CHAPTER 4
CHAPTER 4

Saumyendranath Tagore and the Peasant Movements of Bengal: Mixed Successes in Various Parts

Under the leadership of Saumyendranath Tagore, the Communist League of India (CLI) or later the Revolutionary Communist Party of India (RCPI) organized powerful peasant movements. These movements were organized against increase in revenue, against illegal cesses such as *abwab*, against work without pay and the ryotwari and zamindari systems, remission of peasant debts, and others. They raised the slogan “Langal jar Jomi tar” (The Owner of the Plough is the Owner of the Land). In literature, we get a poignant description of this movement: “It is a story from long ago … A tremendous fight had started in the villages all over the country … ‘The Owner of the Plough is the Owner of the Land’ [was the slogan]. All the starving, poor, peasant-class people had joined the fight.” Under the leadership of Tagore the CLI formed peasant organizations in various parts of Bengal. Peasants committees were formed in the 24-Parganas, Nadia, Birbhum, Murshidabad, Bankura, Dinajpur, Faridpur, Khulna, Jessore and other districts. In April 1938, Tagore visited Faridpur and established a Kisan Kendra (Centre) in this district to help erstwhile political prisoners. He also participated actively in organizing the peasants of Mymensingh, Noakhali and Sylhet. Though the peasants played an important role in the Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience movements the Congress did not build a separate organization for the peasants.

On 16 January 1936, in Meerut a number of left-minded political workers met eminent leaders such as N.G. Ranga, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Jaiprakash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Deb, Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, Indulal Yagnik and others. They discussed specially the question of the peasantry and the miserable condition in which they lived. Finally
they decided to form an organizing committee, with N.G. Ranga and Jaiprakash Narayan as joint conveners, to convene an All-India Kisan Congress (AIKC). The first session of the AIKC was held at Lucknow on 11 April 1936 under the presidency of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati. N.G. Ranga was the general secretary. Among those present were Indulal Yagnik of Gujarat, Karan Singh Mann of Punjab, Niharendu Dutta Mazumdar and Sudhin Pramanik of Bengal, Jaiprakash Narayan of Uttar Pradesh. Indulal Yagnik was appointed editor to publish an All-India Kisan Bulletin. From Bengal Saumyendranath, Niharendu Dutta Mazumdar, Bankim Mukherjee and other left leaders joined the Kisan Congress.

In Bengal, the Bengal Pradeshik Kisan Committee (BPKC) was formed in 1936, following the goals and rules and regulation of the All-India Kisan Sabha. In 27 and 28 March 1937, the first conference of this committee was organized at Patrasayar of Bankura District. Tagore was a member of the State Committee as well. Tarapada Gupta and Sudhir Dasgupta were also in this committee. The motion passed in this conference demanded abolition of zamindari system without giving any compensation, exemption from debt to money-lenders, distribution of lands among the landless peasants and the general improvement of the situation in rural Bengal.

A number of eminent leaders of the CLI dedicated themselves to the work of organizing the peasantry. Among them were Tarapada Gupta and Haridas Gupta of Murshidabad; Khemesh Chattopadhay and Ajit Roy of Dinajpur; Dibakar Halder, Satish Samanta and Ranjit Majumdar of the 24-Parganas; Durgadas, Pannalal Dasgupta and Radhagovindo Sarkar of Birbhum; Santu Mukherjee, Haren Basu, Bimal Chattopadhyay, Kanai Pal and Gour Pal of Nadia; Mihir Dasgupta and Golam Rosul of Khulna; Suren Podder of Jessore; Gopal Basu of Howrah; Mukuleshwar Rahaman and Nurul Hoda of Barisal; Haridas Deka, Kedar Sharma and Khagen
Baruah of Assam. According to Sunil Kundagrami, an assistant to the office of the Bengal Provincial Kisan Committee, early in 1937 the BPKC was an all-party organization. Sometime after, Saumyendranath Tagore with his supporters separated from this organization. They formed a rival organization under the name “Bangiyo Pradeshik Krishak Sabha” (BPKS) at 220, Cornwallis Street.

So the unity that was formed at the Bengal State Conference held at Patrasayer did not last long. In 1938 a propagandist document was circulated which claimed that factional conspiracy was taking place within the BPKC. On the one hand, there were Bankim Mukherjee, Muzaffar Ahamed and Niharendu Dutta Majumdar and on the other hand were Tarapada Gupta, Sudhir Dasgupta, Satish Samanta and Tagore. The Ganabani reported that the BPKC that was originally formed to protect and promote the cause of the peasants had unfortunately fallen into the clutches of a powerful clique whose only aim was to preserve the interests of its mother organization. All the other Krishak Samitis which did not belong to this clique were side-lined in the BPKC. As a result of the treachery of this clique, the Ganabani averred, genuine peasants’ organization had suffered and what had gained headway was hypocritical posturing. A list of the names of the leaders who formed this clique was also provided: it included Bankim Mukherjee, Muzaffar Ahamed, Niharendu Dutta Majumder among others.

