

All this Leftism

PROFESSOR ASHOK MITRA, IN an article published in an English daily has made a tentative calculation about the gains the Tatas are going to receive from the West Bengal Government, showing that the 'group is being offered the allure of around Rs 850 crore by the state government, apart from their being spared the bother of acquiring the land through their own efforts. The deal does not though mention what the Tatas are, in exchange, offering West Bengal.' Prof Mitra's final comment is interesting. After a reference to the Tatas' investment for acquiring control over Corus, he has asked, "Does it not appear obscene that a state government, carrying a burden of debt of more than Rs 150,000 crore and with a countless number of problems. would offer a freebie of Rs 850 crore to an industrial group which has made an outlay of over Rs 50,000 crore only the other day to satisfy its expansionary ego overseas?" Obscene it has appeared to Ashok Mitra, obscene it would appear to any genuine well-wisher of Bengal's economy.

Meanwhile, some intellectuals have raised some questions that deserve attention. Eminent economists like Amiya Kumar Bagchi and Prabhat Pattanaik, while regretting the incident of 14 March in Nandi-gram, have decried what they think as attacks on the offices of a particular political party. It may be noted that they did not decry the left government's policy of wooing the Tatas and the Salims to the maximum extent possible, even at the expense of peasants. Yet it should be admitted that attacking the offices of a particular political party is not the best way of attacking its political hegemony; such a method represents something like a pre-political consciousness. There is another side to the story, however. The CPI (M), by its continuous neglect of the feelings of the masses, the upshot of which was gory episode of 14 March, has made itself an object of hatred of the broad majority of the local people, otherwise its objective of recapturing the hegemony over the area with the help of the police and armed cadres would not have failed. When hatred rules supreme in the minds of the people, one way of negation chosen by them might well be an attack on the symbols of authority. In Ranajit Guha's seminal work, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, one would find many such examples of negation.

There are some other intellectuals, and men of literature who have taken the field in support of CPM-led left government's industrial policy and are trying to vilify, by devious arguments, those who have resigned from the government-sponsored institutions. One of these 'left worshippers' in order to vilify Samar Sen, poured out slanderous remarks against him about a year ago, knowing fully well that it was not possible for anybody who is long dead to answer him. Those who knew Samar Sen and know this fellow can well understand the real design behind such derogatory remarks.

Buddha Babu has, however, one advantage. Persons like Mamata Banerjee call him a leftist, and this is one big advantage to the Chief Minister who also loves to call himself a leftist and his party a left party. If Buddhadeb Bhattacharya is a leftist, then why should Manmohan Singh, Narendra Modi etc be called rightists? After all, they share, with Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, the policy of creating SEZs in order to serve global capital, ignoring the adverse consequences they stand for.

The real challenge before the democratic masses of West Bengal is to smash this sham leftism and establish real leftism. Of course, the capitulation to the forces of globalisation, along with the culture of wooing big capital, is an all-India phenomenon

and only an all-India united mass movement can serve as an antidote to this culture. Kalinga-nagar and Nandigram have demonstrated this necessity glaringly. □□□