

# Long Live 'Revisionism'

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In 1977, CPI(M) came to power in West Bengal riding the anti-Congress wave, immediately on ascending to power the party declared that it would try to implement the socialist model despite the odds it faces in bourgeois democratic set up. It loudly had then proclaimed that its government would implement alternative path of economic development based on Marxist ideology. Bengal model was to be the show-piece that CPI-M wanted to replicate nationwide. But these three decades of 'communist' rule excepting some limited land reforms that it achieved during the initial days of its power the next two decades has been a lost era for Bengal that has led to the cul-de-sac of economic stagnation.

The land reform also is also not without its own problems. The reform has resulted in fragmented land holding that today has become largely uneconomical. Then here is the problem of agrarian landless workers and the share croppers or the Bhagidars.

*In West Bengal, the landless exceed the landowners by about one and half times in numbers [for every ten landowners there are fifteen landless]. For the rest of the country, the average distribution is roughly ten (landowner) to eight (landless). In states like Punjab, Haryana, Tamilnadu, Gujarat etc., where rapid industrialisation is taking place on agricultural land, the ratios are ten (landowners) to six, four or three (landless). Therefore, there is less hassle in acquiring agricultural land.*

CPI (M) all these years has colligated the struggle of landless agrarian labourer under the larger peasant struggle. In Bengal there is still no organisation on agrarian labourer associated with CPI (M), but they are part of the Kisan Sabha (Farmers' Union). As a result today there is no voice of the landless when it comes to land acquisition. These rural have-nots have no say in any compensation that is disbursed when land is acquired for industrial use. It was these landless workers and Bagidars whose economic interests were hurt most when land was acquired in Nandigram and Singur and they overwhelmingly this time opposed the CPIM's brand of 'socialism' for Mamata's brand of 'democracy'

CPI(M)'s obsession with the Land reforms and Panchayat has led to complete neglect of other vital social sectors like education, health, public transport and even minority welfare.

A distinctive characteristic of every government professing the principle of socialism has been eradication of illiteracy and promoting health care programme. Even in a backward country like Albania under the rule of Enver Hoxha, the state had initiated several measures to alleviate literacy level and enhance health care. Illiteracy from 90-95% in rural areas in 1939 went down to 30% by 1950 and by 1985 it was equal to that of the United States of America. In health care Malaria was completely eradicated.

To promote literacy and health care the state government does not have to be dependent on the Central government, hence the favourite nag line of the 'communist' government of step-motherly treatment from the Central government doesn't wash.

According to West Bengal government's own Human Development Report, married women in West Bengal, on average, *have a lower body-mass index than the average Indian woman*, suggesting greater undernourishment. Married women in West Bengal also have a greater likelihood of suffering from anemia than the average Indian woman. The Government has failed to utilise funds earmarked for health sector, the Comptroller & Auditor General of India, Audit Report (Civil), West Bengal for the Year 2006-2007 stated that "During 2002-2007, the (West Bengal government's) department could not spend the budgeted funds of Rs 357.13 crore for urban health services. Further, unutilised funds of Rs 1.50 crore remained parked in the personal ledger accounts of the Superintendents of two hospitals for over seven years."

Similar is the case with Education sector, West Bengal has the second highest school dropout rate among major states of India.

In a recent report prepared by the *Pratichi Trust* founded by Amartya Sen brings out the sad but trustworthy picture of this apathy. In the census of 1991, West Bengal occupied the 19th position in the order of literacy; at snails' pace, the position improved to 18th in 2001. According to the census of 2001, three-fourths of the 31.5% of illiterates of the state resided in the villages. It is difficult to comprehend that, in the 21st century; over two and a half crore illiterates reside in a state under continuous 'communist' rule for over three decades. It is important to note that literacy is not the only criterion for industrial employment; some language and arithmetic skills are also needed. The record of West Bengal on this score is pathetic. With respect to at least nine years of school-education for young people in the state lags behind the national average. Out of 40,782 villages in the state, there is a middle school only in 5541 villages. There are 18,624 middle schools within a radius of 5 kilometres of a village. As a result, over 40% of the villages do not have a middle school within a radius of 5 kilometres. Yet, the rulers of this state frequently boast of 'excellence'.

When it came to implementing schemes that the party laid claims for getting them passed in Parliament its result in its own ruled state shows an abject failure.

In 2006-07, the person-days of NREGA (National Rural Employment Guarantee Act: *The NREGA provides a legal guarantee for one hundred days of employment in every financial year to adult members of any rural household willing to do public work-related unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage*, the Left parties along with many NGOs were in forefront to get the act passed) employment generated per rural household was 6 in West Bengal and 3 in Kerala, with both states figuring in the list of the 3 worst performers. Compared to this, the all-India average was 17 person-days, and Chhattisgarh generated 34, Madhya Pradesh 56, Assam 70 and Rajasthan 77 person-days. A similar picture emerges for the next year too: in 2007-08, West Bengal generated 8 person-days and Kerala 6 person-days, much below the all-India average of 16 person-days.

The coming days may witness a sharp contradiction arising in the party between the neo liberal group and the 'hardliner' group. They seem still to have turned Nelson's eye to the real cause of party's mauling and have been blaming the stance of central leadership regarding withdrawal of support to the Congress government and opposing of reforms. They seem to be endorsing the

view that the results have been a victory for the forces of neo-liberalism and stable government.

The revisionists have a history of liquidation and decimation of communist parties from giants like the CPSU to the smaller yet powerful entities like CPGB. So if one sees voices clamouring for complete change of the leftist outfits then it should not come as a big surprise.

It is certain that as and when the new government unleashes the next round of neo liberal economic agenda and draconian laws, the lives of large sections of the Indian population will be tremendously affected.

The Left deserves an applause that because of their persistent opposition to reforms in core financial sectors like Banking, Finance and Pension that Indian economy remained insulated from the recession sweeping the entire capitalist world. Even after the global financial meltdown and crumpling of the financial giants like AIG and Lehman Brothers, Indian banks and financial market were able to withstand the shock.

Now the new government has made its stand amply clear that it would speed up the process of neo-liberal reforms which it could not achieve due to Left's reluctance. This means submitting the large amount of fund in Pension deposit to the whimsical nature of stock and capital market, privatising the profit making Public sector industries, giving virtual infinite power to the international finance capital in exploiting working class. The capitalists and their lackeys in media are all in a joyous mood about the impending capitalism that is coming to Indian shore, largely oblivious to the current state of capitalism worldwide. The working class is in for severe repression and exploitation.

Today those at the helm of CPI (M) both at the central and state level have jettisoned the idea of socialism accepting capitalist path as the ultimate truth. Communism for CPI (M) has become just a word in its nomenclature and revolution has been limited to the slogan of *inqilab jindabad* (Long Live Revolution) that is to be just parroted in rallies and strikes. It has the same significance in CPI (M) today as the poem/anthem Red Flag had in the British Labour Party before being finally discarded by the openly pro-capitalist Blair and company.

The severe mauling of CPI (M) has also given the revolutionary left a chance to consolidate itself to fill the space created by the degeneration of CPM into an open mouthpiece of capitalist class. If the revolutionary communist groups adapt correct tactics then there is a major scope of reinvigorating the revolutionary left movement in India once again. □□□