

# frontier

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## BEFORE THE POLLS

THIS time it was not a midnight decision. The President signed the proclamation dissolving the fourth Lok Sabha at the auspicious hour of 9 p.m. on Sunday, December 27, and ordering fresh elections. The polling date or dates, it is presumed, will be fixed in consultation with the Election Commissioner and the royal astrologer.

Mrs Gandhi had been accused of trying to stall the West Bengal elections on the plea of law and order and of entering into a conspiracy with dark, anti-social forces for the purpose. But those who have known her or, for that matter, any ruling politician, should have known that she would choose her time, order or no order. It is her power and the power of the party she rules that matters in such decisions. When the first UF Ministry was kicked out in November 1967, Dr P. C. Ghosh ruled for about three months, with a rag-tag combination. After he left, the State had to wait for about a year for the election manna before Mrs Gandhi could get ready though the position was much calmer. This time also, a year will have elapsed before the heaven-born again seek the verdict of the people.

It is not that the so-called law and order situation has changed and we are at the end of the tunnel. But something has changed: some political parties have proved to the satisfaction of Mrs Gandhi that they are willing to gang up behind the forces of law and order in West Bengal. There were straws in the wind, as far as this State is concerned, and some straws were very private: a high police official made a tight-lipped declaration at a private party at the end of October that he would make rivers of blood flow and get the Naxalite situation under control by November. There was the decision not to hold any worthwhile enquiry into police firings for three months. Why this time-limit, we wondered. Perhaps Mrs Gandhi was getting ready for the election eventuality? Then came the competitive campaign by certain political parties to mobilise the 'people' against 'anti-social elements'. Was it to prove their bona fides? The two black Acts, too, can now be seen as preparing the ground for elections. The legal parties will not be affected by them.

It is now evident that in West Bengal Mrs Gandhi can rely, not on the police alone, but also on other forces of law and order. At the moment collaboration with the police at the information and other levels cannot

be direct. It is clandestine, bashful. But if a Government of leftist hues is installed, the lawless elements can be dubbed agents of another conspiracy and the rank and file of the ruling leftist parties will be manhunting in wholehearted co-operation with the police. The police then will be protectors of the people. The situation is such and will be such that the task of keeping law and order will be deemed too important to be left to policemen. Of course, in the mean time, the police will continue to mint money: as soon as scores of young men are taken to a police station from any locality, their anxious relatives, it is being reported, go to the thana, pay out large sums and get their sons or brothers released at the end of the day. They do not talk about it loud and clear, lest there is another raid. There is nothing like arms and money to boost police morale.

Being in West Bengal, we have approached the presidential announcement from the law and order angle. There are people who think that elections will be a farce. Mr Atulya Ghosh, for instance, said they would be so, because "even a traffic constable in Calcutta needs four others to protect him." He wondered how many police constables would be necessary to protect the polling booths and then how many more to protect these constables. But doesn't Mr Ghosh, once a big organiser, know that his counterparts in other parties organised volunteer forces during the second UF regime and that these could now be mobilised to help the police in the battle for Indian democracy? If the volunteers of some diffident parties, including his own, turn violent, that is another matter.

The Naxalites have had a terrible time already and are divided over tactical and strategic questions. The campaign against educational institutions and statues has helped the CPM to mobilise quite a large number of people, including some of their own once wavering ranks. The

CP(ML) forgot that raids and attacks on these institutions before and during the half-yearly examinations were different in their effect from those conducted towards the end of the year when the financial interests of parents, teachers and the taught are involved. The intense inter-party knifing has muddled the issues involved and deflected attention from whatever the CP(ML) cadres are doing in the countryside. In their present state, the CP(ML) would have to devote all its energies to warding off the intensified offensive of the police and the politicians and sorting out the inner-party differences with sec-

tions of the party men here as well as with the Bihar, UP, Andhra Pradesh and Kashmir committees.

As for large parts of the country, it is a sure bet that many people will vote for Mrs Indira Gandhi and her party. People want change, and in the absence of an alternative front or party, she can still delude the masses with her gestures of throwing a few radical crumbs from her conservative table. We are so poor and so little politicised that we still try to seize even these illusive crumbs. And in the game of deception Mrs Gandhi this time will have the backing of some left parties.