The parting of ways was clear from several letters and incidents. A letter from Tarapada Gupta, the organizing secretary of the Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha, to Swami Sahajananda Saraswati stated that Bankim Mukherjee, the General Secretary of the Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha informed him (Tarapada) that the Secretariat will be bound to cancel our 20,000 receipts. During the last one year every time, everywhere they had been upset as independent Kisan workers were suppressed and gagged, false disputes and cancellation of membership in
thousands to shut off others. Tarapada appealed to Sahajananda to intervene in all cases and set things right. Otherwise they shall be compelled, much against their will, to recede and carry on the work independently.\textsuperscript{12}

In a letter from Sahajananda to Tagore dated 24 May 1938, Sahajananda stated that he had spoken to Bankim Mukherjee. Mukherjee had told him that unless Saumyendranath withdrew his statement about the BPKC publicly, it was impossible to persuade the members of the BPKC to come to any agreement with Saumyendranath or his party.\textsuperscript{13} In a reply on 3 June 1938, Tagore in his letter to Swami Sahajananda stated the main point of the charges. These were –

1. The arbitrary and unconstitutional cancellation of membership in the districts of the 24-Parganas and Nadia.
2. Holding parallel conference at Birbhum by entirely flouting the Birbhum District Kisan Organization for which the Birbhum District Kisan Committee demanded a month ago disciplinary action against Muzaffar Ahamad.
3. Supply of 5000 membership forms to a notorious right-wing Congress leader of Howrah and accepting 5000 membership entirely manufactured by this man.
4. Deputation to the Home Minister of Bengal and holding Comilla conference by seeking his consent.\textsuperscript{14}

In another letter dated 24 November 1938, Saumyendranath wrote to Sahajananda that the BPKC clique in its last meeting of general council had taken decisions which he and his party workers could not accept. Bankim Mukherjee attacked Tagore personally and came to the following decisions:

1. The Birbhum District Kisan Committee was not a \textit{bona fide} Kisan committee as Tagore’s candidate could not get elected to the committee.
2. Out of 900 memberships, 600 memberships have been cancelled most arbitrarily on the ground of technical faults of the 24-Parganas Kisan Committee.

3. In Nadia district 2000 memberships have been cancelled without any proper enquiry. These arbitrary and high-handed steps were taken by the clique in the BPKC. Moreover, Tagore’s comrades were systematically refused the receipt of books by the BPKC office. Their comrades repeatedly represented their cases to the president and the secretary of the AIKC but to no avail. Saumyendranath’s group felt that justice and fair-play was denied to them. Under the circumstances Tagore and his party very reluctantly decided to secede from the BPKC and to set up a parallel provincial organization.¹⁵

From the beginning of 1938 Saumyendranath started to form a separate peasant organization independent of the CPI-controlled BPKS and in March he visited Murshidabad, the 24-Parganas, Nadia and Howrah to organize this independent peasant organization with the help of the Anushilan Samiti and the CSP. In the next month he was successfully formed the peasant organization at Faridpur, Birbhum, Nadia, Burdwan and the 24-Parganas under CLI control.¹⁶ As such, Tagore formed a parallel organization named Bangiyo Pradeshik Kisan Sabha (BPKS). It was easy for Tagore to form this parallel organization for he was the undisputed leader of the peasants of the 24-Parganas, Howrah, Birbhum and Murshidabad. Mutual blaming and opposition continued between the two organizations. As a result of this internal strife the ultimate sufferer was the left peasant movement which split into two rival camps. Having said this, however, it has to be admired that Saumyendranath Tagore and his organization played a very important role in organizing the peasant. The organizational structure of Tagore’s peasant front during this time was the following:

- Tarapada Gupta (Organizational President, BPKS)
The CLI experienced varying degrees of success in organizing the peasants in various parts of Bengal as well as in regions beyond Bengal such as the United Provinces, Assam and Tippera. However, the CLI was most successful in the three districts of the 24-Parganas, Murshidabad and Birbhum of Bengal. The last district was in a certain sense Tagore’s home turf. It may be remembered that his early Gandhian brushes with political organization had started in Birbhum at a place called Bonpass. In what follows, the endeavour is to provide a quick survey of the CLI’s limited success in various districts of Bengal and in areas beyond Bengal. In the next chapter, we take up the three districts of the 24-Parganas, Murshidabad and Birbhum separately to study in detail Tagore and the CLI’s organizational successes there.
Peasant Mobilization in Nadia District

Saumyendranath was actively working in Nadia district from 1926. On 28 May 1926, Bengal Provincial Conference of the WPP was held at Krishnagar. Tagore, Mani Mukherjee, Hemanta Sarkar and others distributed the manifesto of the CPI. It was published by J.P. Bagerhatta and Muzaffar Ahamad, from 37 Harrison Road of the Bengal Peasants and Workers Party on behalf of the CPI. The manifesto was addressed to the workers in the cause of independence and said that freedom could only be obtained by an economic programme with the idea of social equality. They also distributed copies of the *Langal.* In March 1935 Saumyendranath Tagore got some organizations on behalf of his party at Ranaghat (Nadia district).18

