

Armed Struggle in Telengana

AN intense struggle between the two lines has been going on for a long time inside the Indian Communist Party. The struggle has centred on the question of which road the Indian revolution ought to take. This is a key issue upon which the success or failure of the Indian revolution hinges.

Revolutionaries in the Indian Communist Party resolutely advocate the seizure of power by armed struggle, and make it clear that they will take the road of the Chinese people who have won victory in their revolution under the guidance of the great leader Chairman Mao Tse-tung. Some revisionist chieftains, however, have feverishly pushed ahead with the revisionist parliamentary road, thus doing tremendous harm to the Indian revolution.

Guided by the light of Mao Tse-tung's thought, armed struggle flared and spread in Telengana in 1946-51. Telengana is in the northern part of Andhra State, southeast India, which was at that time part of eastern Hyderabad. It has an area of 44,000 square miles and a population of over 10 million. Its peasants have long been ruthlessly exploited by the British imperialists and feudal forces. Half the land is owned by the princes and most of the rest by the big landlords. More than 50 per cent of the peasants are landless. Under tyrannical rule, the masses live like beasts of burden.

The Telengana people have a glorious tradition of struggle. In the 1930s and early 40s, mass struggles broke out against feudal exploitation, and the influence of the Indian Communist Party grew steadily among the peasants. In 1946 a mass organization, Andhra Mahasabha, led by the Indian Communist Party, had a membership of more than 100,000.

The armed struggle first broke out in Shayapet, Nalgonda District, in June, 1946. It was touched off by the murder of an Andhra Mahasabha official by a landlord. The angered peasants, led by the Indian Communist Party, rose and seized land and weapons from the landlords. The storm of revolution spread rapidly and village people's committees and people's volunteers were established throughout the area. They resisted the 30,000 troops mustered by the Nizam, ruler of Hyderabad.

By the end of 1947, the uprising had spread to 300 villages. Armed struggle continued to surge still higher under the guidance of Mao Tse-tung's thought. Local organizations of the Indian Communist Party fought steadfastly along the road taken by the Chinese revolution. By September 1948, the whole of Telengana was aflame, and a red political power was set up embracing some 3,000 villages and a population of nearly 3 million. The guerrilla force increased to 2,000

men and 10,000 villagers joined the militia. Agrarian reform was carried out in the liberated areas. About one million acres of land were confiscated from the landlords for free distribution to the landless and land-poor peasants. For the first time in history, the peasants of Telengana were free. The Nizam's regime was shaken to the core.

The Nehru regime at first confined itself to providing the Nizam with arms and ammunition to suppress the uprising. Then, seeing that this feudal prince was in crucial danger, Nehru ordered tens of thousands of troops to invade Hyderabad. Telengana was plunged into a bloodbath. More than a million peasants were arrested and tortured.

Fighting the enemy, but with heavy odds against them, the peasant guerrillas suffered temporary reverses. They were militarily inexperienced and some of their leaders vacillated. Nevertheless, with wide support from the masses, they quickly recovered and carried on the fight. Some of them moved into the jungles to continue operations from there; others resumed their activities shortly after they had been put down. New areas of guerrilla activity were opened up in the coastal districts of Andhra. Between 1948 and 1951, the Congress party never succeeded in quelling by force of arms the armed revolution in Telengana.

After 1949, and especially in 1950 and 1951, the guerrillas used flexible tactics. They ambushed enemy troops, blew up enemy vehicles and attacked munition dumps and police stations. In the three months October-December, 1950, they carried out 344 such operations. By the end of that year, the guerrillas of Karimnagar district had well-established contacts with the people in 300 villages. At the beginning of 1951, guerrillas were active in over 100 villages in the coastal districts of Andhra state. Up to the end of 1951, government troops were still afraid of moving into Telengana's mountain areas.

In October 1950, a vast guerrilla zone of 40,000 square miles with a population of 10 million was established in an area which included Telengana and Andhra of northern Madras.

The brilliant successes achieved by the armed struggle in Telengana had a tremendous impact on peasant struggles all over India. Between 1946 and 1951, peasant armed struggles broke out in Kerala, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Tiripura, Manipur and in the Garo hill country in Assam.

From the very beginning, the armed struggle in Telengana came up against opposition and sabotage from the counter-revolutionary revisionists in the Indian Communist Party. First they slanderously charged that it "undermined the united front" and then they attacked those who advocated following the road of the Chinese revolution as preaching the theory of "leadership by the peasantry." Dange and a handful

of extremely reactionary revisionists openly vilified the peasants' armed struggles as "adventurism" and "individual terrorism." They were determined to betray the armed struggle in Telengana. In a party document issued in September 1950 and again in an open statement in 1951, they vilified the Chinese people's revolutionary war led by Chairman Mao Tse-tung and put forward the theory of India's "exceptionalism" in an hysterical attempt to prevent the Indian people from taking the road of the Chinese revolution.

In June 1951, the Indian Communist Party's Central Committee controlled by the handful of revisionists adopted a resolution on settling the Telengana struggle by negotiation. Under pretext of "restoring peaceful conditions in Telengana," they begged for negotiations with the Congress government. In July, they hastily sent a delegation to Hyderabad for talks with the local government. During the talks, the delegation went on its knees asking the government to accept two minimum demands for ending the armed struggle: one, that the government stop seizing the land of the peasants; and two, proclaim an amnesty for the guerrillas. They were categorically rejected by the local government. In October of the same year, the Central Committee of the Indian Communist Party unilaterally issued a statement of capitulation. The statement said that the central committee had decided to advise the Telengana peasantry and the fighting partisans to cease all guerrilla activities, and mobilize the people to defeat the Congress party in the elections.

Thus, the Telengana armed struggle was shamefully betrayed. Mass arrests, jailing and killings of the revolutionary peasants by the Indian reactionaries followed. All the fruits of victory won by the revolutionary peasants in the armed struggle were lost.

In the past decade and more, the heroic armed struggle of the Telengana peasants has had a far-reaching impact on and been a profound lesson for the Indian people longing for liberation. After many setbacks and heavy sacrifices, the Indian masses have come to realize that the parliamentary road of "defeating the Congress party in elections" advocated by the revisionists in the Indian Communist Party under the cloak of Marxism-Leninism is a road of out-and-out betrayal and burial of the Indian revolution. They have come to realize that the only road to genuine liberation is the road of victory of the Chinese revolution led by the great leader Chairman Mao Tse-tung, the revolutionary road of the proletarian vanguard going to the countryside and leading the peasants in armed struggle, the road of building base areas in the countryside, encircling the cities from the countryside and finally seizing political power throughout the country. Only in this way can the Indian people overthrow imperialism, Soviet revisionism, feudalism and bureaucrat-comprador capitalism, those mountains on their backs which weigh them down, and truly achieve liberation to become the masters of their country.