## In The Villages

Exuding optimism on the country's food situation by Krishi Bhavan officials has become annual, thanks to Nature which has been obliging them for some consecutive years. But they should know that once there is widespread drought—if one goes by seasonal cycles—foodgrains production in 1971 will be considerably lower than in the preceding year and the whole distributive machinery would creak. But the Government draws comfort from the fact that aid would flow from some foreign source in such an exigency, no matter what price has to be paid for the shoring up. This is why even after four successive good harvests, the buffer-stock position is not such as can provide the cushion. The unimaginative price fixation as also the indifference with which procurement has been pursued cannot contribute much to the buffer stock operation. Some economists have said that the debacle of a possible disaster has been overcome and the years hence will witness a continuous increase in food production, with the eighties becoming a decade of plenty. The problem then, it is said, will not be one of quantity but of insufficient purchasing power to consume enough food. But the basis of this projection—the New Agricultural Strategy

—is so tenuous that it fails to convince, though the so-called green revolution will create a few pockets of prosperity surrounded by undeveloped tracts of land. The extent of income disparities and their consequences are not unpredictable. All agrarian reform measures in the post-independence period have actually benefited middle and big holders, with a large-scale eviction of small farmers. There are innumerable instances of big landlords having significantly increased their holdings by either taking advantage of the loopholes in the law or through malafide transfers. Many small farmers have become tenants-at-will. If the eviction of small farmers and sharecroppers has not swelled the ranks of landless agricultural labour to the expected extent, it is due to the prevalence of the antiquated system of cultivation and migration to the urban centres. While the big holders with requisite capital resources and capacity to manipulate the crop pattern have more than doubled their income in the past two or three years, the small landowners who could not finance the improved agricultural inputs have suffered a relative decline in their economic standing. Though the professed policy of nationalised banks and other financing agencies operat-

ing in the rural areas is to help the small farmers, they have to lean on usurious moneylenders for satisfying their needs. Institutional support has remained a privilege of the big holders. All this has helped the process of economic polarisation in village India and only a social revolution can alter the situation.

## The Jobless

When about two decades ago, the Indian bourgeoisie began their tryst with destiny, Mr Nehru, their leader, said that lack of jobs and wealth disparities were the main afflictions of this country. Even after an interval of twenty years or more his daughter was echoing him almost word by word in a seminar in New Delhi last month. But hers was not the lone voice. A motley crowd of politicians, social scientists and crypto-socialists have joined in the choral symphony. Their argument is that jobs have become rare and the jobless young folks are haunting this land of non-violence.

What, however, is ignored in this over-excretion of bile against unemployment and the unemployed is a proper assessment of how the chorus leaders have worked in the past years. Despite planning and all that it entails, jobs have continued to become rarer and rarer and in the Fourth Plan the number of jobless stood at more than 21 million. The intensity of the situation is most felt in Kerala and West B ngal though other states too have their pinch. In West Bengal the number of unemployed has gone up to two million or more this year and about 40 per cent of these jobless have adequate education. Businessmen are closing down their shops leaving the men high and dry. About 90 existing units have reportedly been folded up since the UF assumed power in the state, throwing about 50,000 hands out of jobs. Statistics however are statistics: they give out something but hide much more. For one thing, they do not indicate the

under-employment. In rural India about 30 per cent of the workers cannot work full time. The real number could be more than that. For another thing, the figures do not say a word about the hyper-inflation that is continually eating up the income of the poor man.

The official view is that inadequacy of placements is to blame. But this is casuistry. The real cause lies elsewhere. A strange contradiction seems to exist in India: a rich endowment and a huge labour force on the one hand and criminal abuse of these on the other. Another country, equally placed materially at the time of its freedom and equally populous, presents a totally different picture. To

its leader, population is a relative, not an absolute, category: men represent not only consumption but also production. They worked out a policy of walking on two legs and went for labour-intensive industries and wholesale communisation of agriculture. The policy paid and China broke through the vicious circle of poverty quickly. But then China's way cannot be India's way. China called for self-reliance and depended on internal resources. India's value judgement was different. She took to foreign 'aid' and chose slavery. Not unnaturally, therefore the hapless multitudes, are going on to the barricades to smash this rotten system.

## The Hawkish President

*A correspondent writes:*

After the howl that went up following the November raids over North Vietnam, Nixon was badly in need of an excuse less flimsy than that of "protective reaction". And the Pentagon computers obligingly supplied one early this week. The traffic on the "Ho Chi Minh trail" is reported to have registered a 30 per cent increase in recent months. If a similar bit of information could justify Johnson in bombing North Vietnam for three years Nixon has no reason to shy away from the same course just because he has pledged to bring the boys home. In the case of Johnson it was an act of war—a move to hasten victory. But with Nixon it is, after all, an act designed to hasten peace—an 'honourable peace' presided over by Thieu, Ky and Co. after the NLF has faded away. He made no bones about his bloody intentions. "Now," he said a few days ago, "if as a result of my conclusion that the North Vietnamese, by their infiltrations, threaten our remaining forces, if they thereby develop a capacity, and they proceed possibly to use that capacity to increase the level of fighting in South Vietnam, then I

will order the bombing of military sites in North Vietnam".