In December 1937 the Bengal Provincial Peasants Conference was held at Burdwan. Saumyendranath attended the meeting. It was decided to carry on vigorous agitation throughout the country. Tagore visited Nadia district. Peasant Committees were formed in pursuance of his instructions and branches of the Political Prisoners’ Relief Committee were also started. Saumyendranath opened an all-India publicity office of the Krishak committee in his own house of which he was the president. On 21 December 1937 Saumyendranath Tagore arrived at Krishnagar. He delivered speeches at Gangnapur and Santipur.19

In January 1938, Tagore visited Nadia. He came in touch with ex-detennues and other members of the different revolutionary groups. He addressed meetings of the youth and peasants with a view to consolidating his own party. In February Tagore again visited Nadia to organize a rival peasant organization with the help of the Anushilan Samiti and the Congress Socialist Party. According to a secret intelligence branch report in the month of December 1938, Tagore was successful in securing a large number of followers in Nadia. He started parallel peasant
organization in rivalry with the BPKS. In May 1940 Saumyendranath Tagore went on an organizational tour to Santipur in Nadia district.

On 13 September 1941 Tagore visited Bhaluka village near Nabadwip. His intention was to supervise the district organization of his party. He was assisted by the general secretary of his party. Saumyendranath met some of the leaders of his party secretly. He ordered them to take over the district student organization. On 14 September 1941, Tagore again visited Krishnagar. He discussed the organization of Communist League with the college students. He returned to Kolkata on 15 September 1941.

In December 1941, Tagore attended a private meeting of the delegates to the Bengal Provincial Students Federation conference at Krishnagar in Nadia district. He urged them to unite the industrial and agricultural workers for the final struggle for independence.

The British-owned Keru Company in Nadia used to exploit the peasants. They had huge agricultural lands at their disposal to manufacture country liquor. The peasants were made to cultivate sugarcane on this land through the ‘Dadon’ system at a nominal wage. Apart from this the company used to buy sugarcane from other peasants of that area. However they never paid the peasants the correct amount of money; in fact they delayed the purchase so that they could depress the prices and then buy sugarcane at a very cheap rate. They also cheated the peasants in weight and then delayed the payment. Under the leadership of Sudhir Dasgupta, Harendranath Basu and Someshwar Mukherjee (of Chuadanga) the Communist League started a movement against this exploitative system. The demands were: right price, correct weight and payment immediately after sale. Under the leadership of Tagore’s party, the peasants stop selling sugarcane for three or four days. As a result the factories shut down. Because of this movement ultimately the company was forced to accept the demands of the peasants.
According to an I.B. report on 15 March 1942, Tagore and other members of his organization were planning to organize a movement against the payment of rent among the peasants of Nadia. On 14 January 1944 secret branch reported that Joganath Mukherjee was an active member of Tagore’s party in Krishnagar Town. He was an ex-convict who had been convicted in a procession case and also for abusing police officers of Krishnanagar police station and sentenced for 2 years R.I. in 1942.24

**Peasant Mobilization in Dinajpur District**

After the Bengal Provincial Peasant Conference at Burdwan in December 1937, Saumyendranath visited Dinajpur. His intention was to form Peasant Committee there. But, before the Bengal Provincial Peasant Conference on 28 June 1935, it was reported that Amar Raha was instructed by Tagore to spread Communist ideas in Dinajpur. Amar Raha had been preaching Communist ideas to the ‘Santhals’ in the night school that started at Dinajpur for this purpose. Intelligence Branch reported that on 16 December 1937 Saumyendranath arrived at Dinajpur by the morning train at 5AM. There was none to receive him at the station as his arrival was not previously known to any of the Congress men there. He went to the local Congress office in the morning and from there, being accompanied by Kalipada Dhar of Kalitola, went to the house of Babu Ashutosh Guha, pleader Balubari and was accommodated there.25

On the same day at noon it was announced in the town by ex-detenue Gopal Kumud Saraswati of Balubari that a public meeting would be held in the Congress office compound at 4pm. And the meeting commenced at about 4.30 pm under the presidency of Babu Jogindra Chandra Chakravatry, a pleader of Dinajpur. At least 300 people attended the meeting. Tagore delivered a lecture dealing mainly with the principles of socialism. He said that terrorism had proved failure as a political instrument and that the only way to obtain independence was
through socialism by awakening the mass. He asked the people to give up party feelings and to fight against Capitalism and Imperialism which were the cause of poverty and degradation of the country. The following were present at the meeting:

1. Babu Jogindra Chandra Chakraborty, Pledger
2. Babu Gopal Chandra Banerjee, Pledger
3. Babu Jamini Kanta Goswami, Pledger
4. Babu Ashutosh Guha, Pledger (Congress)
5. Babu Srish Chandra Chatterjee, Pledger (Congress)
6. Babu Kali Bilash Bagchi, Pledger (Congress)
7. Anil Kumar Biswas, Pledger (Ex-detene, Jugantar)
8. Narendra Mohan Sen, Pledger (Socialist Inclination)
9. Kamakhya Chakraborty (Anushilan)
10. Sushil of Kalitola (Jugantar)
11. Kalipada Dhar of Kalitola (Jugantar)
12. Shyamapada Dhar of Kalitola (Jugantar) and many others.

