

LETTERS

'REVISITING THE PAST'

'THE DARKER NATIONS' by Vijay Prashad [published by LeftWord Books, 12 Rajendra Prasad Road, New Delhi, 110001, email : adminleftword@gmail.com, price : Rs 245.00 / US \$ 10.50] is a well-researched book. The book invites comparison to Edward Said's *Orientalism*. If anything Prashad's documentation of a critical part of international politics and culture is fascinating. It's about Third World, its rise and fall. It's the talk of Third World politics aimed at analysing the problems of revolution and social change.

At a time when the politicians and ideologues of the Washington Consensus appeal to former colonies to free themselves from the colonial legacy Vijay Prashad stubbornly carries on revisiting the past without which it is not possible to understand the present.

A Reader, New Delhi.

OF TATAS AND COLUMBUS

'Behind all the glamour, sobriety and humanitarianism that one reads and hears about Tatas, there is a dark hidden side which is kept under wraps. It is time people look at the destructive role Tatas have played over the years in uprooting thousands of poor families, and the resulting destruction of livelihoods and the environment.

To overcome their guilt, and that too aimed at pacifying the liberal voices in the urban centres, it is quite likely that Tatas would be thinking of setting up schools and funding some NGO activities in the tribal lands as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

What a sophisticated way to cover dark underbelly !

But to see a frontpage headline in *The Hindustan Times* (dated November 19, 2009) was simply horrifying : *The biggest land grab after Columbus*. As the blurb says: Government report criticises corporate exploitation of tribal lands; tribals turn to new friends : Maoists. And if you remember only a few days back, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had publicly accepted, and made a promise: "The systemic exploitation of our tribal communities can no longer be tolerated."

Does anybody think Manmohan Singh will do anything to stop this? Well, he will simply push for more such projects that will eventually destroy the social fabric of these tribal lands. What is happening in the land-grab in Bedanji, a remote rural expanse in Bastar in Chhatisgarh, is a test case. The Tatas plan to set up a Rs 19,500 crore steel plant for which ten villages have to be emptied.

Interestingly, a report of the PM-appointed Ministry of Rural Development committee on Land Reforms has succinctly said : "This open declared war will go down as the biggest land grab ever, if it plays out as per the script." *The Hindustan Times* report quotes the just-released government report warning against the corporate takeover in the Bastar hinterland: "The biggest grab of tribal lands after Columbus."

Devinder Sharma, New Delhi