycott market following harassment by zamindar. (Dacca 17th July)

24.7.46

- (1) Section 144 withdrawn from farms taking part in peasant movement at Nandigram. Mass meeting at Tamluk in support of sharecroppers. (Tamluk 22nd July)

- (2) Comrade Gurudas Talukdar charged with violating peace. Joint attack by zamindars and police on market-agitators in Dinajpur. (Dinajpur 21st July)

26.7.46

- (1) Government food policy sharply criticised in Bengal Assembly. Adjournment motion ends in an endless debate. Communist leaders warn all parties.

Date

Head lines of News-items

- (2) Profiteering millowners nominated sub-agents. Procurement policy a total failure. Secret procurement attempts by government face opposition from hoarders. (Report by Nani Bhownik). Example of procurement policy - farmers not duly paid, government profits. (Rangpur 3rd July)
- 27.7.46 Official investigation into police excesses at Domjur. Witness in police lock-up. Complaint lodged. (Domjur 22nd July)
- 28.7.46 Government designs to save landlords at the expense of sharecroppers. Villagers starve at Dinajpur also - the granary of Bengal.
- 29.7.46 Antisocials (Rowdies) attack sharecroppers at Tamluk. Heroic struggle by farmers against hoarder's oppression. (Tamluk, 26th July).
- August, 1946
- 4.8.46 (1) Atrocities by police and armed forces to suppress August movement in Bengal. Government admits of excesses in Assembly. Rejects demand to setup an unofficial investigation committee and withdrawal of punitive tax.
- (2) Reorganisation of Food Committees to resist famine demanded. Powers to the people's representatives not to self-centered officials.
- 6.8.46 Cooperative farming in Pabna generates unprecedented enthusiasm among farmers. The homeless, determined to fight famine, get lands. (By Saroj Mukherjee) Famine must be resisted land for the landless peasants. Bengali farmers in collective farms. How farming is done. Farmers efforts not in vain encouragement among farmers. The homeless get land.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Head lines of News-items</u>
7.8.46	Communist leaders Jyoti Basu and Ratanlal assaulted and arrested inside Assembly. Audacity of notorious police officer Samsuddoha. Agitated League and Congress members demand Samsuddoha's dismissal
8.8.46	Bureaucrats conspire against unofficial Food Committees. Members resign enmasse in protest. Disastrous policy adopted by Forward Block at Nawabdwip. (Nawabdwip 4th August)
9.8.46	Brahmanbaria SDO orders forcible dissolution of Food Committee. Plot hatched to form autocratic committee with hood-picket men (5th August).
12.8.46	(1) Procession by hungry farmers in Dacca. Rice demanded at cheap rates. Shameless confession by Magistrate - demand cannot be met due to scarcity of food stock. (Dacca 9th August)
	(2) Procession in Chittagong by starving men. (Chittagong 9th August)
13.8.46	(1) Farmers save crops of 40000 bighas. Blow to vanity of Circle Officer and profiteers. (Jessore 7th August).
14.8.46	Discussion to abolish zamindari. Attempt to stop discussion by force. Comrade Jyoti Basu's comments irks Congress members. Pandemonium in Bengal Assembly.
	(2) Farmers undertake 30 mile march to Jalpaiguri. Demand confiscation of hoarder's granary and loan. All parties extend support. Unprecedented scenes witnessed. (9th August)
16.8.46	(1) Police arrest many in Tamluk village. Conspiracy to crush Weaver's Cooperative Society, medical unit. (13th August)

- Headlines of News-items
- Date
- (2) Brutal police attack in Mymensingh village. Rs. 60,000/- looted. Women not spared. Call to launch all-party movement for demanding an official enquiry and punishing the guilty.
- 20.8.46 Police and military not prepared to surrender in Calcutta riots. Murder, looting and arson in broad daylight.
- 21.8.46 (1) Calcutta comparatively normal on Tuesday. United peace efforts by Congress and League leaders. Distressed rescued. Homeless deserting the city.
- 22.8.46 (2) Calcutta riot is an outcome of British Imperialist conspiracy. League leadership fails - outcome of Congress - League strife. P.C. Joshi appeals to end fratricide.
- 23.8.46 Over one lakh rendered homeless in seven days. Half a lakh leave city. Decomposed dead bodies pose health hazard. General conditions on the improve.
- 24.8.46 Starvation and epidemic in the wake of bloody rioting. Calcuttans tense on even of Id. Official negligence on public health.

September, 1946

- 1.9.46 (1) Police and CID in the forefront of Howrah communal riot. Communist workers risk lives to restore peace. (By Saroj Mukherjee)
- (2) Communist Party appeals to preserve united struggle to enslaved Indians. Labourers congratulated for keeping away from Calcutta riots. (Communique issued by Communist Party of India).