Jogindra Chandra Chakraborty also addressed the meeting for a few minutes. He said that they had formed a “Mass Contact Committee” at Dinajpur and had asked the members to see Tagore after the meeting to take necessary instructions from him.26

On the next day on 17 December 1937, Tagore addressed another meeting in the Congress office compound at 4pm. He delivered a speech on Socialism. He urged the audience to realize that Capitalism and British Imperialism were their enemy and they must fight against these forces at all costs. He also asked the people to organize Krishak Committee in the district with a view to unite the peasants and to make them stand against the oppression of the zamindars.
Saumyendranath announced that a committee has been formed at Dinajpur named “Dinajpur District Political Prisoners’ Relief Committee”. About 400 people attended the meeting including 30 ladies. Babu Nishi Kanta Ganguli was made president of this meeting.27

The following persons were seen to associate with Tagore during his stay here and they took keen interest in his work. They were

1. Bibhuti Bhusan Guha, Ex-detenu
2. Kalipada Dhar of Kalitola
3. Sucharu Kumar Roy, Ex-detenu
4. Gopal Kumud Saraswati, Ex-detenu
5. Jitendranath Lahiri, Ex-detenu
6. Dinesh Chandra Roy, Ex-detenu
7. Sushil of Kalitola
8. Satadal Roy of Munshipara
9. Anil Roy, Ex-detenu
10. Amiya Bhattacherjee, Ex-detenu
11. Baidyanath Chakraborty of Balubari
12. Sourindra Mohan, Ex-detenu
13. Narendranath Neogi of Kalitola
14. Birendranath Guha, Muktear of Balubari.28

Saumyendranath again visited Dinajpur and established a centre of League Against Fascism in Dinajpur in the end of 1937. He also established an organizational committee of the CLI with the following members: Khemeshranjan Chattopadhyay, Mrinal Ghosh, Nripen Roy, Tarapada Dhar, Arun Banerjee, Ajit Roy, Amar Raha, and others. They were responsible for organizing the
peasants in the Gangarampur and Balurghat area. League members also appealed to those peasants whose forefathers were engaged in the “Fakir Rebellion.”

In Dinajpur district the Rajbanshi and Santhals, who solely depended on the agriculture, formed the majority population. They were the most oppressed class of the district. In the year 1938 a peasant conference was held in Haripur which was presided over by Sudhir Dasgupta. In this conference Khemesh Chattopadhyay gave a long speech on the conditions of the peasants there. A Krishak Samiti was formed in this conference. Nisithnath Kundu was elected president and Khemesh Chattopadhyay was elected secretary of the Samiti. The oppression on the peasants was severe. According to the peasants “ek taka khajnar due taka bajna” was extorted from the peasants. Tagore in his book *Chashir Katha* has depicted the true picture of the peasants of this district. He described how the peasants were oppressed by the zamindars, jotedars and mahajans. He also wrote that most of the farmers were losing their lands. Landless labourers were increasing day by day. Revenue demands were also increasing and the income of the farmers were decreasing. Agricultural productions were losing their values but the mahajans and foreign merchants were gaining.

On 27 April 1940, it was reported that Khemesh Chatterjee of Dinajpur wrote a letter to Saumyendranath dated 27 April 1940, asking him for some articles and money. Khemesh wrote that he was in great need of money and that he had also not got any clothes from Tagore. He could manage only 20 or 25 caps by himself, and no more. He wrote whatever had to be done must be done quickly because he would soon go to the village. Saumyendranath replied that on his return from Guwahati he fell ill; so, there had been some delay in sending the clothes to Khemesh. He was now sending 10 pieces of cloth and requested him to take the delivery from the station by this receipt. Intelligence Branch reported on 20 May 1940 that Khemesh Chatterjee
of Dinajpur town was now engaged in organizing a Krishak party, independent of itself, under the guidance of Tagore of the Communist League.\textsuperscript{32}

Tagore visited Dinajpur on in April 1941. There he instructed his party colleagues not to do anything that may get them arrested or forced the organization underground. And on 26 August 1941 the police intercepted a letter from which it was announced that an eminent member of the organization in Dinajpur had received some money for the party fund from Tagore. The foundation of the peasant movement was laid firmly in the Gangarampur Thana area of Dinajpur too. The leadership was provided by the members of the CLI. The party continued with its anti-war agenda as well. When the police came to arrest the party members who had gone into hiding, they clashed with the villagers. The police carried out widespread torture, beating and arrest. The male members of the village took shelter in the nearest jungle. Among them were the indigenous (\textit{adibasi}) leader Sanj Desi, his wife and his son Indra Desi. More than sixty members were arrested.\textsuperscript{33}