That the liberation fighters of South Vietnam were not impressed by the big bully in Washington was obvious in the waves of attack they unleashed last week on American and puppet forces in the Central Highlands and the Mekong Delta. Hanoi too has seen too much of American barbarities to be afraid any more of resumed bombing. Notwithstanding his electronic gadgets the American President seems to have a pretty short memory. Barely two years ago Washington decided on a bombing halt, for contrary to their wishes the genocidal bombing only steeled Hanoi's morale and the effort to plug the so-called Ho Chi Minh trail only exposed American forces in the south to fiercer attacks. Johnson learnt to his cost that the death-defying courage of the Vietcong is homegrown and its major source of weapons is his own war-machine—the LBJ trail from the Pentagon to Saigon. But with all those costly lessons before him it is still difficult for an American President to swallow the fact that before a determined people the U.S. is a "helpless pitiful giant". He therefore continues to

believe that victory lies a few thousand tons of bombs and a couple of miles of Cambodian jungle trails away.

History, however, is taking its inexorable course. Nixon's plan to defeat the liberation struggle by Americanising the air-war and Vietnamising the ground operations has met no better fate than what the Taylor plan achieved before the war became an all-American affair. The much-vaunted Phoenix Programme to destroy the Vietcong administrative infrastructure in the countryside has gone the way all 'special war' plans have. Rather according to a CIA report, 30,000 Vietcong agents have "infiltrated" the South Vietnamese Government. With chronic food shortage, sky-

rocketing prices, and trigger-happy GIs shooting around in towns, as witnessed last month in Qui Nhon, it may not be very long when everybody except the Americans and their puppets would be considered Vietcong agents. While the pot-smoking, demoralised GIs huddled in camps continue to be shelled by the Liberation forces, last month witnessed an intensification of urban guerilla action all over South Vietnam. A year ago in South Vietnam one would have required a lot of guts to talk about peace, not to speak of protesting or retaliating against American atrocities. But the shooting of a Vietnamese boy in Qui Nhon last month sparked off widespread violence and a banner carried by the students, many of them non-communists, said 'Kill All the Americans'. Is Nixon listening?

Of course not all in the Establishment have fallen in line. A novelist in West Bengal has got himself rapped by a moralist judge for allegedly writing pornography albeit insipid. Cabaret artistes have been advised in Delhi, Madras and Bombay to cover objectionable parts of their body during dances. Regional film censors are directed not to be misguided by the outraged cry at double standards of censorship and to continue clipping off bare flesh in celluloid.

What to make of these contradictions? Another case of unity amidst diversity? Or a case where the semi-feudal and semi-bourgeois base reflects itself on a semi-feudal and semi-bourgeois superstructure? Sex in modern India, unlike in feudal societies, is not suppressed altogether; unlike in bourgeois societies, it is not freely marketed either.

The developed bourgeois societies, we are told, are fast liberating themselves from all sexual hangups. But surprisingly sex has not ceased there to be a market commodity in spite of the sex revolution. Neither has there occurred the withering of the system of prostitution. The headshrinkers, we are yet to hear, have lost business because of the sex liberation. Nudity in films is, according to their own critics, more for the box office than for depiction of reality. The same applies to theatre; and to literature and to commercial ads. That is as it should be. Sex, in bourgeois society, is exploitation.

Living as we do now in an exploitative society and unable to see beyond our petty-bourgeois bias, we cannot of course judge what should be our attitude to sex in a classless society. But that should not be a barrier to forming a firm attitude for the transition period. Sex in private life can be accepted any way an individual prefers. But when sex is purveyed by an organised body, under the guise of freedom of sex, to make profit out of it, it has to be resisted. Sex-ploitation is not sex freedom.

## A Little Sex Talk

*A correspondent writes :*

What is the Establishment view of sex in India today? This surely is a hell of a question to ask at a time when police barbarities have reached the peak in living memory in West Bengal, the military arrogance has let itself brazenly felt in Mysore and in between the bureaucratic juggernaut grinds the whole country. Nevertheless it would be deceiving ourselves if we believe that, but for a small section of peasants, workers and dedicated youth who are waging a mortal battle against the repressive State machinery, people at large are that high-strung. It may be therefore not sheer new year eve frolic to indulge

in a little sex talk, the more so when sex can be an instrument in converting people into an amoral and apolitical mass.

Has a mini-sex revolution already occurred in our cities and towns? Look at the staid pictorial journals, accepted without qualms in any middle-class home. The *Eve's Weekly* has recently published a sex issue with pictures for which prurient fellows used to hunt in dark alleys only a few months ago. *The Illustrated Weekly*, under the editorship of Mr Khuswant Singh, has become the hottest weekly in the country with salacious pictures published under the guise of sociological study. Fashion magazines and film journals have long ago turned to spicy flicks. The fantastic popularity of the film *Blow Hot Blow Cold*, which was of course diligently pruned by the censors, shows that the urban middle class has shed much of its prudery. Commercial ads and films are now pronouncedly tinted with sex. Mr G. Khosla, representative of the middle class intelligentsia, has advocated nudity in films for art's sake.

