

ANOTHER "NAXALBARI" IN KERALA?

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sentry are points which have not been explained by the authorities so far.

The incident was flashed all over India as another "Naxalbari"* being rigged up in Kerala. Significantly, the state conference of the "breakaway extremists" -- who call themselves "Communist revolutionaries" -- was scheduled for two days after the attack on the police station. Leaders of the group, however, disowned any responsibility for the incident.

On November 24 another gang attacked a police wireless station in Pulpalli town in the Wynad forests of the northeastern districts of the state. They smashed up the set and killed a man in charge before escaping into the forest. This has given an entirely new complexion to the political situation in the state and posed a new problem for the Namboodiripad ministry, already faced with the revolt of a sizeable number of cadres against the CPI(M) leadership.

The Kerala police have made a large number of arrests in connection with the two assaults. Among them is Ajitha, a 25-year-old college girl, daughter of Kunnikal Narayanan, an expelled member of the United CPI, allegedly the mastermind. Narayanan's wife, Mandakindi, 40, a schoolteacher and once an activist of the United CPI, has also been arrested.

Kunnikal Narayanan himself surrendered to the police a few days later and allegedly confessed that his group was responsible for both the incidents. This has led to several other arrests, including his brother K.P. Narayanan and two others at Madras.

During the interrogations, according to some reports, the arrested persons were severely beaten by the police and forced to confess. In the name of law and order and security, the police force, technically under the charge of the CPI(M) chief minister, has behaved in precisely the same manner as under the Congress government. A trial of the arrested persons is to begin soon.

The Pulpalli area, where the police wireless station was destroyed, is notorious for the cruel injustice meted out to the Kurichians and other tribes, who have been deprived of their land and

An incident that had the appearance of a stage-managed affair -- an attack on a police station in the coastal town of Tellicherry in Kerala on November 22 -- was followed by a rash of screaming headlines in the capitalist press suggesting that it was an attempt by "Marxist extremists" to ring up the curtain on a Maoist-type "armed revolution" in India. The whole affair sounded very much like the notorious Reichstag fire stage-managed by Hitler to crush the Communists in Germany.

In this case it was difficult to identify the forces that were at work. Supporters of the United Front government of E.M.S. Namboodiripad in Kerala* suggested the hand of either the American CIA or the (Indian) Central Bureau of Intelligence. Opponents of the United Front government suggested that the ruling CPI(M) and the police might have hatched a conspiracy to expose the "bloody intentions" of "extremists" breaking away from the party.

According to the newspaper account, a police station at Tellicherry in Calicut district was attacked by an armed gang numbering about 300 at about 3 p.m. on November 22, 1968. They carried spears, bottles of acid, home-made bombs and grenades, ground pepper, a good measure of Maoist literature, and a bundle of letters addressed to persons in China.

The reports said that they bore a red banner, along with the banners of the Muslim League and the Congress party. But the bloodthirsty gang, with its strange assortment of weapons, took flight when a sentry attached to the police station began shouting. All of them took to their heels, thoughtfully dropping their weapons, flags and literature, to the gratification of the police who only too often find it an onerous task to produce evidence for the prosecution in criminal cases.

Why it was decided to organize such an attack in a well-populated coastal town instead of a town in the hilly forest area of Kerala, and why, after having decided on the attack, the "revolutionists" beat a hasty retreat at the first outcry of a

* An opportunist alliance of the "left" Communist party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)] with capitalist and communal parties in a "non-Congress coalition." The CPI(M) split from the pro-Moscow CPI in April 1964. -- I.P.

* Naxalbari, in West Bengal, was the scene of an armed peasant revolt in early summer 1967, led by a group that split from the CPI(M). -- I.P.

left without any means of livelihood. The similarity to the West Bengal Santhals in Naxalbari is pronounced.

Leaders of the "actions" at Telli-cherry and Pulpalli evidently are not a part of the group of "Communist revolutionaries" who broke politically with the CPI(M). This group, associated with veteran leaders of the party like K.P.R. Gopalan, Kosla Ramdas (both members of the State Legislative Assembly), and N.C. Sekhar, has not been linked with the incidents although the capitalist press has started labeling all the rebels from the CPI(M) as "Naxalites."

In pursuance of the stand taken by the all-India "Coordination Committee" of the "Naxalite" groups in different states, this group in Kerala has decided to withdraw its members from the legislature. Kosla Ramdas has in fact already submitted his resignation from the Kerala Legislative Assembly, while Gopalan continues to be a member.

The capitalist press throughout the country has mounted a big witch-hunt campaign against the so-called Naxalites, taking advantage of the incidents in Kerala. There is also talk about a possible central intervention in Kerala on the ground that the Namboodiripad ministry has failed to maintain law and order in the state. The allegation is that the Kerala police have been rendered impotent because of a directive by the chief minister not to be firm against "subversive" elements.

In Bombay city a couple of so-called Naxalites have been arrested on a phony charge of having painted slogans on walls -- "Long Live Mao," etc. The supporters of the Jan Sangh and the Swatantra party meanwhile have been allowed to burn an effigy of Mao Tse-tung in a public place in the name of fighting "Maoist subversion" in the country.

This appears to be a forerunner to a nationwide witch-hunt against all shades of revolutionary militants, taking advantage of the confusion in the ranks of the traditional working-class parties. The Congress government headed by Mrs. Indira Gandhi has rushed through parliament a bill banning strikes by government employees -- despite the strong opposition voiced by the entire trade-union movement.

Significantly enough, the CPI

(Dangeites) [the pro-Moscow CP led by S.A. Dange] in Kerala has come forward to organise the legal defence of Kunnikal Narayanan and his colleagues, although it has condemned their action as "adventurist." CPI leader S.A. Dange is said to have praised the participants of the Pulpalli raid for their "individual courage." This manoeuvre of the Dangeite CPI has irritated the leadership of the CPI(M), which is currently holding its national congress at Cochin, also in Kerala.

One of the major problems to be discussed at the national congress is the party's attitude to the "breakaway extremist" groups especially in relation to developments in West Bengal on the eve of the forthcoming midterm elections in that state, scheduled in February 1969.

The so-called Naxalite groups have made big inroads into the CPI(M) in states like West Bengal, Andhra, Uttar Pradesh, and now in Kerala. In West Bengal they have declared a "boycott" of the forthcoming elections for the State Legislative Assembly.

While the action of the Narayanan group has been dubbed as "adventurist and foolhardy" by major left parties, there are sections among the Communist ranks which admire the sincerity and dedication of the Narayanan family. Narayanan has been described by some as a "rare specimen of an Indian revolutionist." Unlike others who always keep their families safely out of the turmoil of politics, he has thrown himself, his wife and daughter into the thick of the fray, and that too is a dangerous adventure.

While this aspect of the episode has its own romantic appeal, Narayanan is regarded by many as a sectarian. Since his expulsion from the CPI(M) he has become an ardent supporter of the Maoist line.

Whatever the final outcome of the trial now commencing in Kerala, the Telli-cherry and Pulpalli episodes have provoked a new debate in the entire left movement. In opposition to the opportunist policies of the traditional left, a broad discussion has broken out about the new methods and tactics to be used in the revolutionary movement in India in the coming period. Sectarian adventurism is the price the working class is paying for the opportunist sins of its present leadership.