**Peasant Mobilization in Rangpur District**

After the Bengal Provincial Peasants Conference at Burdwan in December 1937, Tagore visited Rangpur. His intention was to form Peasant Committees in this district. According to an Intelligence Branch report, on 17 December 1937 Saumyendranath arrived in Rangpur by the Shillong mail. He was received at the Rangpur railway station by some 20 Congress workers including some students of the Rangpur College. They were led by Jitendranath Chakraborti of the Rangpur Congress, and the recently released detenu Suresh. Among the students of the Rangpur College the following were prominent:

1. Sachi Bagchi
2. Paresh Majumdar
3. Santosh Sengupta and all the fourth year students of the Rangpur college

As soon as the train arrived they shouted “Bandemataram”, “Inquilab Zindabad”, “Long live the Revolution” etc. Seeing the honourable minister Maharaja SC Nandi travelling by the same train as Tagore, they also shouted “Mantri Sabha Dhansha Houk”. Saumyendranath was taken to the house of Jitendranath Chakraborty. 34

On the same day an open-air meeting was held at 4.30 pm in front of the Rangpur Congress office. It was attended by about 500 persons, including many released detenus. Tagore spoke on the subject of Communism. He explained that the poverty of the masses was due entirely to an uneconomic and unjust social system. He referred to the coffee growers of America and wheat growers of Australia who had dumped innumerable sacks of the commodity into the sea in order to keep up prices while the whole world was suffering from hunger.

Saumyendranath further said that the zamindari was the institution of the capitalist state which directed brutal oppression at the peasants and fought against the Civil Disobedience Movement as it was against their interest. He strongly condemned the United Front Movement as it admitted all classes of people including the zamindars whose interest is not identical with that of the toiling masses. He continued that the slavery of the country was due to the capitalist social order and that there was no good from the reforms which only replace the white dacoits by the black dacoits. He advised the workers to refashion the society to suit them and advised them to carry on their struggle on an international basis. Saumyendranath also urged the students to follow his example and openly declare that they were Communists. Tagore along with the labour and communist leaders were beginning to move further afield and appeared to be actively engaged in the mass-contact campaign. 35
On the next morning Saumyendranath went to the Rangpur College and met the boarders of G.L. Hostel and the K.B. Hostel and the Mohammedan Hostel. He advised the student to join the Students Federation formed in Calcutta. He also told them that the students should not feel any hesitation to declare themselves as Communists openly as he himself does. 36

**Peasant Mobilization in the Khulna District**

In December 1935 director of the intelligence branch reported that Saumyendranath Tagore was now very active in Khulna and trying to form peasant organization there. The Juba Sangha (Anushilan) of Santosh Ghosh from Khulna had recently joined his party.

An I.B. report on 01 April 1939 stated that Saumyendranath with Dibakar Haldar of the 24-Parganas District Krishak Samiti held several Kisan meetings in Kaliganj and Shyamnagar P.S. areas in March 1939 and succeeded in forming the Krishak Samiti named Kaliganj Krishak Samiti. Name of the office bearers were:

1. President- Kazi Atwar Rahaman
2. Vice-President- Surendranath Ghosh
3. Secretary- Habibur Rahaman
4. Assistant Secretary- Narendranath Sardar
5. Joint Secretary- Afajuddin Tarafdar
6. Cashier- Surat Ali Mondal
7. Auditor- Taraknath Sardar37

Between the years 1939 to 1941 Tagore frequently visited Khulna. Saumyendranath arrived in Khulna on 06 April 1940 and left for Calcutta on 07 April 1940. It was reported on 14 March 1940 that Tagore will come to Khulna in March and address some peasant meetings there.
Tagore again visited Khulna on 03 December 1941 and in three secret meetings held in Khulna town he engaged with the CSP leaders. These leaders wanted to merge CSP with the CLI. Saumyendranath Tagore promised to extend economic and political support to this party until it became self-reliant. Saumyendranath Tagore returned to Calcutta on 04 December 1941. On 9 December 1941 Saumyendranath again arrived in Khulna and left for Calcutta on 10 December 1941. According to a secret report Makhanlal Ganguli was a resident of Khulna Town. He was a known member of the Communist League.  

**Peasant Mobilization in Barisal District**

According to secret Intelligence Branch report Tagore was greatly connected with Barisal District. On 27 May 1935 it was reported that Saumyendranath was trying to lay down a definite programme for his party. The ideology of Tagore’s party had not so far been made known to the different groups which had identified themselves with him. The Barisal group was particularly anxious to get a definite line and programme of future action. Tagore said that he would soon go to Barisal himself and discuss the programme with the group leaders of Barisal. In the meantime he would draw up a programme in consultation with Nitya Narayan Banerjee and Dr. Biresh Guha. On 26 June 1935, it was reported that Saumyendranath would leave for Barisal and would meet the leaders of the different political parties there. Sudhangsu Mazumdar of Barisal was sent to Jessore by the central committee of Tagore’s party on 06 July 1935 in order to negotiate with the Jessore group.  