<u>Date</u>	<u>Headlines of News-items</u>
2.9.46	(1) Civil war in Calcutta - Communist Party's effort to resist.
	(2) Hindu and Muslim sharecroppers take out food procession in Dinajpur. District Magistrate garanteed Relief for Thakurgaon demand. (30th August)
	(3) Situation at Dacca highly explosive. District authorities indifferent to quell riots. Conspiracy to crush leftists. (31st August)
4.9.46	(1) Section 107 imposed on 80 villagers at Contai. Zamindar's wrath on Congress, Peasants Conference and Communist workers. (Contai 30th August)
	(2) Riot prevented in labour-dominated Howrah village. Red flag leads Hindus and Muslims unitedly against rumours and instigation.
7.9.46	(2) Communal riots instigated by enemies of farmers. United effort to protect villages and food only way to defeat exploiters. Joint statement by President and Secretary of Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha.
9.9.46	(1) Sharecropper dies of starvation at Dinajpur - the granary of Bengal. No provision for relief and loan for sharecroppers. (Dinajpur 5th September).
10.9.46	Government finally admits of food crisis in Rangpur. Next two months to be critical. Landowners and officials join forces in food procurement.

Date

Headlines of News-items

- 11.9.46 (1) Detective department instigates anti-communist statements. Government officials in Rajshahi play tricks to drive wedge among political parties. (9th September)
- (2) Prostitutes beaten up in the name of dealing with communists. The misdeeds of RSP leader at Jiagunj. (9th September)
- 13.9.46 (1) Bengal cannot be saved by accusing one another - Communist Members of Bengal Assembly on no-confidence motion.
- (2) Anti-Communist instigation at Chittagong. Reactionaries conspire behind Hindu - Muslim quarrel. (8th September).
- (3) Much publicised anti-hoarding drive a failure. Hoarders continue blackmarkoting at Dinajpur. (10th September)
- (4) Peasant's Association stops rioting in Nadia. (Swarupgunj - Nadia)
- 14.9.46 Farmers occupy 334 bighas of land at Dinajpur. Volunteers ignore landlord's muscle power. Peasant movement in Bengal witness down of a new era. (12th September)
- 16.9.46 (1) Food supply in districts uncertain. Black-marketeers control market. Rice costs Rs.27/-.
- (2) Hindus and Muslims swear in front of peasant leaders to prevent riot. Peace efforts by Communist MLA: a success at Dinajpur. (10th September)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Headlines of News-items</u>
17.9.46	Eight hour long search in the offices of 'Swadhinata' and Communist Party. Publication of secret army circular evokes police anger. Almirahs forced open. Indiscriminate search.
18.9.46	(2) Rumour of riot causes fear among masses. Peace Committees propagate at different places. Leaders at Rajshahi indifferent. (Jessore 14th)
	(3) Struggle to occupy wastelands begin in Nadia. Hindu & Muslim farmers unite. Two farmers charged with Section 448. (Krishnanagar 14th)
19.9.46	(1) 10 cases filed against 44 sharecroppers in Nandigram. 70 year old farmer arrested for the second time in a week. (Tamluk 15th)
	(3) Muslim and Hindu farmers unite to cleanse canals at Chittagong. Determination to carry relief work over 21 sq. mile flood hit area. (Chittagong, 14th September).
20.9.46	Lessons of Rajshahi Civil War - Brothers never to take up arms against one another. Congress-League ministry only way to secure and protection against white traders. Speech of Communist member Jyoti Basu in Bengal Assembly.
	(3) Three thousand strong procession in Mymensingh demand food. Hindu-Muslim unite on demand for rice at controlled rates. (12th September)
	(4) Bureaucrats misbehave with people representatives over relief operations. Rice costs Rs.25/-. 9 lakh villages face famine (Netrakona, 14th)
	(5) Section 144 imposed on pastureland movement by farmers. Colonisation officers turn up with armed police. (Barisal 15th)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Headlines of News-items</u>
21.9.46	(1) 'This is the time of annual hardship' - shameless comment by Magistrate to starving villagers at Thakurgaon. (Dinajpur 17th)
24.9.46	(2) Conspiracy of panic-stricken Zamindar Syndicate fails. Hindu-Muslim unity among farmers in Khulna creates history. (By Krishnabinod Roy, Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha)
	(3) Students and farmers unite to protect food grains. (Jessore, 20th)
	(4) Taxes not payed for zamindar's luxury, and should be diverted to irrigation. Police find no witness in Tamluk village; return empty handed. (Tamluk 20th)
25.9.46	(1) Farmers demand consolidation of independence movement only. Released prisoners given rousing reception in 24 Parganas villages. (Baharu 21st September).
26.9.46	(4) Villages in Bengal witness starvation, suicide, death. (Dinajpur 22nd September)
27.9.46	(1) Sudden police raid on the office of Jessore District Fishermen's Association. Lathi charge leaves many wounded, 12 arrested. Party deserter Bholanath Biswas, MLA tries to occupy office with police help.
28.9.46	(1) Starvation compels selling off of land, cattle and utensils. Ration cards of the poor confiscated. (Mymensingh 22nd)
	(2) Hungry men at Rajshahi gharaged SDO's quarters. Paddy seized and sold by Peasants Association in Dinajpur. (Rajbari 24th September)

Date

Headlines of News-items

29.9.46

Rice dear throughout Bengal. Famine stares in the face of villages in East Bengal.