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## Vaulting The Poll

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

THE weeks of nerves and tranquillisers are over and the mid-term Lok Sabha elections are coming after all, unless Mrs Indira Gandhi switches her strategy to fool her detractors once again. A decision had been taken by her long before the Supreme Court struck down the order on princes but an arbitrary decision was sought to be made a democratic act in appearance by getting the Working Committee first and the Cabinet later to rubberstamp her decision. The dissolution was scheduled for December 22 and Mr V. V. Giri, who must have been practising his signature in Kottakkal, rushed to New Delhi in time but only to find that Mrs Gandhi had gone to Jammu and Kashmir. Mr Jagjivan Ram was the lone opponent of a mid-term poll but he was neutralised with a bait—another year as Congress President without having to seek re-election provided he agreed to a mid-term poll. Mr Inder Gujral openly proclaimed the imminence of a poll at a press conference in Jullundhur. Mrs Nandini Satpathy, the Prime Minister's latest protegee, has been saying it to her cronies. In Calcutta, Mr Bijoy Singh Nahar has been saying it. Every party took a mid-term poll for granted and went about preparing for it. But in New Delhi, MPs of Mrs Gandhi's party thought that the news was too bad to be true and a rush for tranquillisers at the Parliament House dispensary followed lobby reports that Mrs Gandhi was out to drop 102 of the present 220 MPs of her party.

The main question now is whether Mrs Gandhi would succeed in her plan to de-link the Lok Sabha elections from the Assembly elections wherever they are due immediately or in 1972. The pradesh bosses have realised the implications of her game. If she has her way, she would not care to salvage the party at the 1972 Assembly elections which will be held

in over half the country. The Assembly candidates usually get the funds from the Lok Sabha candidate, at least in part. This would be lost if the elections are de-linked.

If de-linking is to Mrs Gandhi's advantage, it is not only to the disadvantage of her own pradesh satraps but to the Congress-O alliance. So Orissa and Gujarat are planning dissolution of the Assembly to force a snap poll and Mysore might follow suit. In Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the Congress-O and its allies are not so sure that they could advise dissolution and force a poll because the ministers are perched rather precariously and a whimsical Governor, by rejecting any advice for dissolution, might succeed in manipulating a majority for the Congress-R and its allies in these States. There is no such danger in Orissa, Gujarat and Mysore where no party is in a position to replace the present ruling party or alliances. Rajasthan and Maharashtra are among the Congress-R States which see the advantages of a linking up and might insist on Assembly polls simultaneously. The precedent of Mr C. Achutha Menon is here—he advised the dissolution, without so much as a consultation with the Cabinet or the parties of the ruling alliance and the Governor obligingly accepted it.

A mid-term poll for the Lok Sabha is a gamble for Mrs Gandhi. The outcome is very uncertain. She might win only 200 to 220 seats now. But then, next year, if it is a bad monsoon and the expected economic crisis materialises, it would be in the order of 150 seats. Neither Mrs Gandhi nor her opponents are sure of the outcome of the next Lok Sabha elections, whenever they are held. The Congress-R has written off Tamil Nadu, Mysore, Gujarat, Orissa and West Bengal. The Congress-O and its allies have written off

Maharashtra, Punjab, Assam and Jammu and Kashmir. The fight is for the other States. In Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, the Congress-R cannot underestimate the influence and role of the princes who would naturally help the rival Congress and its allies. In Haryana, it is conceded by Mrs Gandhi's supporters that the Congress-O would have an edge over the Congress-R. In Andhra Pradesh, Mr Sanjiva Reddy, in alliance with the Telengana section, has made a dent in the Congress-R and there are reports that Mr Brahmananda Reddy might defect to the Syndicate if assured of his Chief Ministership. The fight then narrows down to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh which account for 140 of the 523-elective seats in the Lok Sabha. The claims about Uttar Pradesh are conflicting. Mrs Gandhi's supporters claim they can win up to 65 of the 85 seats while the Congress-O is prepared to concede 30. In Bihar, it would be 50-50 between the two alliances.

Mrs Gandhi has to win the Hindi belt to return as Prime Minister, either with an absolute majority or as the head of an open or secret coalition. The Congress-R has to take a crucial decision: whether it is making a bid for independent majority or a majority for a constellation of like-minded parties and potential and actual allies. If the Congress-R does not contest all the 523 elective seats, its credibility as the party of the country will suffer. It will be just another party. An idea being canvassed in the Congress-R High Command is that they should narrow down their front to some 420 seats, leaving about 100 out for the CPI, PSP, Bangla Congress, DMK, Muslim League and the Akalis. Under this plan, there is every chance of Mrs Gandhi even getting a bare majority for her party with the atten-

dant advantage of not having to fight all the seats.

