

## A Vote Against Marxists

A B

Before the Panchayet elections in West Bengal, many skeptics, who do not necessarily share the CPI(M) views on 'development' and 'industrialization', expressed the opinion, or apprehension, that the CPI(M) would emerge out of the polls with a resounding victory. This calculation was based generally on two notions. One was that the opposition was hopelessly divided, and that the CPI(M) being the ruling party in Bengal and having the support of big corporate capital, it enjoys far greater superiority in respect of money and muscles. The lack of credibility of outfits like the Trinamul Congress among the poor peasantry was considered another factor.

All these apprehensions were not altogether unfounded. But such analysts could not foresee that mounting grievances could often outstrip such negative factors. Here too Nandigram is a good point of reference. The 'recapture' of Nandigram by force of arms was hailed in the CPI(M)s Bengali daily as 'new' sunrise. Even those who felt only a sense of indignation at such Goebbles-type propaganda did not fail to note that the forces of the people had become much weakened owing to the divisive tactics of the Trinamul Congress. The combined platform, Bhoomi Uchhed Pratirodh Committee was lay shattered, because the Trinamul Congress wanted to establish its dominance and brush aside other constituents. The situation came handy for the CPI(M), which hoped to sweep away the polls with the help of the police and administration. Yet the people voted out the CPI(M) out of power. It was not a verdict in favour of the Trinamul Congress; it was a vote against the CPI(M). This is remarkable in view of the irresponsible nature of the politics and activities of Mamata Banerjee & Co, which unnecessarily alienated a good section of the masses as well as other participants of the movement. The people who were not committed to the Trinamul Congress wanted to unseat the CPI(M). This result has been replicated in an attenuated form in many other places.

It is clear that the CPI(M) is the principal instrument of globalization as far as West Bengal is concerned. In this sense, the setback in the Panchayet polls is a setback for globalization and liberalization in this state. The defeat in Singur has also exposed the fact that fraudulent talks about 'development' of the area with the help of the Tatas have not carried conviction with the people. In fact the controversy over the Singur project has exposed the pitiable ignorance of Buddhadeb Bhattacharya and his whiz-kid mentors about project evaluation, cost-benefit analysis, choice of techniques, distributive effects and other related issues of development, and they had finally to fall back upon the argument that it would be imprudent to ignore the advantages offered by the IMF–World Bank model. Government advertisements had been regularly appearing in dailies and weeklies, even mofussil weeklies, that investors were showing interest in West Bengal with the objective of promotion of 'employment'. But this type of propaganda and argumentation was not very successful. Even Prof Amartya Sen, who had given something like a clean chit to Buddhadeb Bhattacharya in a rather mindless way had finally to qualify his position to a great extent after going into the subject somewhat closely and

more sensibly. It is noteworthy that the plan of the proposed township in Dankuni, where small factories were going to be destroyed for the sake of big promoters, of course in the name of 'development', has now gone to the winds. And it is clear that the troubles of the Tata-CPI(M) combine in Singur are far from over.

Of course it is not very wise to place much hope on the victory of the Trinamul Congress or the BJP. It is much more important to utilize the newfound opportunity to push more democratic and pro-people demands and related ideas on a really decentralised pattern of development. It is naive to expect that these ideas and demands will be seriously taken by persons like Mamata Banerjee. So, the case has to be taken up by the progressives of the left. The recently formed outfit named the PDCI may well be an ally in this struggle.

Alimuddin Street is now licking its election wounds, and speculating on how to change the situation to its advantage. But this party is so overcrowded with corrupt and self-seeking elements down to the grass-roots level, and so heavily dependent on the police and administration for maintaining its political hegemony that it is well nigh impossible for it to regain effectively the ground it has lost. On the other hand, the opposition offered by the Congress and the Trinamul Congress cannot take the people very far, because their very ideological foundation is to accept the phenomenon of globalization. It is for other forces to disseminate alternative views—these views definitely exist—and mobilize the people. □□□