

CBI And CPM

Harried at home and elsewhere in the country over the Nandigram issue Bengal Marxists are now doubly embarrassed because of arrests of some CPM activists including a zonal committee secretary by the CBI in connection with the Tapasi Malik murder case in Singur. Being an important partner of the Congress-led UPA dispensation at the centre, such unfriendly act from a 'friendly' government seems to have angered the marxist party. No doubt the latest disclosures about the death of Tapasi Malik a teen-aged girl, raped and murdered during the anti-land grab agitation in Singur have put the CPM on the wrong foot.

When the charred body of Tapasi Malik was found on 18 December, 2006 the CPI (M), through the media under their control, tried to project it as a case of suicide out of frustrated love. As time rolled on, it transpired that it was a clear case of murder, not of suicide.

Those who concocted the story knew what had happened and what they would have to face, and tried to raise the bogey of suicide in order to defend themselves in advance. Ironically the Marxist chief minister apparently convinced that his partymen were not involved, agreed to a CBI enquiry, but the central agency has put him and his party in an awkward position.

The root cause of the disturbance over the Tatas' automobile project was the decision of the CPM-led left front Government to show the multicropped, richly fertile land of Singur to the Tatas. The latter chose that very area and made it clear that they won't accept any other area, whether it is fertile non-agricultural land or not. The reason was simple; the Tatas wanted to build up a spectacle of their own brand of industrialisation that would attract the attention of the people who regularly travel along the nearby expressway. In order to cover up their folly, the Chief Minister and his colleagues went on telling the plain lie that most of the acquired land was barren and under monocropping. But the lie was exploded soon. When the acquisition process, coupled with a most unabashed display of police brutality, was going on, the Chief Minister, went on to declare that almost all of the acquisition had been made with the consent of the farmers. Now this lie stands badly exposed and the apologists of so-called 'industrial revolution' have succeeded only in defacing themselves. The slogan of employment generation, only a slogan backed up by little corroborating data, needs some scrutiny. At first, the Chief Minister and his party colleagues suggested that the automobile factory of the Tatas would generate about 10000 new employments. When it transpired that the Tatas had made no promises regarding employment, the number dropped to 4000. How many are going to lose their livelihood? On any count, the number exceeds 10,000. 179 young men are undergoing a training course, but without any guarantee of absorption. Hence, net employment is decreasing. Of course, there is an apology: Agricultural land has to be taken, because the area lying fallow constitutes only 1 percent of total land in West Bengal. It is an irony that the Status Report published by the Government itself in December 2006 tells a different story, the percentage is not 1, but 3.85 and more than one million acres of fallow land are available for industry.

Frequent references to the Chinese way of industrialisation are being given. It may be mentioned that after the explosion of the East Asian myth, neoliberal attention turned to China as a success story. During 1998-2004, the average net value of fixed assets of

enterprises dominated by foreign investment rose by 90 percent, while the value of fixed industrial assets controlled or owned by the state rose by only 39 percent. In other words, a gradually dominating position of foreign investment is a reality of China today. The Gini coefficient, the most acknowledged measure of inequality, for income inequality in China rose from 0.33 in 1980 to 0.40 in 1994 and to 0.46 in 2000. According to one source, it was 0.50 in 2006. It should also be pointed out that the media controlled by the Central Government suppresses the fact of growing income inequality in China. The CPI(M)- controlled propaganda channels do likewise.

The Union Government want the industrialists to purchase land directly from owners, but the West Bengal Government and the CPI(M) are suggesting that state governments should be empowered to acquire land on behalf of the corporate giants on the ground that this would save landowners from the machinations of land-brokers. The events of Singur and Nandigram have, however, exposed the real design of these self-styled champions of farmers' interests.

It is very interesting that although the CPI(M) leaders and ideologues have consistently claimed that they have effected decentralisation of power through the gram panchayets, no panchayat was consulted before taking the decision to acquire land in Singur and Nandigram; even the CPI (M) dominated panchayets were totally bypassed.

Whether CBI probe can expose the ruling marxists is anybody's guess because the ball is now being played in New Delhi and presidential election is knocking the doors of Congress and Left. But the very arrest of top CPM functionaries suggests among other things that concerned citizens who have played a vital role in resisting CPM barbarity, can now see something beyond 'conspiracy theory'. □□□