### Muslim Convention

The All-India Muslim Political Convention here should have restored sunshine to the hearts of the Hindu communalists who traffick in public credulity. For the demand for proportional representation has only one parallel in history—the now forgotten Muslim demand for separate electorates which culminated in the Pakistan demand.

It is even alleged here that the CPI was behind the convention and funds from a certain socialist country underwrote the lavish show of Muslim communalism. The motive behind the exercise: to prevent the Muslims of the north from going under the influence of the Muslim League which is a party from the South directing its appeal northwards. The Majlis-e-Mushawarat of late had become a front organisation of the Congress-R. This again is a de-linking game Mrs Gandhi tried to play. She tried to de-link her alliance with the Muslim League from her position vis-a-vis the Mushawarat which has been claiming to be a non-political socio-economic body. With the Mushawarat abdicating politics, the Muslim League thought it could provide the platform for Muslims in the north as well. But the emergence of the Muslim League in some strength in the North would have compelled her to come to terms with the party as she had to in Kerala. Mrs Gandhi's solicitude for the Kerala Muslim League is over a decade old. For Mr Morarji Desai disclosed at the Lucknow AICC session that in 1960, when he opposed any Congress-Muslim League alliance in Kerala against the CPI, the party president, Mrs Gandhi, overruled him in the Working Committee. No wonder the Muslim League is less communal in Kerala than in Uttar Pradesh. An open alliance with the Muslim League would have given the Jana Sangh the credibility it has been needing. So the League had to be kept out of North India

and the Mushawarat used as the front organisation of the Congress-R. But the Muslim leadership that dominated the convention in New Delhi seemed to have gone a little too far. Or was it part of a deliberate plan, to match the Muslim League's communalism? There was no difference bet-

ween what the Muslim League had to say and what the convention had to say but spokesmen at the convention were aiming at one objective—preventing the faithfuls from joining the League.

December 25, 1970

## Rajasthan

# India's Ignored Frontier

R. P. MULLICK

**T**HE westernmost border of India, Rajasthan is neglected and obscure. Jaisalmeer, the largest district not only of the State but in the entire country as well, has seldom been given its due. Perpetually haunted by famine, the people of this district (1,40,338, according to the 1961 census) has remained in unenviable obscurity, thanks to the high and dry attitude of the State's rulers despite its inheritance of the classic traditions of Harappan and post-Harappan civilisation that had once swept a 1500 square mile area of desert between the Saraswati and the Indus, right up to Rangpur in Saurashtra.

Tradition dies hard. Yet, the famine-stricken who die, unreported, leave no undying impression on politicians in positions of power. For eight years in succession there was acute drought in western Rajasthan. People here say that little children in the districts of Barmer or Jaisalmeer do not know what a cloud is. They might have remained in their blissful ignorance but for last year's rain. But the "green revolution" is a mirage still: at least it is so in the districts of Bikaner, Pali and Jodhpur. For irrigation is a crying need, without which traditional methods of cultivation have no likelihood of furthering production of bajra or maize, the two main staple crops. Canals are a far cry; from the Ganganagar irriga-

tion complex, the nearest one has reached up to Chhattorgarh (in Bikaner), more than 300 miles away. Deep-bore tube wells of which much was made in the government-inspired press, have not made any impact, since establishment costs are high, and since loans from banks or cooperatives are hedged in with conditions regarding security.

There is, further, the stark reality that animal husbandry, and not agriculture, is the real resource of the people in the frontier areas of Rajasthan. Ancillary industries like dairy-farming and tanning offer potential prospect; but leaders who wield control over the administration do not appear inclined to break tradition. Only a short while ago, Shri Amrit Lal Nahata, the "Young Turk" leader and Member of Parliament from Jaisalmeer, undertook a fast to focus attention on the sufferers from famine in the region. The Prime Minister was impelled to come, for reasons connected more with considerations of party interest than as a response to the cry of the anguished; speeches were made, promises were bandied; but that was all. No first-rate dairy-farm is yet in sight; nor has any move been made towards planned projects for increasing the animal-wealth of these border districts of Rajasthan. It has been claimed by the Information Department of the Rajasthan Government that animals increased in number from

