

POLEMICS

Communism and Anti-Communism

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It is very interesting as well as intriguing that in the pages of *frontier* some professes his opposition to the principle of communism and at the same time tries to argue that doing away with the CPI(M) is necessarily to do away with communism. Of course, there is no dearth of such people who are prone to think in this fashion. Certainly they should get some thanks from Buddha Babu and his fellow colleagues because to consider the rule of the CPI(M) as synonymous with the rule of communism is to give the former a great tribute that they are not possibly worthy of.

Be it as it may, these people may be asked: what are the principles that you wish to uphold against communism? Many will not answer the question, but certainly many will reply: 'I want democracy?' But what kind of democracy? Ostensibly they mean democracy under capitalism, and this is what enlightens them. The world-wide recession, born out of the crisis of speculation in the United States of America, is perhaps what enlightens them. They may also feel enchanted by the massacre of the Iraqi people by the champions of democracy, and the massacre of the Afghans in the name of fighting terrorism. In the so-called democracies of the world those who wield considerable amounts of power, namely the bureaucracy, the police and the judiciary wield immense power, and they are not elected representatives of the people, and hence not accountable to the latter. The champions of the non-communist world are unable to show a single example where all those holding power do not serve the interests of the big corporates, and are not susceptible to the propaganda of the media controlled by them. In the Indian case, the propaganda of the crusade against communism has taken much curious form. This writer since his childhood heard one particular allegation against the Bengal communists repeated ad nauseam; these communists called Tagore a bourgeois poet. If the anti-communists are in favour of Western-style capitalism, and openly profess their loyalty to the world that is dominated by the bourgeoisie, they should be happy that someone, be he/she a communist or a non-communist, calls Tagore a bourgeois poet, if their reverence for Tagore is genuine. Or if they want to contradict the label 'bourgeois', they have the responsibility to demonstrate that Tagore tried to uphold proletarian principles all through his life. If they feel that they have no such responsibility, they should be treated only as objects of derision and scorn. What is that so-called anti-communist world? After the victory of the Russian Bolsheviks, who came with the slogan of 'all power to the Soviets', Western powers sent armies to crush the new Soviet republic. They were ostensibly enraged at the fall of Tsardom, because numerous interests linked them with Tsarist Russia. Do those who profess their faith in anti-communism think that Tsarist Russia represented a more desirable socio-political order for the Soviet peasants and workers? Of course, it is true that in Soviet Russia, there remained many contradictions and distortions even from the point of view of communism, which subsequently grew into enormous proportions. But that does not prove that Tsardom was a better option for the Russian people.

Or take the Chinese example. During the mid-thirties of the last century, the Japanese fascists invaded China and the Communist Party became the main force in the War of Resistance. The Indian National Congress sent a medical team to aid in this resistance, when Subhas Chandra Bose was its president. Bose himself gave an inspiring speech when the team was going to leave for China. It is ironical that after only five years, Bose made an alliance with these fascists in the belief that they were reliable partners in the struggle for India's independence- although it is unjustified to call him a Japanese quisling. After the

victorious conclusion of the War of Resistance, there began the civil war, thanks to the stubborn obstinacy of the Chiang clique. In this war, the Communists defeated the thousand-to-one firepower superiority of Chiang, although the entire anti-communist world rallied behind the latter with a liberal supply of arms and money. The peasantry remained firmly with the communists because they knew that a return of the Kuomintang meant a return of the landlords. The way Chiang and three other families looted national property earned the hatred of all sections of Chinese people including the intelligentsia. The Communist Party was victorious, and the later three decades saw another phase of struggle, this time within China. But there is perhaps nothing that the anti-communist world could offer to the Chinese people. Those who are prone to think that the CPI(M) is the sole representative of communism, nationally and internationally, seemingly do not have any knowledge of these episodes of history. CPI(M) has long abandoned even its formal loyalty to the programme of people's democratic revolution, and in the states where they wielded power, began, following the footsteps of professed anti-communists, to woo corporate capital in the name of development and industrialization. There are many in this country who refer to the CPI(M) as a bourgeois party, and this epithet is used in a derogatory sense. But those who are professed anti-communists and at the same time call the CPI(M) a communist party in the real sense, are by their speeches and writings, only gladdening the hearts of the CPI(M) leaders, because the latter do not want to abdicate the banner of communism, although much of what they have done has only served to move the people away from the ideal of communism. The reason is simple : this banner is often effective in deceiving the masses, while open advocacy of bourgeois (or corporate bourgeois) rule is counter-productive in this regard.