On 07 August 1935, it was reported that a Bengali youth came from Barisal and stayed with Saumyendranath at 6, Dwarkanath Road. Tagore said that he was son of a friend of his. He sent Jainal Abedin with him to Barisal with some propaganda literature with the object of starting a centre at Barisal. Saumyendranath paid the passage money Rs.12 for Jainal Abedin.
Tagore assured them that he would also go to Barisal soon if necessary and urged Jainal Abedin to start work in the earnest. During this month, Subodh Dasgupta visited Tagore at his house almost daily. He was known to Saumyendranath. He also took Hemanta Kumar Roy of Barisal now residing at 27/B Grey Street, Calcutta. Saumyendranath gave them some copies of the *Ganabani*, and asked them to go through them to discuss with him if they had any doubt. Tagore asked Subodh Dasgupta to go to Barisal and see the important members of all the terrorist organization there and find out if they were willing to work on the lines of Communism. Then he should inform Tagore through Hemanta Kumar Roy. He would then send Communist literature for them from Calcutta.  

The old central committee of Saumyendranath Tagore’s group has been dissolved and a new committee had been formed in August 1935. Subodh Dasgupta of Barisal was now in charge of Barisal. According to a secret report in November 1935, Sudhangshu Mazumdar had said that he was now working with the group of Saumyendranath Tagore. There group was sending representatives to Barisal and other districts with the object of opening branch organizations in those places. Tagore himself visited Barisal from time to time. On 12 December 1935, the Director of Intelligence Bureau reported that Tagore was now very active and the Jugabani Group of Rabindra Gupta of Barisal had already joined his party.  

A report from the Barisal D.I.B. dated 05 March 1936 stated that Subodh Kumar Dasgupta, S/O-Aswini of Mahilara, P.S. Gaurnadi, Barisal, against whom restrictive orders were made ready but which could not be served, as he suddenly left this place. When he returned to Barisal from Calcutta on 29 February 1936, his belongings were searched with the result that a copy of *Biplob* and *Bharatbarsha* by Saumyendranath Tagore, the communist leader in Calcutta, were found.
Peasant Mobilization in Mymensingh District

According to a secret Intelligence report Saumyendranath had a great influence on the district of Mymensingh. In the first week of July 1935, Tagore was in Mymensingh. His intention was to help the movement of the peasants there. Saumyendranath said that in his tours in Mymensingh he would meet many terrorist sympathizers and would try to bring them over to the Communist cause. In September 1935, a youth named Faizuddin had visited Tagore in connection with a conference at Mymensingh. Tagore gave him about 20 copies of the Hindi booklet named “Communist Barnamala” and 50 copies of the old “Ganabani”. He also gave copies of “What is Communism?”.

On 31 July 1941 the Police Superintendent of Mymensingh reported that the house of a rich person residing in Sankarail area under the Tangail police station was broken into and robbed. In connection with this incident one of the leading members of the CLI told the police that the jewellery was robbed from the house by the members of the CLI and the money received by selling the jewellery was sent to Saumyendranath Tagore in Calcutta.

Peasant Mobilization in Assam

The first person who was responsible in building the CLI organization in Assam was Debendra Sharma. Later on Sudhamoy Dasgupta and Sanat Roychoudhuri were sent for party organization. A strong party unit thus came into existence there. Assam Party Committee was set up with the members like Horidas Deka, Haren Kolita, Mohonlal Khogen Borborua and others. Party activities started in Digboy and Margarita. SK Kichlu, BM Bantia, Balram Singh, Jaffer and others set up a party unit there. Trade union leader Kanailal Srivastava was also working with the CLI there.
According to an Intelligence Branch report, Tagore visited Assam in April 1940. Saumyendranath arrived at Gauhati from Calcutta in the morning of the 17 April 1940. He had been staying in the vacant house of J.N. Barua, retired principal, Earle Law College, Gauhati. In the evenings of 17 and 18 April he attended *in camera* meetings in the Radical Institute and explained the policy of Gandhiji. He asked all to read his book *Gandhism and the Labour-Peasant Problem*. On 19 April he went to Lumding and returned to Gauhati on 20 April. In Assam he succeeded in recruiting new members for his party. During the Second World War in March 1942 Saumyendranath again visited Assam. It was named as “Assam Propaganda Tour”. He said that the British government must be given a death blow first and the Japanese aggression should be counteracted by organizing guerrilla warfare.\(^{46}\)