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12,30,000, over the three Plan periods, to 19,17,000. But it has not been given out that depletion of animal-wealth has proceeded faster than the number of famine-deaths, which is reported to have reached very nearly the 25000-mark in the two districts of Jaisalmeer and Barmer alone. Of course, these unfortunate dead met their end not directly as a result of famine but due to diseases from malnutrition. But it has been admitted in the State Government's hand-out, that an area varying from 1/3rd to 1/2 of the total area of Jodhpur district was affected during the intermittent famine-spells starting from 1963-64. Yet the district authorities, who thought it fit to spend Rs 41 lakhs over the construction of 40 roads (by way of test-relief) and Rs 21 lakhs on light irrigation works plus soil-conservation, did not go beyond the mere pittance of Rs 1 1/2 lakhs in the project meant for preserving good breeds of animals. And this imbalance in planning of allotments is inherent in the outlook of the State's administrators notwithstanding the fact that there is little potentiality for agriculture in the desert-fringed districts of Jodhpur, Bikaner, Jaisalmeer and Barmer, unless and until a revolution in irrigation is effected through widespread application of electricity to deep-bore (300' to 500' feet) tube-wells. In Jaisalmeer, for example, out of the acreage of land available (38,83,00), the proportion of the arable is only 3.9% (1,53,000).

#### Smuggling

The general impression that Rajasthan's natural resources are limited and that it needs investment of a very high order to exploit the mineral wealth of the State, has led a section

of the wealthy to turn to smuggling as a lucrative though underhand commercial intercourse. Its illicit nature offers no deterrent to the moneyed (with no scruples). For the underworld of big business, it offers a ready-made procedure for converting black money into white. Gold is the medium. Starting its journey from the Middle East, centres of which are the West-patronised Arab States, this contraband trade-item reaches India's frontier via Pakistan. Buying at the rate of Rs 140 per grms., the Indian tycoons of the smugglers' world easily get purchasers on this side of the border who pay Rs 230 per 10 grms. (the official rate varying between Rs 179 and Rs 183 for equivalent amount). The other item of roaring trade is opium. Its purchase is effected from as disparate areas as Madhya Pradesh and Nepal. The Rajasthani variety, which is dearer (the price ranging between Rs 200 and Rs 250 per kilogram), comes from production centres like Kotah, Jhalawar, Chitore and Neemuch and fetches a sales price as high as Rs 450 to Rs 500 per kg. Bidis with hashish, stuffed almonds, some rare items of spices and luxury articles follow in the list. This invisible trade was more or less an open secret with the participation of the bigwigs among police and Border Security Force, up to the time of the Indo-Pakistani confrontation in 1965. The short-lived conflict appears to have been a shake-up; and, it is said, the extent of smuggling has dropped down to nearly half of what it had been. Even so, it is still the most tantalising "profession" for those with easy money and easier conscience, especially when the top-notch financier elite and politicians from the ruling class are behind the game.

This brings one to the question of "free enterprise". Why, one feels tempted to ask, do not the ex-feudals or the big bureaucrats tread the road to capitalist enterprise, especially when Rajasthan offers scope for exploiting its mineral wealth? The reason inheres in the restrictions inevitable in industrial ventures, the ini-

tial delays in getting profit-return, and the comparative limitedness of its margin. Smuggling, relatively, offers a sky-high prospect; and a private type of insurance-scheme provides some sort of guarantee to traders/consumers who are participants in its rather widespread circle. Smuggling in of foreign exchange, especially of hard currency areas, affords a sluice-gate for the outflow of black money although at the cost of the country's credit resources. No wonder, foreign aid has very nearly turned into an illusory nectar in the sieve.

There is another aspect to this question of "who's who behind smuggling". It is the developing confrontation between two sections of India's upper bourgeoisie. The scions of princely dynasties have grouped themselves into a powerful political lobby in league with the landowning upper stratum of ex-feudals, who have apparently lost everything but their financial teeth.

Today's Rajasthan presents a graphic scene of how the feudal class of yesterday is adjusting itself to new situations and transforming itself as an adjunct of the rising oligopoly of India's financial cum industrial interests. The new-rich strata of corrupt officials and managerial establishments of big business, as well as middlemen of wholesale trade, have found their latest ally in the ruling party. The latter, further, has the good looks of an anti-feudal; in Rajasthan the anti-rajah pose of the new Congress has paid political dividends and is paying still. Out of seven Assembly seats from Jodhpur district, all have been bagged by the

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new Congress. But this does not mean that the party in power is chary of allowing its representatives to rub shoulders with those from the princely class. They do. If any evidence was needed indeed, the recent example of private collaboration between the middle class representatives of all right-wing political parties, the Swatantra, the Jana Sangh, the Congress(O) and the Congress(R), in arranging for and according a right-royal reception to the present Maharajah of Jodhpur on his return from Oxford after completion of his education, is ample enough. The entire city was made to look gay, with colourful arches, and another Deepavali blazing a welcome of high finance on the top of cinemas, commercial establishments and the Fort, the day the young Maharajah appeared.

