

LOSING TOUCH?

Four decades later. It's the same old story of how to reverse the 'split' syndrome. The times are different yet the naxalite movement in its entirety, including all the tendencies, parliamentary and non-parliamentary, continue to wander in ideological wilderness. The 40th anniversary of the great 'spring thunder' over Darjeeling was not that eventful. Most groups would like to express satisfaction with their 'middle ground' approach. The problem isn't that Naxalite Movement is still too weak but that it's seen as too arrogant and insensitive to popular issues in a changed global context. They are still too dogmatic in maintaining their group identity. Ever since the collapse of initial ideological framework for which communist revolutionaries sacrificed so much they have been struggling from one crisis to another in quest for a new orientation without which they cannot move forward.

Revisionism was the rallying cry at the initial stage and a bitter ideological struggle against Moscow oriented communist establishments made a major ideological breakthrough for the first time in the communist movement of India. The myth of peaceful transition to socialism through parliamentary path as propounded by diehard Muscovites and their innumerable fellow travellers without communist tag was exposed. But what finally emerged from ideological onslaught against revisionism, both national and international, was not that illuminating, not to speak of path-finding. No doubt the concept of armed rebellion under the command of an underground structure gained momentum. But it soon found itself besieged and a tactical blunder in the form of individual terrorism became all too apparent. Too much dependence on China for ideological guidelines had its pitfalls and blindness became an unmanageable political mess.

In truth communist revolutionaries maintained the old tradition of ideological slavery and had to pay the price dearly. In the yester years Moscow's ideological overlordship played havoc. And China did the same thing to naxalites who, consciously or unconsciously served China's foreign policy interests in the name of proletarian internationalism. Beijing acted as a catalyst to develop Marxist-Leninist tendencies in international communist movement but the Chinese Communists in the end refused to take responsibility for the setback M-L movements suffered throughout the world.

Nobody can force anybody to be free. But China tried to impose revolution of its kind, only to create more ideological problems instead of resolving them. They simply abandoned their ardent supporters in the middle, again to further their national priorities under the cloak of internationalism. In the absence of any international centre with broad appeal and acceptability, the naxalites seem to be treading a cautious path today with no long-term action plan, new democratic or otherwise. They are reacting to spontaneity in their own empiricist way with little success. Talking vaguely and failing to demarcate differential approach won't work.

As for the non-parliamentary segment of the movement, the boycottists to be precise, selective armed action against the symbol of state authority seems to be only strategic line they could think of. Masses do not know much about their revolutionary goal because they lack a popular mass line. They are still in a dilemma as to how to develop mass outfits without being identified with the underground set up. As a result their not-so

open frontal organisations are easily branded as 'terrorist' and it is enough to create panic and isolate them while forcing their activists to indulge in individual terror, only to get isolated further.

But things are equally dismal for those who have already discarded violence once and for all. The trouble is that they cannot set agenda; they can at best respond critically to the agenda set by others. Their options are limited and they have no plan to go beyond those limited options. Despite massive repression by multinational capital, affecting the poor and middle class as well the far left aspiring to reach the sun—parliament—has failed to articulate popular slogans in the changed situation to convince the people that ideas cannot be killed. By imitating social democratic methods as practised by the official left, they could hardly motivate the people to talk differently.

What stands in the way of unifying mass action against authoritarianism and vanishing democratic space is really puzzling. Ideological niceties do not really matter. What matters is feudal mindset and group identity. It's again a crisis of identity. Nobody knows when they will bury their mutual mistrust, perhaps not in the immediate future.

The 40th anniversary of the naxalite upsurge, was an occasion to review the history in the making but they showed little inclination to become a part of it. □□□