Saumyendranath Tagore gave an important speech on “What Socialism Aims At?” in Gauhati on 7 November 1942. He said that “socialism did not mean classless society but did mean a society where equality of human creativeness would prevail, thus preventing exploitation of one class by another in the name of false dogmas. Ultimately a new world order resulting in the productive forces of human society would evolve”. He also said by referring to India that India’s freedom must be so attained where the masses would have their say. Concluding Tagore said “we must study and visualize Indian problem in the terms of world forces because India is a part of the latter. Ours is an internationalism based on Marxist philosophy of socialism for evolving a new order”. Prafulla Goswami, secretary of the Guwahati Socialist Party, offered a vote of thanks to the speaker.\(^{47}\)

**Peasant Mobilization in Burdwan**

In December 1937, Bengal Provincial Peasants conference was held at Burdwan. Saumyendranath Tagore attended the conference. At this meeting it was decided to carry on
vigorous agitation throughout the country. Again in this month Saumyendranath visited Ausgram secretly with Dasarathi Ta and Pramath Banarji, Secretary, Burdwan Town Congress Committee. Tagore went to the house of Dr. Kapileswar Mondal with detenu Nalini Ranjan Sen and requested him to withdraw his case against the detenu. Saumyendranath Tagore regretted much for the conduct of the detenues in respect of assaulting and insulting Dr. Kapileswar Mondal.\textsuperscript{48}

**Peasant Mobilization in Uttar Pradesh**

In January 1938, Saumyendranath visited Meerut and Jubbulpore. He attended a peasant conference in Meerut and Jubbulpore. In April 1941, a letter was found in Bengali written by Tagore’s wife to him. His wife had written that she travelled extensively in secret in Uttar Pradesh and then she had formed the opinion that there was lot of opportunity of organizing Tagore’s party in Uttar Pradesh.\textsuperscript{49} On 19 March 1942, Tagore attended the subjects committee meeting of the Benares Forward Bloc conference. Saumyendranath was trying to open branches of his party at Cawnpore, Benares and Lucknow.\textsuperscript{50}

Saumyendranath Tagore was arrested in Lucknow on 16 April 1942 and subsequently detained as a security prisoner in the Fategarh jail. During the search of the residence of his wife at Lucknow in October 1000 copies of a Hindi cyclostyled leaflet entitled ‘Inquilab’ dated 18 September 1942 and issued by the Communist League were seized. A note book belonging to Saumyendranath containing the names of party contacts in different parts of India and a cyclostyle machine were also seized. The leaflet ‘Inquilab’ advocated the overthrow of the government by violent means including the burning of government buildings. He was transferred to Dumdum jail where he arrived on 09 February 1944.\textsuperscript{51}
Peasant Mobilization in Faridpur

Saumyendranath Tagore made a speech on Faridpur in the Ambika Memorial Hall on 25 March 1938. Tagore in his speech gave emphasis on internationalism and socialism. He expressed “grief in the clutches of imperialism”. He said, “The entire world today is involved in an all-round crisis and unemployment, starvation, ruthless suppression of democratic rights of the people, mad hunt for colonies, huge preparation for war, all this prove that the present system fails to satisfy the needs of humanity and thus is condemned extremely. Revolution is the order of the day. Socialism teaches us the meaning and technique of this revolution. In India, the independence of the country and the social transformation will not be achieved unless we learn to apply the socialist methodology to the problems of Indian independence. Internationalism is against nationalism but not against national revolution. Internationalism stands for self-determination of the people and co-operation based on understanding of the oppressed and exploited people of the countries. Only by this internationalism of the oppressed of the world we shall be able to smash imperialism and achieve our emancipation.”

According to an Intelligence Branch report, Tagore was forming a separate peasant organization independent of the BPKS (controlled by the CPI) in Faridpur district in April, 1938.

Peasant Mobilization in Bankura

According to a Secret Branch report on 27 March 1935 Saumyendranath left for Bankura with Gyan Dasgupta, secretary of the Water Transport Workers Union in connection with the works of his party. In April 1938, it was reported that Tagore was forming a separate peasant organization independent of the BBPKS in the Bankura district.
Peasant Mobilization in Hooghly, Malda and Comilla

On 16 February 1935, a meeting was held at Masra, P.S. Balagarh by peasants and cultivators of 32 villages which formed a strong executive committee. This meeting passed 23 resolutions including the resolution for going on strike to stop the oppression of the zamindary. In April 1935 it was reported that Bishahari Thakur was organizing the peasants of Balagarh Thanna in Hooghly under Tagore. He has been able to form a “Balagarh Thana Union Peasants Society”.

In December 1938, information was received that Saumyendranath Tagore was successful in securing a large number of followers in Malda. Tagore was forming a separate peasant organization independent of the BPKS in the Malda district. Superintendent of Police of Comilla reported on 18 June 1940 that Communist leader Saumyendranath paid a visit to this district in the month of May 1940 and started a branch of his own organization that was CLI with a number of CPI workers. They imported large volumes of revolutionary literature including the ‘Lal Nishan’ and distributed in the villages. The main objectives were:

1. Organized peasant unrest coupled with no-rent and no-tax campaign.
2. Labour unrest in the A.B. Railway
3. Terrorist crime
4. Communal and Agrarian troubles leading to looting etc.