Some professed anti-communists are prone to visualize the USA as their dreamland. They openly declare their admiration for the USA and feel gratified if their sons and daughters can settle there for ever, because the USA can provide them with greater affluence and comfort, which their own country cannot afford. It may not be out of place to refer to the memoirs of Professor Bhabatosh Datta who served as the Chief of the South Asia division of the International Monetary Fund in the 1950s. Professor Datta, after serving there for three years, did not renew his term. One of the reasons he cited in his memoirs was that although the Americans were very polite outwardly, it was not difficult to understand that they (i.e. Americans holding high positions) treated Indians like Professor Datta as second class citizens. If a person of Professor Datta's stature can be treated in this way, it is anybody's guess how lesser mortals are looked upon. The professed anti-communists may undertake an analysis if this is one of the inspiring effects of the non-communist world. Of course, the lure of self is often, although, always, more powerful than the sense of self-respect. Well one may for the time being shelve considering how many millions of people were killed since the 1960s by the US ruling classes, the leader of anti-communism, in Vietnam, Cambodia, Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries. Also for the time being it is better to refrain from discussing the state of the US economy, which maintains its hegemony almost solely by means of its military superiority, and is trapped in colossal debts. An analysis of the basic reasons of the two world wars, which arose out of the competition among capitalist powers for a re-division of the world may also be postponed for the time being.

What is the Indian scenario? It is not clear how open anti-communism has served the people, although all sorts of parties have to face the electorate. One of the major effects of two decades of liberalization is growing inequality as well as poverty, although official statistics, by means of various kinds of jugglery, is trying to suppress it.

Opposition to Marxism is now a fashion, just as one generation ago, parading loyalty was a fashion. The opponents of Marxism have not, however, been able to disprove that *classes are the product of specific stages in the development of human society, and class rule is by no means the terminus of history*. This is where all the anti-Marxists and communists have failed. Marx is still a living debate, while the great stalwarts of English Classical Political

Economy as well as the great figures of German Idealist Philosophy have found their way into academic discourses.

Now a question may be raised: given that anti-communism is harmful to mankind, why has communism failed? This is a pertinent question requiring careful investigation and analysis. One reason is that in Russia as well in China, the representatives of the bourgeoisie have captured power. In the Soviet Union, it was obvious. Those who declared the end of socialism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union were themselves leaders of the Communist Party. That only shows that representatives of the bourgeoisie penetrated the ranks of the party in a significant measure, and accumulated significant amounts of capital, which they were not able to invest profitably within the pale of the earlier system.

In China, on the other hand, the communist party, as the leader of the revolution against the forces of feudalism, imperialism and domestic comprador capitalism was the platform of all forces that were opposed to these three enemies. But the triumphant conclusion of this revolution left the question of socialism and communism largely unsolved, and there was a bitter struggle inside the Chinese Communist Party on what path the country should follow. There should now be no doubt that the party and the army too were captured by ideological representatives of the bourgeoisie, who, whatever their profession, took to a capitalist path. The apparent high growth of China's economy has been achieved at great cost, one manifestation of which is the alarming growth of inequality, high degree of corruption. The recent severe world recession affected the Chinese economy deeply, and the ruling powers still do not seem to know how to tackle the situation. How two post-revolutionary societies were transformed in this way may be a matter of speculation, analysis and debate, but it can be no matter of inspiration to anybody. Nor does it contradict the notion that the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Chinese Revolution of 1949 were advanced and necessary steps of history.

Let us take the example of the Paris Commune, from which Marx himself derived the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This Commune did not last long; it was defeated. It might have been untimely, but only from the standpoint of the possibility of victory against external aggression. But it left certain principles, which any sincere democrat should try to understand. First of all, the Paris Commune, in its bid to introduce fullest democracy, decided that *all the officials of the Commune would be elected and accountable to the people. Secondly, their wages would be the same as workmen's wages. Thirdly, the standing army would be replaced by armed population.* Can anybody drawing inspiration from the non-communist world suggest a better form of democracy? Those who consider the CPI(M) as the symbol of communism should be reminded that this party has never demanded that Indian bureaucracy should be elected and made accountable to the people. Right now, there is growing discussion all over the world about the revival of the principles of the Paris Commune, and the working class of advanced capitalist countries are turning anew to the study of *Communist Manifesto* as well as the writings of those, e.g. Rosa Luxemburg, who raised some basic questions concerning the practical aspects of establishing socialism with democracy. If the party named CPI(M) goes into extinction, this trend will remain and continue to haunt the non-communist world. The main question is: should mankind accept capitalism with its attendant evils: recessions, crises, inequality, wars for divisions and redivisions of the world etc. etc. Or should mankind struggle for a real communist world free from all the evils that accompanied the earlier practices. If the second is the conscious choice, a thoroughgoing analysis of the history of class struggles and post-revolutionary societies must be undertaken, because there is no *unilinear* movement of history. □