

NOTE

'Staying Alive'

Sankar Ray writes :

The top brass of communist Party of India (Marxist) at its national headquarters, A K Gopalan Bhavan, are obsessed with a we-told-you syndrome, the most disastrous electoral performance in the 15th Lok Sabha polls (2009) and 15th West Bengal Assembly elections (2011) notwithstanding. This conceited mindset is strewn all over the 8400-plus word Political Review Report (PRR), adopted at the 20th Congress of one-million strong party at Kozhikode (4-9 April 2012).

Mystery surrounds the delay in publishing the Political Organisation Report (POR), adopted at the 20th Congress and instead a part—PRR—is published and that too in the theoretical quarterly, *The Marxist* (Jan-Mar 2012). Normally, the POR is an open document and not the draft POR.

The party leadership, as evident in the PRR, seems too afraid to face the fall-out of a full-fledged self-criticism although a candid self-critiquing is a must for a party, claiming to tread along Marxist theory and practice. A half-hearted determination for working out a remedial strategy to rid itself of a deep-seated malaise is destined to end in a damp squibb. This is true for not only the CPI(M) but also its major allies like the Communist Party of India if these parties are genuinely committed to an all-out endeavour to regain lost grounds, leave alone expansion of new bases. Nowhere the party admits that it has lost much of its credibility among its basic masses—the toiling masses.

Nonetheless, the PRR which is a part of the political organisational report, endorsed the scathing criticism of the West Bengal party, by the party central committee (CC). “The image of the Party amongst the people has been dented by manifestation of highhanded-ness, bureaucratism and refusal to hear the views of the people. The existence of corruption and wrong-doing among a small strata (sic) of Party leaders and cadres due to corrosive influence of being a ‘ruling party’ and running the government for a prolonged period was also resented. Links with real estate promoters and other unhealthy elements in some instances have met with an adverse reaction from the people. All this have affected the Party elections”.

The party admits “erosion of support among the working class and the rural and urban poor” which is due to its “failing to consistently take up class issues.” But the CC lacks the courage to go deeper into the causes of erosion and instead indulges in an escapism by holding “a systematic campaign against the Left Front and CPI(M)” as the main reason for the setback. Recalcitrant to note—or too hesitant to put on record—that the party and its following in two basic mass fronts—the state branches of Centre of Indian Trade Unions and All India Krishak

Sabha and the units in hierarchical order—have become somewhat mutually isolated. A couple of senior wholetimers working under a direct branch of West Bengal state committee aggrievedly told a veteran CC member functioning at the AKG Bhavan almost openly at state headquarters, “Over three dozens of zonal and local committee offices have large apartments, donated by real estate promoters or acquired at incredibly low prices through bonhomie with promoters who patronize anti-social activities in Kolkata, North 24 Parganas and Howrah districts. But the state leaders at Alimuddin Street never cared to institute even an informal probe, let alone issuance of show cause letters to concerned leaders”.

The hard truth is that the CPI(M) refuses to realize that it has suffered a haemorrhage of confidence among basic masses—working class and peasantry (excluding rich peasants). Or maybe, the present leadership isn’t sure of its ability to cure the party from an ailment that spread into the entire physique of the party. The very first thing needed by the leaders at the top is to garner the moral courage to face criticism from below instead of blaming the opposition and the media. “Imperialism or neo-liberalism has no role in the intrusion of vested interests into the party. Inroads made by these anti-communist forces in the guise of comrades in West Bengal and Kerala affected our image as a socially progressive image”, a party wholetimer told this writer in a sarcastic tone after attending the 23rd state conference in Kolkata. □□□