

Division In CPI (M)

N. K. SINGH

Ever since the expulsion of Mr A. K. Roy, one of its three MLAs in Bihar, along with a number of prominent workers and party activists, the CPI (M) in Bihar has been facing a turmoil. This started even before the party could recover from the severe shock received by the large-scale 'Naxalite' desertions/expulsions during 1967-68. According to informed sources, the process to eliminate the 'extremists' from the party started long ago and culminated in September 1971 in the expulsion of its lone MLA from south Bihar, Mr A. K. Roy, on charges of "persistent violation of party directives, disruptive activities, gross individualism, factionalism...and writing in an anti-party journal," (which incidentally is *Frontier*). Others expelled along with Mr Roy were Mr A. K. Bakshi, Secretary, Dhanbad District Committee, Mr T. L. Singh, a trade union leader of Jamshedpur, and Mr Ganesh Singh, Office Secretary of the State Committee.

Except a few labour unions in some industrial areas like Dhanbad and Jamshedpur and some pockets in the agrarian-belts of Nawada and Purnea, the CPI (M) had no influence worth the name in Bihar. Even these pockets were more the creation of individual leaders in the areas concerned, such as Messrs A. K. Roy, S. N. Singh (leader of a faction of the Naxalites), Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi and Ramanand Singh. Even judging from the parliamentary point of view the party occupies a very negligible position in the State politics. With one of its three MLAs expelled, and one defected, it had one MLA left in the dissolved Bihar Assembly. Even its percentage of the popular vote was meagre: 0.86% in the 1967 General Election.

Deplorably enough, even such a

small unit is divided into two factions, 'extremist' and 'liberal' which is said to be the by-product of politics at the national level. Messrs U. S. Shukla, K. K. Singh, G. S. Vidyarthi, Taqui Rahim and Chandi Prasad form the 'extremist' group reportedly owing its allegiance to Mr B. T. Randive. The liberal group consists of Messrs S. S. Srivastava, Hari Krishna, Bhagwan Sharma and others. This group reportedly toes the 'official' line pursued by Messrs Jyoti Basu and company.

Differences between the two groups cropped up over the question of Mr A. K. Roy's expulsion. Despite wide protests from the 'extremist' faction and the rank and file, the Srivastava group prevailed and Mr Roy was expelled.

In the meantime the Bihar State Conference of the CPI (M) was held at Bettiah (Champaran) from December 3 to 6 last, in which the strength of the State Committee was raised from 13 to 22. The Vidyarthi-Shukla group alleges that Mr Srivastava filled all the new vacancies with his staunch supporters. Not satisfied with it, the Srivastava faction was trying to capture the State Secretariat too. On the other hand, the 'extremist' faction was publicly expressing resentment over the manner in which the party bosses were working. They were not reconciled to Mr Roy's expulsion and efforts to bring him back to the fold were continuing vigorously.

In this background, the four-day (January 22 to 25), crucial meeting of the party's State Committee, which was to decide, among other things, the formation of the State Secretariat, selection of constituencies and party candidates for the forthcoming Assembly elections, had promised to be a stormy one and Mr Promode

Das Gupta was deputed to supervise the session.

The 'official' group prevailed over the State Committee meeting too, thanks to its nine new recruits. Mr Srivastava succeeded in his plan of capturing the State Secretariat. The old Secretariat used to maintain a balance between the Srivastava and the Shukla faction: it had three members, Mr Srivastava, Mr Shukla, and Mr Ramanand Singh, who is neutral between the two factions. But in the new Secretariat, formed in the January meeting, Mr Shukla was dropped altogether and its strength was increased from three to five. Of the three new entrants to the Secretariat, only one was from the Shukla-Vidyarthi faction. So now, of the five State Secretariat members, three are 'liberal', one 'extremist' and one neutral.

Of the three new entrants, Mr Hari Krishna's (a 'liberal') case is very interesting. He has virtually jumped from ordinary membership of the party to the State Secretariat. Mr Hari Krishna, who had joined the party only in 1967, was not even a member of the State Committee till very recently.

Sharp differences over the selection of constituencies and party candidates for the Assembly elections and other organisational matters arose, too. Although the Patna District Committee had twice recommended Mr Taqui Rahim's candidature from the Patna West constituency, it was Mr Hari Krishna who was chosen.

Maharashtra

Election Scene

M. J. AKBAR

THE crucial question in Maharashtra is not which party will gain power after the elections but which person the Congress will choose for the palatial Chief Minister's residence on Mount Pleasant Road. With the Congress accepting its continuance in power as a fact of