

On Trial

AFTER EACH SETBACK IN THE NAXALITE CAMP THE DISCOURSE about social justice gets louder only to raise the same old question of whether the revolution as visualised by the extreme left or the moderate left, is both necessary and possible. Chased by the junglemahal nightmare the maoists are on trial for their refusal to do away with dogmatism and sectarianism despite recurring failures in translating the Chinese model of 1920s into an Indian reality in the 21st century. Not that toilers—industrial workers, daily wage labourers in the fields—do not understand the reformist nature of the established left. They know very well their trade union leaders might betray them in due season and yet they don't frequently desert those 'reformers'. Mass organisation, legal or otherwise, doesn't wither away so easily. Then mass organisation cannot be created and run simply by exhibiting muscle power. Also, mass organisations developing somewhat spontaneously against the backdrop of limited and immediate objectives cannot sustain themselves even if there is intervention by radical forces, supposed to have superior ideological outlook.

It's not that easy to break a reactionary Congress trade union even if revolutionary forces shout thousand times. Nor can it be a cake-walk to dislodge a reformist CPM-union though workers know full well that their leaders don't really practise what they preach. After all they cannot eat and drink revolution the way the revolutionaries ask them to do. Arrogance doesn't pay. And the maoists of junglemahal are paying the price for their unlimited arrogance coupled with too much reliance on muscle power, not masses. Current political and economic conditions won't let reckless experiments, which will negatively affect the welfare of the people. In other words all this will lead to deviation from the popular Maoist principle—serve the people.

The basic question of identifying friends and foes remains as bizarre as it was in the seventies. At that time some groups pinned too much hope on practical manoeuvring by way of encircling the enemy. But in the Indian context enemies are everywhere. So are people. No thought was ever given as to how to encircle the enemy by the people. In truth it is political isolation of the enemy that matters in the final analysis. When arms began to command politics, it all showed the symptoms of decline, with occasional flashes that were always taken as growth. The way the Chinese communists of pre-liberation China, developed their regular army to go for positional war cannot be imitated in today's India. The defeat and virtual genocidal extermination of LTTE despite their superior military potential and some strategic advantages attributes to their political isolation at a stage when a broad-based united front with a lot of flexibility in accommodating divergent political cross-currents were badly needed. In the seventies the dominant faction of the naxalite movement was too arrogant to recognise the very existence of minor groups with ideological and political differences. Instead of showing flexibility in their attitudes towards fellow travellers, they treated them as enemies, rather class enemies, otherwise right target for annihilation campaign. The security establishment simply

rejoiced over the development and they played their part well to turn a non-antagonistic contradiction into an antagonistic one. The same tradition continues unabated.

Not that maoist guerillas are the last word in jungle warfare. These days Indian Security Forces are specially trained to operate in jungle. As for present-day junglemahal, it is an apology of jungle i.e. forest. Even in the seventies the forest cover in the junglemahal region was fast dwindling because of indiscriminate felling of trees. What stands as reserve forest or 'dense forest' as per fashionable media parlance, could hardly be an ideal terrain for guerilla warfare for long. Those who live in cities and elsewhere in the country, perhaps can hardly fathom the denseness of the so-called dense forest, say in the Ayodhya hills of Purulia. These hill tracts with insufficient forest cover could be combed without much fire-power. After all guerillas cannot live on leaves, they need people's overwhelming support for survival.

How did the Chinese and later the Vietnamese managed to enjoy enormous popular support amidst massive repressions and encirclement is no mystery. But mystifying the maoist culture in Indian drama seems to be one of the major hurdles standing in the way of bridging the gap between the understanding of the people and the maoists' expectations from the people. It is not enough to dish out propaganda literature routinely condemning the oppressors as per guidelines taken decades ago while asking people to do revolution for a radically different world. What the people really need is the capacity to form blood, rather than blood itself.

At no point of time, no popular slogan, barring 'agrarian revolution' at the initial stage, emerged from the maoist camp to catch the imagination of the masses. And without a popular slogan, otherwise easily communicable to the new generations who have been condemned to a life of misery and brutality, masses in their millions cannot be mobilised. Then revolution is all about emancipation from enslavement. It's not about re-enslaving the people, maybe, under a different ideological garb.

In most cases the oppressed who don't know where to go for redressal of their grievances, take up—if they really take up at all—the strategic objectives of maoists, merely as far-off and essentially abstract goals or ideals. There will never develop a popular movement in depth and breadth across the country, that doesn't take into account the deeply felt desire of the masses in a situation of peace or in a situation of war. □□□