

CPM GARBAGE

Contempt for 'Ideology'?

Sankar Ray

THE FEUDAL LORDS OF CPI(M) at their national headquarters, A K Gopalan Bhaban, comprise a mutually-back scratching coterie, posing at times as omniscient about the ideological purity of 'Marxism-Leninism'. A 26000-plus word draft document *Draft Resolution on Some Ideological Issues*, now debated inside the party, was scripted by this coterie that vetted it to the polit bureau for discussion prior for, onward transmission to party's central committee adoption. In all fairness it would be finalised at CPI(M)'s 20th Congress at Kozhikode (4-9 April). But the mandarins of A K Gopalan Bhavan, including the general secretary Prakash Karat and second-in-command in polit bureau, Sitaram Yechury, seem blissfully unaware of Frederick Engles' contempt for the word—ideology. Marx's most-trusted, partner in communist protect wrote to Franz Mehring in the 1840s "Ideology is a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously, indeed, but with a false consciousness. The real motives impelling him remain unknown to him, otherwise it would not be an ideological process at all. Hence he imagines false or apparent motives". In all ideology, "In German Ideology" Marx and Engels stated unequivocally, "The human beings and their relations appear to stand on their head, as in a camera obscura".

Overwhelming majority of CC members have not read a polemical piece by Prof Paresh Chattopadhyay, Montreal-based professor of political economy at the University of Quebec, in a thought-provoking piece in *Frontier* Autumn 2007 issue and arguably, India's most famous Marx scholar in the international arena. There he pointed out the anti-Marxist essence of ideology, aside from locating numerous potholes of Yechury's basic understanding of Marx as well as Lenin. CPI(M)'s self-glorified 'ideologues' may note that in recognition of Chattopadhyay's scholarship, Stephen Anthony Smith, Professor of History, European University Institute, Florence, and Sir Bernard Pares, Chair of Russian History, University College, London, commissioned him for writing the chapter, 'Communism of Marx and Engels', for the forthcoming OUP publication Oxford Handbook of Communism, scheduled to be published this year.

An ideologue is like a honcho whose main task is to defend the existing hierarchical order of a political party with suitable political terminology to keep the party functionaries intact. But the import—rather pollutant—of 'ideology' was done by Lenin. He wrote an article captioned "The Ideological Struggle in the Working-Class Movement" in 1914, ignoring contempt of Marx and Engels towards 'ideology' and 'ideological' against 'ideology.'

In the article (2007), Chattopadhyay did not spare Lenin and argued with formidable and authentic reference to original texts of Marx that far from enriching the ideas of Marx, Lenin impoverished Marxism in applications. The architect of Bolshevik Revolution distorted socialism

as a lower form of communism. For Marx and Engels, socialism is synonymous with communism, "Republic of Labour, society of free and associated producers or simply Association, Cooperative Society, (re)union of free individuals", he emphasized repeatedly in several papers, he argued.

Chattopadhyay and other Marx-scholars, associated with the Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe (MEGA) Project, a venture for publication of complete works of Marx and Engels in 114 volumes, do not consider Lenin as a great scholar on Marx and Engels. "There are clear counter-examples which show that Lenin read his own ideas into Marx's texts which he cites", Chattopadhyay wrote in a rejoinder to Murzban Jal (author of a paper, *In Defence of Lenin*) in EPW last year.

In a personal communication with this scribe, Chattopadhyay stated, " Lenin's materialism was pre-Marxian, that together with Plekhanov, could not go beyond Feuerbach's. This was convincingly argued by the astronomer- mathematician-council communist Pannekoek, and it was endorsed by Karl Korsch. Pannekoek showed that Lenin was ill-equipped to attack empirio-criticism. The two theoreticians formulated *Council Communism*—a militant workers' movement that first emerged in Germany and the Netherlands during the 1920s. They took up libertarian aspect of communism in contrast to Bolshevik's *bureaucratic state socialism*. Society and the economy under socialism or communism, they asserted, should be managed by federations of workers' councils, made up of delegates elected at workplaces and can be recalled at any moment by those who elected them. " Communist Manifesto states exactly this position", Chattopadhyay too told at a seminar on unexplored Marx during his stay in Kolkata.

Incredible as it may seem to one who became acquainted with this outstanding scholar that even in the early 1970s Chatopadhyay was a devout follower of Lenin, Stalin and Mao. He underwent a deep scholastic and self-rectificatory process which began conscientiously in him after reading the great work of Charles Bethelheim on the class struggle in the USSR from the early years of Bolshevik era.

AKG Bhavan honchos apart, leaders of CPI, CPI(ML) Liberation and other variants of CPI(ML), try their best to keep their rank and file- fellow travelers too -within the party hold. They see to it that the party members evince no interest on MEGA, although out of proposed 114 volumes have been published to date. And Chattopadhyay is associated with MEGA. Small wonder, none from the official communist parties—no 'ideologue'—showed interest in even an informal chat with Chattopadhyay during his seven-week stay in Kolkata until early February. The establishmentarian CPs and their mentors are too afraid to confront the revelations in the MEGA. □□□

[written before the CPM's 20th Congress at Kozhikode during April 4-9]