

PLAYING WITH SIGNBOARDS

The Official marxist enterprise is in its worst down-town since the great upheaval of the 1960s—and it's taking the rest of the left down with it. There is nothing new in CPM's pro-capitalist stance. What is new is their bold statement about the class they represent. They are no longer ashamed of telling the world that they are in league with big business, both domestic and foreign, albeit their party signboard continues to convey something else. Had they been in East Europe they could have long changed the name of their party to some suitable social-democratic or liberal democratic—outfit. As it is India it works best with a leftist spin and campaign on a populist appeal to the common man. At the same time the unmistakable implication is that poor people have no right to representation. Despite their horrendous crimes against poor people—workers and peasants—they could manage to inflate the significance of their presence by assigning a social meaning to their pro-capitalist bias belied by the situation on the ground. Their political jugglery is mathematically wrong and factually absurd as well. They are vying with nations and states where SEZ has already wrought havoc. It may be alright for the political right to chant invitations to SEZ. It also fits, say, a Sharad Power fine, who dismisses, over a lakh suicides of peasants as victims of just their sloth. But they think they are impervious to criticism. There are so many pressing issues that they can always divert public attention from one area to another as it happened in case of forcing the controversial Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasrin to leave Kolkata. As a diversinary tactic it played out well but the ruling marxists, finally emerged as defenders of islam. The Modis have reasons to enjoy the moment.

The red apologists of global capital have a long tradition of betraying their professed class interests at every critical juncture. Their break with the past (i.e. CPI) was half-hearted and their fight against revisionism, otherwise vaguely and inadequately defined in the Indian context, even by the far left, was sham. On India-China border issue their 'principled' stand was totally 'unprincipled', if not misleading, and opportunistic to the core. Yet the Chinese communists came to their rescue by engineering the first official split in Indian communist movement, apparently on ideological grounds, which it was not. The Chinese also took the honour of engineering the second split as well, only to further their national interests. The so-called left communists as today's CPM people were called in those days, in the early 1960s, simply produced a programme, that was basically aimed at delaying Indian revolution, otherwise long overdue.

They no longer talk of class struggle, it is not on their agenda. In truth they allow themselves to be used as vehicles of class struggle in reverse order.

Their populism is for middle class people. Their influence among the toilers is declining very fast and it cannot be otherwise. They do not see danger in imperial capital that renders thousands of workers, artisans and peasants jobless. What is more the peasant question has undergone a radical change in their 'marxist' formulation. Pauperisation of peasants to benefit the industrialists is a fait accompli in their scheme of things and they are out with all their might to defend it, ironically with marxist fervour.

Maybe, classical feudalism is a thing of the past but what remains seems to be maintaining a kind of social equilibrium in rural areas through the mechanism of subsistence farming. With the crumbling of this equilibrium, thanks to onslaught of global capital, social tensions are mounting, forcing people to indulge in desperation for sheer survival. But the marxists think they are the 'people'. They cannot really hear people.

In the 1960s when the communist left first made a major breakthrough in their political culture by tasting power and privilege as well, they tried to project their united front resulted from electoral compulsions, as a platform to further class struggle even of their kind, while hoping to consolidate mass base through pro-people relief measures. Not that they introduced something novel. What they did was to implement old Congress policies with 'less corruption' at the initial stage and they highlighted it as a grand success of their marxist project. But that world has vanished. Neo-liberal relief-wallahs cannot sell their utopia anymore; they have exposed their authoritarian fang beyond tolerable limits. Their very signboard creates popular dissent and irritation. To say that power corrupts is not enough. It corrupts to the bone and changes class character sharply.

During the Soviet days they championed bureaucratic state capitalism as socialism and parliamentary path became the sole and easiest route to reach 'socialist paradise'. As the Soviet model is dead, they too are shifting from bureaucratic capital to private capital *a la* China! The way they are opening retail trade to big business and multinationals has surprised even their traditional left fellow travellers. In the absence of Brezhnevs and Garbachevs, they can at best swing their allegiance to the Bushes. They cannot recall their past. Nor can they defend their present. As for future, it does not exist for them. □