The recent municipal elections have given another proof of the apparent popularity that the ruling Congress is now enjoying. Out of the 130 municipalities, the party has captured 100. Out of the 30 remaining, only 23 may be said to have slipped under the control of "other parties". The Jana Sangh trails behind with tenuous control over three. But this party is strong in urban areas such as Jodhpur and the Capital itself, owing to its appeal to the trading circles of middle rank. Its recent pro-labour orientation, even though superficial, is helping it to find a role among the so-called militant agitators from among the youth and the students. But beyond holding routine demonstrations or infructuous and purposeless strikes, the latter do not yet appear to have got their teeth into any real movement. As a result, pseudo-socialists and crypto-communists of all sorts pass off in the western Rajasthan of today as saviours of the famine-stricken, the under-paid wage-labourer and the unemployed. In the background looms the ruling party everywhere.

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## Book Review

# China In Two Thousand And One—I

KALYAN CHAUDHURI

HAN Suyin, known as an expert on China and the Chinese life in the communes, firmly believes that the commune is the plan on which the future China will be founded. The social organisation of the future China and the communist society, she feels, will be centred in the commune, which is at once city and countryside, trade market and production centre, with no distinction between peasant, worker, military and white collar staff, no division between industrial, agricultural and intellectual labour.

In September, 1956 Mao Tse-tung wrote: "It is forty-five years since the revolution of 1911, but the face of China is today completely changed. In another forty-five years, that is in the year 2001, China will have undergone even greater changes. She will have become a powerful socialist and industrial country. And that is as it should be."

Han Suyin takes the title of her book,—*China in the Year 2001*\*—from Mao Tse-tung's writings and following an intimate study of the present-day China tries to have a picture of her future after setting out to interpret the Chinese experience for those in the West whose usual view of that country derived from distant journalists and so-called Pekingologists, is "one-dimensional and unsympathetic".

Han Suyin (real name—Chou Elizabeth Kuanghu) was born in Peking in 1917. She studied in Peking, then in Brussels. Returning to China in 1938 she married Colonel (later General) Tang Pao-huang, and during the Sino-Japanese war prac-

tised midwifery in China. In 1942 she and her husband went to London where she continued her medical studies. Qualifying in 1948 she has since practised medicine in Hong Kong, Malaya and Singapore where she has finally settled. In 1964 she stopped practice for an extensive research work on the communist society of China and the Chinese life in the communes. Her work is the result of a decade of visits, eleven in all varying from two weeks to three months, to China, and the collection of data over a wide area in cities and rural districts.

The communes were a direct personal creation of Mao Tse-tung. In spite of their temporary failure because of the initial mistakes and dislocations, they have survived and flourished. Studying the Chinese life in communes from a very close range Han Suyin comes to the definite conclusion that communes have proved themselves the best type of organisation yet devised for the attainment of China's goals, not only in the agricultural sector, but also in the speedy socialisation of the entire population, and the thorough decentralisation of industry begun in 1956.

The communes are "indispensable" to the nationwide strategy of self-defence by multiplying the centres of self-sufficiency in the event of bombing attacks, nuclear or conventional. They make China regionally self-supporting, decentralised, a "cellular living assemblage rather than a mechanical system"; and, in the event of massive bombing, unconquerable. With its own foci of culture, communication, defence, education, its own factories, its own food production, and its own exchange markets, the commune becomes a

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cell, a flexible miniature of the whole State. Supermarkets for consumer goods, parks, factories, schools, hospitals, recreational areas, totally non-existent in the Chinese countryside before 1949, are already coming into being in China's communes.

The movement towards setting up communes began spontaneously in the merging of certain collectives in Honan province, eighteen months before the communes became an official programme in 1958. In six months 26,000 communes were established. The economic scope of the Chinese commune is more than the agricultural mechanised unit on the Russian model. In 1958 Mao Tse-tung stated that the commune includes people of all professions and trades...the people's commune is different in nature from the agricultural cooperative...referring to the urbanisation of the countryside, the ruralisation of the cities, we imply [that new changes have come to society as a whole].

In course of time communes began to take over all local government organisations acting as an instrument for the elimination of private ownership of the means of production (the private plot, retained until today but now disappearing). Each commune was trying to be an agro-industrial complex, running its own affairs, a small state on its own, but connected with all other communes by bonds of cultural, economic, political and military unification. The wage system, introduced to the peasantry through the work-point, gradually eliminated the difference between him and the industrial worker.

#### Ruralisation of Cities

Returning after a two-month visit to China in 1968, Han Suyin stated

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that through communes a decentralised, flexible and yet solidly interwoven social economic pattern had come into existence in China; a pattern capable of modification; it predicated the ruralisation (even, perhaps one day, the abolition) of the cities as they were created, as strongholds of property and wealth, fortresses against a peasantry in revolt.

