

# Indian Maoism—Two Shades ?

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THE first recorded debate in the world communist movement on the legitimacy of Mao Tse-tung's theories as part of Marxism-Leninism took place in India in 1948-49 and the first open denunciation of these theories as alien to Marxism-Leninism came from the General Secretary of the Communist Party of India, B. T. Ranadive, in 1949. In the wake of the "left sectarian" deviation at the Calcutta (Second) Congress of the CPI early in 1948, the Andhra communists, who were already leading an armed struggle of the Telengana peasantry, turned to Mao Tse-tung's *New Democracy* (published in 1944) in their search for revolution based on a four-class alliance and the tactic of peasant partisan warfare. Ranadive, who advocated the new-fangled theory of the "intertwining" of the two stages of revolution and wanted the entire bourgeoisie to be fought, had to extend his polemic to reach the very source of the Andhra communist heresy—Mao Tse-tung himself. Ranadive wrote: "... "we must state emphatically that the Communist Party of India has accepted Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin as the authoritative sources of Marxism. It has not discovered new sources of Marxism beyond these. Nor for that matter is there any communist party which declares adherence to the so-called theory of new democracy alleged to be propounded by Mao and declares it to be a new addition to Marxism." Ranadive was equating Mao Tse-tung with Tito and Earl Browder when he said it was "impossible for communists to talk lightly about new discoveries, enrichment, because such claims have proved to be a thin cloak for revisionism". The Andhra communists were invoking Mao Tse-tung in June 1948 when what now is regarded as Mao's theories or known as Maoism had not been formalised under this nomenclature. The Chinese revolution had not yet triumphed fully and the Peo-

ple's Republic of China had not been founded when the Andhra communists hailed Mao Tse-tung's *New Democracy* and regarded him as a new source of Marxism.

Twenty years later, the wheel has turned a full circle. The Communist Party of India split into two in 1964. The Communist Party of India (Marxist), formed in 1964, rejected at its Eighth Congress (December 1968) an amendment to its political resolution requiring it to accept Mao Tse-tung's thought as the Marxism-Leninism of the present epoch. Later, in May, 1969, its Politbureau suggested that the analysis of the world situation contained in the main document of the Eighth Congress of the Communist Party of China had nothing to do with Marxism-Leninism.

With this the polarisation in the Indian communist movement was complete. The CPI and the CPI (M) constitute the non-Maoist or anti-Maoist wing. The Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), formed in April 1969, is the only organised Maoist party in India though it cannot claim to represent the majority of Maoists in the country. The Revolutionary Communist Committee of Andhra Pradesh as well as other formations have chosen to keep out of the new party. But just as the CPI is the only legitimate communist party in India in Russian eyes, the CPI (ML) is the only genuine communist party in Chinese eyes. The Communist Party of China conferred "recognition" on the CPI (ML) by reprinting excerpts from its political resolution in the *People's Daily* (July 2, 1969). But there are two principal shades of Maoism in India—one represented by the CPI (ML) and the other by the Andhra Maoists.

#### Differences

There is broad agreement among the various Indian Maoist groups on the international general line. There is also broad agreement among them on the stage of the Indian revolution, though the CPI (ML) identifies it as the people's democratic stage (semantically this is in agreement with the CP (M's) while the Revolutionary

Communist Committee of Andhra Pradesh calls it the new democratic stage.

The first point of difference begins with the very beginning. The manner in which the CPI (ML) was formed has not met with approval of many of the Maoist groups. The first countrywide co-ordination of Maoists took place in the form of the All-India Co-ordination Committee of the Revolutionaries of the CPI (M) in November 1967 and it included Maoists who had left the CPI (M) or had been expelled as well as those still in the party. The co-ordination was not a party or even the nucleus of a party and its sponsors wanted a party and programme through a process of revolutionary struggles. After the Burdwan plenum of the CPI (M) in April 1968, the majority of the party's membership in Andhra Pradesh was in revolt and the Andhra Pradesh Co-ordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries was formed. It sought affiliation to the All-India Co-ordination Committee a few months later. But in February 1969, following serious differences with the Andhra Pradesh unit, the all-India co-ordination disaffiliated the unit.

Alongside, at the same meeting (February 1969), the AICCCR decided to go ahead with the formation of a new party, contrary to its own views earlier against any hasty step towards the goal. For instance, in May 1968 the AICCCR, reviewing the year since Naxalbari, renewed its call for building a "true communist party" in the course of Naxalbari-type struggles, for "revolution cannot be victorious without a revolutionary party." But Charu Mazumdar, the principal theoretician of the AICCCR, was not sure that the time had come for the formation of a new party. He wrote that "the primary conditions for building up a revolutionary party is to organise armed struggle in the countryside" and that a Maoist party cannot be formed merely by gathering together "the various so-called Marxists who profess the thought of Chairman Mao Tse-tung and revolt against the leadership of the party..."