Peasant Mobilization in Tippera

According to a secret Intelligence Branch report during 1934 the Krishak Samiti under Saumyendranath Tagore and Bankim Mukherjee became a terror to the rich men of the districts of Tippera. In August 1938, it was reported that following Tagore’s visit to Agartala, an organization styled as “Sabuj Sangha” was started there with the object of organizing the peasants, labourers and students. On 03 May 1940 Saumyendranath Tagore visited
Brahmanbaria (Tippera) for party propaganda work. On 21 November 1942 it was reported that Musharaf Hussain Khan of Tippera was a Communist League organizer. \(^{58}\)

**Peasant Mobilization in Noakhali**

Intelligence Branch reported that during 1934 the Krishak Samiti became a terror to the rich men of the districts of Noakhali and was still a menace to the general public. A meeting was also held at Tagore’s place in June 1935 and attended by Tagore, Bankim Mukherjee, Sibnath Banerji, Sudhin Pramanik and others in connection with peasant’s organisation in Noakhali District. According to secret intelligence report on 05 June 1935 in the afternoon Rajen Guha of Noakhali met Saumyendranath at his place. He talked to Rajen Guha generally regarding the work of the peasant organization there. He requested Tagore to go over to Noakhali to instruct the workers during a conference which they would hold soon. Saumyendranath in his conversation with Rajen Guha referred to the different rural groups of the local Communists and spoke bitterly against the group of Abdul Halim. He said this group was doing nothing but was always eager to maintain its leadership. Tagore gave Rajen some copies of *Ganabani*. \(^{59}\)

Saumyendranath left for Noakhali in the first week of July 1935. He said that some agrarian leaders of Noakhali had come to Calcutta lately and requested him to tour the district of Noakhali. His intention was to help the movement of the disaffected peasant there. One Guha Roy of Noakhali was the leader and it was he who was fanning the flames of agrarian discontent there. Tagore wanted to go on foot from one village to another in Noakhali and he would address meetings. Saumyendranath Tagore said that in his tours in Noakhali he met many terrorist sympathizers and tried to bring them over to the Communist cause. On 25 April 1936 it was reported that Habibulla of Latshar, who was a prominent member of the Krishak Samiti said that
Tagore and Bankim Mukherji were connected with the Krishak Samiti. Mukleswar Rahaman used to take instructions from them regarding Samiti work.\(^{60}\)

According to secret intelligence report on 27 November 1942 Nasir Ahamed Bhuiya, son of Alam of Noakhali was one of the leading Krishak Samiti workers of the district. He was the secretary of the Lakshmipur Krishak Samiti. In 1939 he was the secretary of the Lakshmipur Forward Bloc. In 1941, he met Saumyendranath in Calcutta and undertook to work of the CLI on return to the district. He informed Tagore that he had formed a branch of the CLI and requested him for monetary assistance. He was a Krishak Communist and at present closely in touch with ex-convict Mukleswar Rahaman.\(^{61}\)

**Conclusion**

From the above account it may be apparent that Saumyendranath’s efforts were met with mixed and limited successes in various parts of Bengal as well as British India. However, his organization, the CLI, achieved remarkable success in three districts of Bengal, namely Birbhum, Murshidabad and the 24-Parganas. In the next chapter we turn our attention to these districts.
REFERENCES

1. *Ganabani*, 15 December 1985, p. 25
2. Supriyo Choudhury, *Drohaj in Saradiya Desh*, Kolkata, 1421 B.S., p. 207
3. File no. 166/26, IB
5. Ibid. p. 3
6. Ibid. p. 467
8. Ibid
9. Ibid. p. 19
10. File no. 166/26, IB
11. *Ganabani*, 15 December 1985, p. 21
12. File No.1389, A-34
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. File No. 368/37, IB
16. File no. 166/26, IB
18. File no. 166/26, IB
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
22. File no. 166/26, IB.
23. Sen, “Padachinho”, p.16
24. File no. 166/26, IB
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. *Ganabani*, 15 December 1985, pp. 16-17
31. Ibid. p. 18
32. File no. 166/26, IB
33. Sen, “Padachinho”
34. File no. 166/26, IB
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid; and also see Bose, *Sarkari File-e*, p. 49
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Bose, *Sarkari File-e*, p. 46
45. *Ganabani*, 15 November 1984, p. 31
46. File no. 166/26, IB.
47. Ibid.
Ibid.  
49 Bose, Sarkari File-e, p. 43  
50 File no. 166/26, IB.  
51 Ibid.  
52 Ibid.  
53 Ibid.  
54 Ibid.  
55 Ibid.  
56 Ibid.  
57 Ibid.  
58 Ibid.  
59 Ibid.  
60 Ibid.  
61 Ibid.