

The Andhra

“Extremists”

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EXPERTS in Communist affairs and the top brass of the Communist movement in Andhra of right, left and extremist views might turn round and say “didn’t I tell you so?”, on the latest split in the Communist ranks, but to the thousands of Communists and their sympathisers and the lakhs of common people who voted for them in the last four general elections, the news brings disappointment and despair.

It is this feeling that is overlooked by those who indulge in the fierce debate raging in this State in recent weeks. The people’s mood of despair often turns into anger and many oldtimers and strong supporters are heard to remark that the Communist movement is now buried fathoms deep and there is no hope of its revival for decades. Should the leaders carry on this dog-fight when discontent is overwhelming the people and they are desperately looking for a way out? they ask.

It is against this background that the recent split in the Communist movement has to be judged. The CPM leadership started with its game of expulsions in West Bengal. Whenever the Government laid its hands on certain CPM cadres and leaders in that State, the top leadership rushed to the Press disowning the arrested. Very soon, “Operation Expulsion” became their biggest weapon: Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Kashmir, and now comes the turn of Andhra. Expulsions in Andhra proved the last straw and there is talk of a third Communist party in the air. Mr Nagi Reddy is the ‘man in the news’.

An amazing similarity between the situation in 1964 when the first split took place and now is the use of the phrase “Chinese agents”, then by the ‘revisionists’ and Government together against the Marxists, and now by both of them plus the Marxists against the extremists. At that time, some Peking Radio broadcasts were men-

tioned by Dange and his friends to prove that the split was brought about at the instance of Peking. The story repeats itself today with exact similarity, the only difference being that the chorus is joined in by Sundarayya.

Following the characterisation of Mr Nagi Reddy's followers as "extremists" or "revolutionaries" by the jute Press, the Marxists too label them as adventurists itching for revolution overnight. Their basic support to Naxalbari is adduced as evidence. But, if his Press statements are any indication, Mr Nagi Reddy does not seem to be dreaming of instant revolution; nor can he be quoted as saying that he would resign his seat in the Andhra Assembly, ask like-minded people to do so and breathe and spit revolution day and night. On the contrary, he went on record saying that it would take at least a year to give an organisational shape to the movement and gather forces around the slogan of winning demands through struggles alone. His complaint is: The CPM is much too preoccupied with defending Kerala and winning the election battle in West Bengal to even think of putting the party on the rails of struggle. When he canvassed support and wanted the party to rally round the struggle of the tribal people in Sriakulam district and think in terms of such struggles wherever people are already prepared to protect their interests from the government-landlord onslaught, his proposal was cold-shouldered on the plea that it would lead to adventurism. The attack against people in Nalgonda and some other pockets, which started at the time of the elections, was intensified, involving literally thousands of people and party workers in hundreds of cases; they were beaten up, local party leaders were even murdered and local party units were posed with the question of defending themselves and protecting the party. Let alone Marxism-Leninism, sheer necessity demanded that the victims of such attacks defend their life and property. They looked up to the Party for guidance, which was not forthcoming. This brought disillusionment with the present leadership.

The problem was taken to the organisational level through an alter-

nate document presented at the special plenum called before the Burdwan meeting. It was natural for Mr Nagi Reddy and his followers to have felt justified in their line of thinking when the overwhelming majority of Andhra comrades voted for it. However, he was in a hopeless minority when he placed it at the all-India level.

Believers of the alternate line have certain differences with him. They agree with him on practically all aspects but doubt whether his line should be pushed through right down to the cadres, cutting across the party's disciplinary barriers, inviting justifiable anger of the State CPM leadership, followed by warnings and, ultimately, expulsions. His friends ask: If he exhibits so much impatience, what is the guarantee that his followers would not turn equally impatient? Would not Mr Nagi Reddy himself take at least a year to gather forces and give his line an organisational shape? By his actions he has only justified the action of the CPM leaders in being equally impatient and rushing to the extreme by expelling a stalwart like Nagi Reddy.

Though there were ideological and political questions on which both Mr Reddy and the leadership differed widely, the parting of ways came at the organisational level, giving rise to a feeling that perhaps this could have been avoided had some restraint been exhibited.

Mr Nagi Reddy's proposals deserve some attention in this context. Ideological and political problems at a policy level can be finally decided only at a Party Congress. Therefore, allow a full-throated discussion on both the lines before a decision is taken at the Party Congress. In the meantime, withdraw the open party letter sent to cadres against himself and his followers, as also the disciplinary action.

But the CPM leadership which met in Calcutta recently seems to be more interested in cleansing the party rather than revitalising it with a militant line of thinking and action—the same thing which promoted them to break with the CPI.