

The Srikakulam Story—II

NARAYANMURTHI

SONS of Andhra have written glorious chapters in the country's freedom struggle and one of them is Alluri Seetharamaraju, the legendary leader of the tribal people. He aroused in them a spirit of revolt against the British rulers and became a nightmare to them. Ultimately, when he was caught, the British rulers took him to a camp, shot him dead and put on the story that he was killed while escaping.

Congress rulers, following in the footsteps of the British imperialists, adopted the same tactics at the time of the Telengana struggle in 1948-50 and has done so now in Srikakulam and elsewhere.

However, despite the death dance of the Congress rulers, the cream of youth and students have been attracted to this struggle for liberation of the tribals from the centuries-old exploitation.

The struggle has unfortunately been caught in the vortex of a controversy between a group of young enthusiasts encouraged and egged on by the All-India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (now called the Marxist-Leninist party) directly leading the struggle in Srikakulam on the one hand and the State Revolutionary Co-ordination Committee led by Mr T. Nagi Reddy on the other, guiding the struggle with his experience of the historic Telengana struggle.

The trouble seems to have started when the All-India Committee, while carrying on a discussion with the State Committee over the ideological and political issues, overran the State Committee, gave some local enthusiasts the status of a State Committee and asked it to take the resistance movement forward to the stage of an armed guerilla struggle without adequate preparation and without rousing the people to a level when

they can act as an effective cushion against the onslaught of the police.

It was, however, not merely the organisational controversy but the very philosophy of armed struggle itself that was involved.

Here is a published interview with Mr T. Nagi Reddy about the points of difference.

Q: What are the main differences between the CP(ML) and the Andhra State Committee of Revolutionaries?

A: The first issue is the question of tactics in relation to people's war. When does an armed struggle start? It starts only as a resistance to the landlord goondas and government repression and this resistance is in the form of people's resistance. Out of this resistance alone, resistance squads are to be formed.

But the CP(ML) does not bother about this aspect of people's participation as a form of resistance to landlord goondas and police repression. Formation of squads even in areas where there is no peoples' movement at all is their methodology, which isolates the squads from the masses.

The second difference: Peoples' war always starts only as a form of resistance, not as a form of offensive. Therefore, it is a battle in defence of their demands, be it for land, be it for wages. It is a struggle for economic demands, it organises people to resist the landlord goondas and the government offensive and it is through this form of resistance that a real peoples' army could be built up in future.

But the method of the CP(ML) has no relation to peoples' demands and peoples' struggle. Without any such relation, they go in for offensive actions against any and every landlord even in places where there is no

mass movement of any type.

To put it simply, for us, it is a matter of resistance and for them, it is a matter of offensive.

Forms of Struggle

The third difference is on the question of other forms of struggle. Even though armed struggle is a basic struggle and is the most important struggle, it is not the only form of struggle in all places. For example, if Srikakulam can go into armed struggle to prepare the ground, organisation of peoples' consciousness towards armed struggle in other areas may have to be pursued. We will have to take to various forms of struggle, according to conditions prevailing in particular places. It might be a question of wages for agricultural labour or the question of share of tenants or a question of distribution of cultivate waste lands of the government or even a question of occupation of government lands which are under occupation of landlords or have been converted into seed farms. In the process of these struggles for these demands, we would use various methods of struggle including the lowest form of struggle such as signature campaigns, deputations and demonstrations, just as we participate in the labour courts and in the industrial tribunals in the cities. Eventually, all these various forms of struggle should be conducted in such a manner as to develop better organisation, consciousness of the people towards peoples' direct participation on the question of land and other issues, leading to resistance against landlord and government repression.

But the Marxist-Leninists do not believe in any form of struggle other than armed struggle in all areas, irrespective of the strength of the party or the people. It is for this reason that they gave the call for party units to form themselves into squads in the coastal districts and to take action against the landlords.

This type of action, according to the Andhra committee, does not help build up a mass movement even in an area where such actions take place. Such actions are against the funda-

mental principles enunciated by Mao in relation to peasants' armed struggle.

Q: In this background, how do you evaluate the armed actions in Srikakulam?

A: Every action in the Parvathipuram agency area and agencies of similar type is real peoples' action on the basis of a movement, which has been built up over a number of issues including the basic question of land. People's participation is evident there and action against landlords is selective. But in the plain areas, generally, there is neither a peoples' movement nor peoples' participation which can sustain those actions to develop a peoples' movement there in future.

Liberation Struggle

Q: Do you agree with the view of the CP(ML) that the Srikakulam armed struggle is a national liberation struggle?

A: Not every armed struggle is a national liberation struggle immediately, even though every struggle is an embryonic form of such struggle. To characterise every peasant struggle as a struggle for power and for national liberation is to divert the attention and consciousness of the people from the basic demands of the people. National liberation struggle becomes a fundamental form of struggle only after a series of peasants' armed actions in various places get coordinated into a peoples' army to fight for national liberation and Peoples' Democracy.

Even Peking Radio has characterised the Naxalbari movement in Bengal as an armed struggle of peasants for land mainly and as an embryonic struggle for national liberation.

Q: Will actions of the Srikakulam type lead to armed struggle?

A: No. There are two reasons: Without a peoples' demand being focussed and people being organised to get those demands implemented by their own actions, mere actions by squads divert the

attention of the people from the issues on which they will have to fight.

Secondly the people are their own liberators under the leadership of the Communist Party. That means they themselves must form part and parcel of the squads. But the manner in which this is being implemented by the Naxalites makes the people feel that liberators are someone else and not themselves. They look to someone for liberation. In consequence, instead of taking to actions on the basis of their own unity and organisational strength, they will look to others to do this job for them and save them from the exploitation of landlords.

The views expressed in this interview indicate that differences are pretty serious but very clear. Attempts to discuss these differences with the All-India Committee appear to have proved futile. It is perhaps this that has led the section led by Mr Nagi Reddy and like-minded people in other States including West Bengal to think in terms of forming another party. It is a sad but stark reality.

At the present moment, the Government is on the offensive. The offensive is not against the armed squads alone but again the people and this might demoralise them temporarily, but they would soon get over this situation and renew that resistance with the help of the armed squads formed among themselves, provided a correct line is pursued.

The Government might be able to fool people in other parts of the country, but cannot close the eyes of the people in an area where nearly 30 policemen have been killed by the armed squads during the last one year. The loss to the people is much more. The loss of young cadres due to arrests by the police on information furnished by a top Naxalite who shamelessly surrendered recently is also not insignificant. These losses can be overcome only on the basis of a correct line.—Concluded.

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