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Bangladesh

The Role of CPB-ML Since August 5, 2024: A Marxist-Leninist Analysis

- Features -



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The Communist Party of Bangladesh (Marxist–Leninist), or CPB-ML, has re-emerged in a new light following the mass upheavals of August 5, 2024. Rooted in Dhaka and drawing on deep traditions of left-wing militancy and peasant struggle, CPB-ML’s role since this pivotal moment has taken on strategic significance—especially when analyzed through Leon Trotsky’s *theory of permanent revolution* and Antonio Gramsci’s concept of *hegemony* and the *war of position*. This article explores how a once-fragmented party has become a key force in shaping revolutionary dynamics in contemporary Bangladesh.

Note: in Bangladesh unlike in many other countries, "ML" means "not Maoist", which are "MLMTT" (Marxist-Leninist-Mao Tsétoung Thought).

Historical Background of CPB-ML in Dhaka

CPB-ML emerged out of ideological dissatisfaction with the revisionist Communist Party of Bangladesh during the 1970s and 1980s. Drawing from Maoist, anti-revisionist, and third-worldist influences, the Dhaka-based leadership cultivated underground networks, particularly within slum settlements, student circles, and rural districts surrounding the capital.

Throughout the 1980s to early 2000s, the party oscillated between urban agitation and peasant mobilization. However, factional splits, state repression, and the collapse of international socialist allies pushed CPB-ML to the margins. In the lead-up to 2024, however, the party had quietly begun rebuilding, focusing on cadre development among university students, informal workers, and rural landless peasants, particularly in collaboration with the **Bangladesh Krishok Federation (BKF)**.

August 5, 2024: The Breaking Point

The general strike and spontaneous uprising of August 5, 2024, erupted in response to a confluence of crises—fuel price hikes, mass evictions, ecological disasters, and systemic unemployment. As millions poured into the streets of Dhaka and beyond, what began as a reactive revolt quickly turned into a revolutionary opening.

Despite its modest size, CPB-ML played a disproportionate ideological and tactical role. Its organizers provided disciplined slogans, coordinated barricades in key zones such as Jatrabari, Mirpur, and Mohammadpur, and established crucial urban-rural linkages. Years of clandestine cadre-building bore fruit as CPB-ML redirected popular anger toward the creation of *dual power structures*: people’s defense committees, occupied land offices, and grassroots food distribution centers.

Trotsky’s Theory of Permanent Revolution and CPB-ML

Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution argues that in semi-colonial and unevenly developed societies, the national bourgeoisie is too compromised to lead a democratic revolution. Instead, the working class, in alliance with the peasantry, must take up democratic and socialist tasks simultaneously, leading toward a socialist transition without deferring to "bourgeois stages."

CPB-ML’s orientation during and after August 5 reflects this framework:

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Rejection of Stageism: Unlike liberal and NGO-aligned forces calling for a transitional "National Unity Government," CPB-ML insisted on immediate working-class leadership and peasant control over land, labor, and resources.

Synthesis of Demands: Land occupation was linked to broader calls for public ownership, climate justice, and dismantling state-backed elite institutions.

Internationalism: CPB-ML framed its struggle within a global anti-imperialist lens, aligning itself with movements in India, Palestine, Philippines and the Global South, emphasizing Trotsky's vision of international revolution over narrow nationalism.

Gramsci and the War of Position

Gramsci's concept of the war of position—a long-term strategy to build counter-hegemonic institutions and challenge ruling class ideology before direct political confrontation—is equally vital for understanding CPB-ML's post-uprising strategy.

Following brutal state repression after August 2024, CPB-ML transitioned from open confrontation to an embedded struggle within the spaces of civil society:

Cultural Resistance: Through radical street theatre, popular song, and locally printed pamphlets, CPB-ML youth organizations began shaping political consciousness in slums and factory zones.

Constructing Alternative Institutions: The party initiated food cooperatives, informal land dispute committees, and mutual aid networks—substituting state services with people-led structures.

Organic Intellectuals: Embracing Gramsci's concept, CPB-ML cultivated cadre-intellectuals from within working-class and peasant communities—activists capable of interpreting Marxist thought in local idioms, thus reshaping political common sense.

Current Role and Strategic Dilemmas (2024–2025)

Since August 2024, CPB-ML has emerged as a central node in the revolutionary left, but this growth has not been without contradictions and dilemmas:

Repression: The state has responded with intelligence infiltration, arrests, and targeted disappearances of district-level organizers, especially in the garment sector and peasant fronts.

Sectarianism: Internal rifts have emerged over key strategic questions: Should the party participate in national elections? Should it align with pro-China currents? How should feminist and queer perspectives be integrated into a Leninist framework?

Mass Line vs Vanguardism: As its mass base grows, CPB-ML struggles to maintain Leninist organizational discipline while embracing grassroots participation. The risk of bureaucratic drift remains, even as the party promotes decentralized initiative.

Conclusion: Toward a Dialectical Praxis

The trajectory of CPB-ML since August 5, 2024 reveals a dynamic and dialectical evolution. Rooted in

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Marxist-Leninist ideology, yet deeply proactive to Bangladesh's specific class formations and geopolitical position, the party has begun forging a revolutionary strategy that is both principled and adaptable.

By blending Trotsky's urgency with Gramsci's patience, CPB-ML is articulating a vision of socialism that is militant, popular, and rooted in the lived struggles of Bangladesh's oppressed classes.

Whether it can survive the state's counteroffensive, internal divisions, and ideological tensions remains yet to be seen. But one thing is clear: since August 2024, CPB-ML has decisively altered the contours of the revolutionary left in Bangladesh.

"The old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born: now is the time of monsters."

— Antonio Gramsci

5 July 2025

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