But in February 1969, the AICCCR leadership decided on the immediate

formation of the party. Its resolution said that an excellent revolutionary situation existed in the country and there was growing unity of revolutionary ranks. The political and organisational needs of a fast developing struggle could no longer be met by a co-ordination committee because "without a revolutionary party, there can be no revolutionary discipline and without revolutionary discipline the struggles cannot be raised to a higher level." Its earlier idea that a party should be formed only "after all the opportunist tendencies, alien trends and undesirable elements have been purged through class struggle is nothing but subjective idealism. To conceive of a party without contradictions, without the struggle between the opposites, i.e. to think of a pure faultless party is to indulge in idealist fantasy." Thus the CPI (ML) was formed from above. Kanu Sanyal said at the Calcutta Maidan rally on May 1, 1969, that those who speak of building a party through struggle are indulging in petty-bourgeois romanticism.

In contrast, the Revolutionary Communist Committee of Andhra Pradesh (formerly the State Co-ordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries) believes in building a party in the course of revolutionary struggle. It has taken a decision in principle to form a party but thinks, as its journal *Janasakti* made clear, that revolutionary action should precede the formation of a revolutionary party.

But the differences between the CPI (ML) and the Andhra Maoists relate primarily to the tactical line. The first difference is over the principal contradiction in India. The second difference, obviously an offshoot of the first, relates to the form of struggle. Or, more specifically, to three sub-issues: Is guerilla warfare the only form of struggle in the present stage in India? Is there any need for mass organisation to carry on the democratic struggle? Should a Maoist party be a secret organisation?

These are the issues being debated within and among the various Maoist

groups in India, including the Andhra Maoist group.

### Main Contradiction

The CPI (ML)'s political resolution identifies the principal contradiction in India as between feudalism and the masses of the peasantry and the immediate task as people's democratic revolution, the main component of which is agrarian revolution to end feudalism. "Comprador-bureaucratic capitalism and United States Soviet imperialism", being the main props of feudalism, have to be fought too. Some of the other groups think imperialism is the main enemy and feudalism and comprador bourgeoisie survive only with the help of imperialism. The *Immediate Programme* of the RCC of Andhra says that India is a "neo-colony" exploited by the U.S., British and Soviet imperialists and along with imperialism, feudalism is also an exploiting force. "The task of the new-democratic revolution is to destroy imperialism, feudalism, comprador bourgeoisie and the bureaucratic capitalism i.e., the big bourgeoisie and then to establish a new-democratic State".

The CP (ML)'s class strategy is one of a "revolutionary front of all revolutionary classes" according to its political resolution; which commends Mao Tse-tung's theory of people's war as the only means of struggle. It says, "If the poor and landless peasants, who constitute the majority of the peasantry, the firm ally of the working class, united with the middle peasants, then the vast section of the people will be united and the democratic revolution will inevitably win victory. It is the responsibility of the working class as the leader of the revolution to unite with the peasantry—the main force of the revolution—and advance towards seizure of power through armed struggle. It is on the basis of worker-peasant alliance that a revolutionary united front of all classes will be built up." But the party does not seem to be clear how to achieve the task of building a "revolutionary front of all revolutionary classes". The CPI (ML)'s documents repeatedly emphasise guerilla warfare waged

by the peasantry against the landlords as the only form of struggle in the present stage of revolution. There is little mention of the need for mass organisations or for an agrarian programme as a concomitant of peasant struggle. To go by published material, an article by Charu Mazumdar in *Ghatana Prabaha* (Vol. II, No. 1) is revealing. Rejecting the ideas of a mass organisation, he advocates the building of a secret organisation through which the poor and landless peasants can establish their leadership of the peasant movement. "Obviously all the peasants do not at first wage guerilla war, it is started by the advanced, class conscious section. So at the beginning it may appear to be the struggle of a handful of people. It is not the Che (Guevara) style guerilla war because this war is started not by relying on weapons but on the co-operation of the unarmed people. So this struggle could be started only by propagating the politics of seizure of power among the peasantry and this task can be achieved by the party unit formed of poor and landless peasants. *The party unit can fulfil this task only by organising guerilla war by poor and landless peasants... Guerilla war is the only tactic of the peasant's revolutionary struggle.* This cannot be achieved by any mass organisation through open struggle." (Italics added).

The main criticism by other Maoist groups is that the CPI (ML)'s line of thinking is opposed to Mao Tse-tung's thought because by considering armed struggle by the peasantry the only form of struggle, it is minimising or even ignoring the role of the working class and the tasks in the urban areas and the role of mass organisations.

