

Better Late...

The more details emerge, the clearer it becomes that the marxist left's handling of the land acquisition crisis is not merely illegal. It is borderline criminal. The situation in Singur and Nandigram could have been a bit different had Nobel laureate Prof Amartya Sen said it earlier that "land acquisition for setting up industries should be the last recourse". In truth Prof Sen begged to differ on the issue of forcible land grabbing. But realisation came too late for the hapless people of Singur and Nandigram. No doubt he indirectly blamed it on the CPM-led left front government for the Tata fiasco in Singur while addressing the distinguished celebrities and state government leaders at a seminar, presumably organised at the initiative of the government. Also, he squarely blamed it, and quite justifiably, on the Tatas for their failure to obey market rules in not buying the Singur land directly particularly at a time when they hit international headlines by acquiring a world steel major. But his oblique reference to de-Stalinisation in Russia, Vietnam and other places was too much for his ruling marxist friends who brutally suppressed popular movements against the Tata small car project.

What Prof Sen said about forcible land acquisition was a stunning blow to the marxist left—'intimidation and brow-beating won't help matters'. Whether the Sen push to force the left to think twice to avoid another Singur or Nandigram is altogether a different issue—because in a low-key, routine manner, Nandigram remains a "war-zone" still, despite an anti-left electoral verdict. So are other areas where agricultural land would be acquired anytime soon. The ruling marxists are buying time, no doubt, but they are lying low to launch yet another onslaught on the worrying peasants, hopefully after the parliamentary poll.

For one thing Prof Sen was pragmatic enough to ask marxists to admit mistakes as he found nothing wrong in doing this. But it is one area where communists of all shades are united not to budge—they hardly admit their mistakes. Even if they do it, in the face of adverse criticism, they do it very casually. And the communists of India have a chequered history of denying responsibility for mistakes they commit in the name of ideology, in the name of people and in the name of party. They are not accountable to anyone because they think they represent a superior ideology. Self-criticism is not in their culture. In party congress, sometimes they explain their 'set-backs', not 'mistakes' by duelling on the changed political context only to 'confuse the confused'.

In the pre-independence days, they were the ardent supporters of 'Pakistan Resolution', galvanising the Muslim League position with a marxist coat by invoking the theory of National Question and Minority's Right to Self-Determination, somewhat dogmatically and mechanically without analysing the concrete conditions of India. Today they no longer support any self-determination movement, ethnic or otherwise, even within the framework of Indian federation, not to speak of cessation.

They are not yet ready to accept the hard reality that their policy of quick industrialisation with a view to developing productive forces at a fast pace, will lead to genocide. It's genocide—plain and simple. They are using poor peasants as

cannon fodders for industrial war to ensure super profits of the Tatas and the like and they describe it as development. They are making internal refugees knowing full well they will be destitutes in no time, having no present and future. These displaced persons will survive for some time simply by living on the past.

At every critical stage communists took wrong decisions but they never apologised to the people for the damage they caused to them by pursuing anti-people measures. Once they vehemently opposed the rehabilitation of East Bengal refugees in the Andaman and Nicobar islands in the fifties only to realise later that it was wrong to oppose Congress government's rehabilitation policy. Then they themselves brutally oppressed the Marichjhapi refugees who came back from the hostile and difficult terrain of Dandakaranya, to get rehabilitated on their own in the Sundarbans. How many people died in the Marichjhapi massacre is still a mystery. Unfortunately there was no Seymour Hersh who broke the story of the My Lai massacre in late 1969. The crimes by the marxists against the poor for whom they officially stand, are endless. It is unlikely that Amartya Sen's caution would change their course. After all they have changed their class position and, visualise every happening through the prism of propertied class.

Even in the early 1960s they used to oppose Indian monopoly houses, at least in public discourses and describe the Congress party as the mouthpiece of Tatas, Birlas and the like. Today they themselves represent Tatas, Birlas—because they think only these people can save India from economic calamity the country has been in for decades. But the recent corporate scams tell a different story. After the left reverse in Nandigram bypoll recently it won't be that easy to forcibly oust peasants from their lands in the coming days. The land movements these days are set in motion by apolitical agitators and the idea is catching imagination of vast masses. Whether they like it or not Nandigram represents a new symbol of people's initiative against red tyranny. □□□