30.9.46

(1) Peasants in Jalpaiguri village besiege granary. Urban people support drive against blackmarketeers. Rice disappears from market; evokes strong resentment. (Jalpaiguri 28th)

(2) 500 starving jute workers take out procession in Netrakona. Realised aid from authorities. (21st.)

Appendix - II

Mymensingh:

Bhalu, an old peasant, was killed by the hired hooligans of the jotodar. The police party had arrested five peasants. (Swadhinata, Nov.30)

Imposition of Section. 144 prohibiting harvesting of crop in various paddy fields in Netrokona sub-division. (Swadhinata, Oct.5)

Institution of cases under Sections 359/144 & 188 of the I.P.C. against 450 peasants in the Unions of Singherbala and Kaylati, and issue of non-bailable warrants of arrest against 18 peasant leaders. (Swadhinata, Dec.6)

Prohibitions under Section. 144 imposed on 20 peasants and Communist leaders. The District Magistrate decided to take stern measures against the agitationists. (Nationalist, Oct.7)

House to house raid by the police in Singherbala Union. Two Communist and peasant leaders arrested. A blind peasant was arrested, and later released. Haranath Mandal, a scheduled caste peasant, was arrested and beaten mercilessly. An armed police party raided the houses of 36 Muslim and 3 Hindu families in Singherbala Union. House to house search by the police in Saiyadpur village. Reports of police repression in the neighbouring villages. (Swadhinata, Dec.11)

Prabir Goswami, a peasant leader, was attacked by people carrying deadly weapons. (Swadhinata, Dec.13)

Two peasants arrested in Nalitabari, and their bail petitions were refused. (Swadhinata, Dec.15)

17 peasants along with their leader were arrested in Netrokona. (Swadhinata, Dec.15)

Repression by the police at Kishoregunj. Men and women beaten mercilessly in Banigram village. Attempts to crush the movement with the help of mass arrests and torture. (Swadhinata, Dec.18)

Sharecroppers arrested in hundreds in Netrokona. 10 peasant leaders arrested. The offices of the Kisan Sabha and the communist party raided. Fazlul Rahman, a local student, became senseless as a result of inhuman torture by the police. (Swadhinata, Dec.8)

The district Magistrate sent a confidential report on the movement to the Govt. of Bengal. Methods of suppression suggested. The Magistrate ordered to sue people in criminal courts if they declined to follow the existing sharecropping arrangements. (Swadhinata, Dec.19 & 20)

Dinajpur :

23 peasant activists arrested in Thakurgaon. (Swadhinata, Nov.26)

The Secretary of the district communist party in Dinajpur and 14 peasant activists arrested. (Swadhinata, Oct.10)

Peasants attacked by a police party at Aloakhoat. Two peasants were seriously wounded. 13 peasants arrested. (Swadhinata, Dec.12)

Peasant women and children beaten mercilessly by the police at Aloakhoat. The police had taken away some jewel boxes from Kanai Barman's house. They had also snatched Rs.500/- which was obtained from the sale of bullocks. Peasants clashed with the police party in Thakurgaon. 7 peasant women and 2 men wounded. Two constables wounded.

Jessore :

Criminal cases instituted against 33 peasants in Ujirpur village. (Swadhinata, Oct.4)

Meetings and demonstrations prohibited in the Sadar subdivision. (Swadhinata, Oct.6)

Cases under Section. 107 instituted against 25 peasants in Abhoynagar P.S. Imposition of Section. 154 on many peasants. (Swadhinata, Oct.9)

Armed police force sent to Abhoynagar P.S.
(Swadhinata, Oct.9)

Notices under Section. 107 served against 13 peasant leaders in Abhoynagar, and later cases instituted. They were interned in the city. (Swadhinata, Dec.9 & 14)

Armed police forces patrolling the paddy fields. Warrants of arrest served on 12 peasant activists in the Keshabpur region. (Swadhinata, Dec.14)

Khulna :

Arrangements made to convict Kisan Samity leaders in criminal courts. Warrants of arrest under Section 107 served and Section 144, imposed on 32 peasant leaders. (Swadhinata, Dec.18)

Police raided the villages of Joykhali and Dandarpara on Nov.28, and Dec.4 & 6.

Dacca :

The District Magistrate had ordered the local authorities at Manikganj to institute cases against peasants who would decline to follow the existing sharecropping arrangements. (Nationalist, Dec.14)

Howrah :

On Nov.24, Gobordhan Makhai, a peasant activist, was detained at the Keshabpur P.S. by the local Officer-in-charge. (Swadhinata, Nov.30)

Midnapur :

Government orders prohibiting harvesting of crop issued in Nandigram. (Swadhinata, Dec.20)

3 peasant leaders and 2 peasants arrested in Kendemari village. Leaders released on bail. (Swadhinata, Dec.10)

Nadia :

Summons under various sections served on 58 peasants and fishermen in Swarupgunj. Police investigations on the application of Sections 107 & 144 on 16 peasants going on.