

Following the Rituals

Gone are the days of Soviet Consulate pampered extravaganza to mark Lenin's birth anniversary. April 22 comes silently and goes silently. That Lenin is still remembered by official communist enterprises in India is a matter of grave concern because neo-liberal Leninists have already undone the very soul of Leninism. Observing April 22 is more ritualistic than anything else. After Lenin another day that has virtually lost all its relevance in neo-liberal atmosphere is May 1. Then marxists have some compulsions to follow the rules—the rules scripted in a marxist calendar. For workers under the sway of various official communist outfits May Day is another day troubled by life-less slogans that make little sense even to slogan-mongers. Hypocrisy unlimited. After the ritual it's the hard choice again about how to lure investors, both domestic and foreign, promising a docile labour force.

Heaven will not fall if they do not observe Lenin's birth anniversary. Nor will toilers lose anything substantial if they refrain from reiterating May Day spirit and working class solidarity. But they cannot discard their sign-board so easily. Maybe a sentimental attachment! Also they look too shaky to disown their own past. Their middle-class electoral constituency may be quite happy with a Leninist tag sans marxist action. In many ways they maintain a legacy of labour aristocracy as symbolised by many labour parties in Europe. Also, in many ways they are worse than labour parties because the latter show some responsibilities to bargain for labour. But official marxists in India have no compulsion to serve the cause of labour. They can talk of labour rights on International Labour's Day while doing everything possible not to empower labour unions. Being the ardent champions of global capital, they are not in a position to raise murmur against the unjust order and the systematic erosion of democratic space. Garlanding Lenin's statue is fine because it is conducive to holding onto power. But the cost for toilers is terrible.

With unprecedented price rise and a food crisis bordering on famine looming large on the horizon these marxists still find it unreasonable to force the market to behave. The cost of staples like rice and wheat have soared by upto 80 percent in recent weeks. Rural India is hardest hit but marxists are enjoying the company of agri-business and batting for multinationals. Curiously enough they are blaming it on the policies initiated by the previous NDA Government to save their ally—Congress. While Congress has virtually surrendered to market forces, pleading its inability to do anything positive in respect of price rise in the de-controlled regime, the Bharatiya Janata Party may take the trouble to resort to a bandh or two to register their tokenism. Paying lip service to the cause won't make any difference. Prices will soar further. The name of the game is double standard and all are well versed with it.

Observing May Day by the marxist left in this part of the globe is hypocritical to the core. By making strong pleas for SEZ which is nothing but foreign territory where no national law is applicable in relation to working hours, wage system, working conditions and all that they ask workers in almost business as usual fashion to unite against exploitation and uphold the spirit of May Day. Workers

in SEZ toil under medieval oppressive atmosphere and international labour day does not convey any new message to them. They cannot hope for a better tomorrow. For the established marxist left celebrating May day is a mockery. Then double standard is the hall mark of their political culture.

Once upon a time Euro-Communism developed and flourished as a distinct tendency with its remarkable success in parliamentary politics. But the party is over. It has no future in the citadel of social-democracy. Indian parliamentary communists with their limited constituency will have to face a similar situation not in the distant future. As official marxists are in a hurry to get integrated with big business, they can go to any length to terrorise dissenters even by indulging in arson, loot, rape and victimisation. The continuing conflict in Nandigram demonstrates among other things that the ruling marxists of Bengal have every right to claim the legacy of fascism. Fascists too observe Lenin's birth day. That the hypocrites continue to sing the *L' Internationale* is a tragedy for the oppressed. Then in the absence of any viable alternative the people have no escape from this brutal reality. The concept of working class solidarity or for that matter worker-peasant alliance has been shattered. Buyoed by the process of peaceful transition to capitalism in most post-revolutionary societies communists are least bothered about taking trouble to do revolution. They have not yet officially revised their party programmes envisaging different brands of revolution—national democratic, people's democratic or even socialist—but for all practical purposes those lifeless programmes may be re-interpreted as blue-prints for counter-revolution. And counter-revolutionaries too need Leninistic rituals because they want to keep things that way. □□□