

What Future for Marxists?

Marxists generally grapple with complex ideas and they can hardly look at and see the gap between the way the world is and the way it should be. And yet they try to do away with all their misdeeds 'dialectically'. After historic poll reversals in Bengal and to some extent in Kerala the CPI(M)—the most trusted single window of corporate India on the left—the central leadership of the marxist party seems to be caught in a dilemma as to how to present the post-mortem report without alienating themselves further from masses. Finally they admitted, though reluctantly that they committed mistakes with regard to Singur and Nandigram and blamed it on the state leadership for the debacle. But central leaders all along defended their state satraps during the Singur agitation. Nor did they review the brutalities unleashed by their police and party goons on the hapless people of Nandigram. Shedding tears and that too after losing polls cannot wash. There was no dichotomy in the party, all were united to teach the defiant peasants a lesson or two.

Now with the Trinamul government taking back Singur land that was given to the Tatas at throwaway prices, by way of placing a bill—the Singur Land Rehabilitation and Development Bill, 2011—in the current session of the assembly, they are doubly humiliated. Even at the height of Singur movement and massive state repression the Tatas refused to part with the land, otherwise acquired at gun point. The CPM and its supporters among the academics and civil society vigorously advocated the irreversible process of land transfer through the British scripted land acquisition act of 1894. But political will can make all the difference as being shown by the present dispensation which by no stretch of imagination claims itself to be leftist. In all fairness the political right is executing a leftist agenda while the left continues to live in the past.

For one thing the left government's achievements in the field of land reforms is always exaggerated. The much talked about 'operation barga' was half-hearted and granting pattas and that too in a selective and partisan way, to the landless was in reality a vote catching device with the sole objective of establishing party dictatorship, only to pit one section of have-nots against another, much to the satisfaction of the vested interests. Recording barga just ensured share croppers' (i.e. bargadars') fifty percent entitlement to sale proceeds in case of sale of land by owners. The ground reality of share-cropping in Bengal has never been fully discussed. Share croppers are not necessarily actual cultivators in many cases, they too hire labour or just lease out lands to small landless cultivators on contract basis for a single crop or double crops. Thus contract farming that the industry wants to introduce in agriculture in a big way is already in vogue, albeit in a minor scale. In plain words the peasant question has never been addressed in its entirety while 'operation barga' is no answer to the issue of survival of so many rural people under the juggernaut of what they call 'reforms'.

In 1977 the countrywide anti-Congress verdict was against Indira Gandhi's internal emergency. But the CPM and its allies thought it was their Russian November 1917 and they lost no time to forcefully impose their partisan dictatorship on a large section of aggrieved population only to vindicate the pet theme of western propaganda machine that there is no difference between communists and fascists. They have no option but to support the 'Singur Land Bill' that seeks to take back Tata land. In other words they now mock at themselves by exposing themselves further in the 'Singur Land Deal'. Tatas are no less notorious than CPM in throttling people's struggle in Singur. And many land losers are very much against paying any compensation to the Tatas as they want now their money back which they invested in infrastructure for the small car project.

That CPM used to enjoy disproportionate weightage in national politics in Delhi is because of Bengal. As Bengal is no longer their fiefdom they are in desperate search of scapegoats and excuses to bounce back in electoral arena the possibility of which seems remote. 13-06-2011