### Andhra Line

As for the Andhra RCC the emphasis is not on armed clashes with the landlords and the State authority through a handful of revolutionaries but on mass armed struggles. A statement on armed struggle (July 1969) notes that "only through mass revolutionary rallies, revolution-

ary organisation and mass armed struggle we can dissolve the present big landlord, big bourgeois imperialist system."

The contours of the revolutionary front the Andhra RCC has in view are: "The working class will lead the united front. Along with workers and peasants, middle classes and (the) national bourgeoisie will also be in this united front", to achieve the new-democratic revolution. The line is based on the inseparable relationship between the party, armed struggle and united front.

A document, devoted to examining the RCC's differences with the Sri-kakulam unit affiliated to the CPI (ML), on the conduct of the Girijan armed struggle in Srikakulam tribal tract, clearly declares that to begin guerilla struggle, participation of the masses is a necessary condition. An agrarian programme is the basis of all peasant struggle. According to the RCC, the starting, development, consolidation and extension of all the struggles of the peasantry would have to be based on an "agrarian revolutionary programme". Liberation for the peasantry means liberation from the landlord-imperialist system. Though complete liberation is possible only after the establishment of base areas, seizure of power throughout India and after the establishment of a new-democratic government, "liberation begins with the starting of class struggles, with the starting of anti-landlord struggles, with the starting of the Agrarian Revolutionary Programme", according to the document.

### Elections

On the call for boycott of elections the RCC's *Immediate Programme* urges action to implement the RCC's earlier decision to boycott the panchayat elections in Andhra Pradesh. It is not a mere question of the Revolutionary Communists boycotting the poll but one of persuading the people not to participate in the elections. "To achieve this we must mainly depend on the consciousness and organising capacity of the people. No short-cut methods are to be allowed or treaded", it warns, because "we



must specify that the issue at hand is not mere boycott of elections by the people" but to convince them that people's war is the path for them and that the village soviets and people's committees which would constitute the foundation of the "new people's democratic revolutionary State" in the villages and provide the leadership for implementing the agrarian programme.

The RCC thinks that its attempt to give a positive content to the slogan of election boycott at the grass-roots level gives a new dimension to the concept of organising the peasantry for action. Where the RCC commands the majority following in a panchayat village, boycott of elections leads to an unprecedented situation. The majority will be outside the government-sponsored panchayat committee and form their own parallel "people's committee". The people's committees in the "boycott" villages will function in competition with the government-sponsored committees, the sanction coming from the majority of the people. These committees will undertake law, revenue, village defence (against attacks of landlords or government machinery) tasks and when the peasant struggles move to higher forms, would become the village soviets. These committees would also work as the united front committees, initiate and carry out agrarian reform and will play their role in the armed struggle. Revolutionary communists would dominate these committees and provide the leadership but these would have the participation of agricultural labour and the poor peasants and others. As the movement goes ahead, a few representatives of the rich peasants might be taken in. But these committees are to have a clear class outlook and ideology.

The *Immediate Programme* clearly emphasises the role of mass organisations for the peasantry, working class, students and other sections of the people. In contrast the CPI(ML) seems to have a distrust of mass organisations and urban areas in general.

It would be quite some time before the major Maoist groups out-

side the CPI(ML)'s fold find agreement on a tactical line and form a new party or before there is a full discussion on a tactical line leading to a single, unified Maoist party in India. But at the moment the relationship between the CPI(ML) and other Maoist groups including the RCC is a non-antagonistic one, just as the relationship between the two non-Maoist communist parties is a non-antagonistic one.

But meantime, the application of the two different tactical lines—of the CPI(ML) and of the RCC—and their results would be a fascinating experiment to watch.

## The Naxalite Tactical Line

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EVER since the beginning of the Naxalbari movement an interminable controversy has been going on over the question of strategy and tactics of the Indian revolution. The amount of polemical literature that has so far been churned out may well fill several volumes. So the present article does not intend to add to these staggering volumes. Its purpose simply is to trace in bare outline the evolution of Naxalite tactics in the countryside. To be more precise, the focus is strictly on the principal Naxalite stream that organised itself as the CPI(ML).

The tactical line of mobilising and rousing the peasantry through "annihilation of class enemies" which was finalised around April 1969 had, however, been taking shape for quite some time. One of the first important attempts in this regard was made by Kanu Sanyal in his "Report on the Peasant Struggle in the Terai" (*Deshabrati*, October 24, 1968). The report dealt not only with the tactics actually employed by the revolutionary peasants of the Naxalbari, Kharibari and Phansidewa areas but made some general observations about the tactics to be employed in the next phase of the struggle.