The commune renders superfluous the idea of the city as a centre of culture, repository of science and art, a stronghold of institutions, the seat of government. It is a feature of the massive decentralisation in process today that the city as such must not draw brain, talent, and technique away from the countryside. Indeed, it is the reverse process which is being carried out, with millions of educated young students and professionals being planted away from the cities into communes. Mao Tse-tung knows that rush of party members to soft-cushioned seats behind desks in the great cities is a tendency and it has to be actively combated time and time again. In 1958 no fewer than six million city cadres were "sent down" to the countryside to renew contact with reality.

In the past few years, some one and a half million young intellectuals have become established in the communes for all their lives. In the next decade, Han Suyin says, twenty times as many, most of them under thirty, will be working in the countryside to build up 74,000 techno-industrial pools. Workers, technicians, handicraftsmen have already moved into communes to start factories, electric pump stations, fertiliser plants and small steel furnaces. Siting large plants (machine tools, trucks, petro-chemical and fertiliser, extractive industries, textile mills, cement works, and precision equipment units) in rural areas surrounded by communes which provide the food and also manpower reserves both for skilled and semi-skilled labour, has been the practice since 1958. Commune organisation is, say the Chinese, the major way in which a

country deficient in capital but rich in manpower can organise production, and use manpower efficiently to produce capital construction and accumulation at top speed. As an educative mass base, too, the commune is proving its advantages. Universities, agricultural colleges, industrial and technical schools, move away from cities, into the countryside, eradicating illiteracy at a high speed.

Yet there are problems and the problems of commune organisation stem from many causes. The recidivist return to petty capitalism has already been noted; old habits of selfishness and greed die hard; they found expression again after the three bad years, from 1961 to 1963; a large and arduous socialist education movement in the countryside to eradicate them is still going on. The difficulties of preventing commune leadership from being taken over by ex-landlords or rich peasants reappear; the clan aspect of village feudalism remains in some areas a deeply rooted psychological problem. Whole villages have only one surname, the inhabitants being all related to each other, and also related to the ex-landlord. Family ties, fear of reprisal, clan loyalties, allow the more clever, better educated sons of landlords to acquire new power through entering the commune leadership. In one such village re-recently, it was found, the only scholarship was given to an ex-landlord's son, in another, among fourteen families, one was the landlord family, and it had "returned to power" by becoming the head of the production team. The produce of this area was being sold on the free market by the landlord-cadre as his own property. Mao Tse-tung had already pointed out this difficulty in 1929. Again

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Mao Tse-tung, who knows his people very well indeed, pointed out in 1962 that "The evil feudal practice of arbitrary dictation is so deeply rooted in the minds of the people and even of the ordinary party members... when anything crops up they choose the easy way, and have no liking for the bothersome democratic system... of meetings and debates and criticism."

Constant rectification campaigns have begun to eradicate this tendency. And the Cultural Revolution, Han Suyin believes, is the most profound and deep of these movements to change the attitudes and behaviour of the past, both among party members and the general population.

So each commune builds its own corps of militiamen for self-defence and to resist the attack from within. It has not always been entirely satisfactory. In the process of cleaning up the communes (1962 to 1964) the discipline of the militia was tightened, and this job was tackled by the People's Liberation Army. Many militia units are drafted for major projects, such as water conservancy, building roads, railways, etc., in conjunction with the PLA.

#### Year of Decision

1966 will probably become, in history, the Year of Decision for China—the decision for a material Leap Forward based upon the economic breakthrough for the achievement of an independent, modern and comprehensive national economic system, the year of military breakthrough in nuclear weapons, the year of a Cultural Revolution involving a

massive psychological and political campaign to reshape the motivation and socialist morality of 700 million people, also a year of total military preparedness in which "the entire people become soldiers."

The seed of China's economic growth in the seventeen years since 1949, Han Suyin says from her personal experience, is already unprecedented in history. The next decade, she thinks, may see this speed doubled, for it is on an economic base entirely different from and more powerful than that of 1949 that the geometric progression which all such developments exhibit in all sectors of the economy will take place. It is, therefore, imperative that the human material, which determines how this future power will be handled, should also become totally involved in the great issue at stake. Of the two transformations, the spiritual one is the more difficult, complex and time-consuming; in the end it is the one that is more important. The idea of the remaking of man as well as man's transformation, on the basis of the material gains achieved, of the earth he lives on, is the essential characteristic of Mao Tse-tung's approach to the whole problem of achieving socialism. The covert acquiescence of the USSR (which alone of any country in the world could stop the genocide in Vietnam in a matter of hours) and its return to selfish national interests after attaining great power status provide a "negative lesson", according to Mao, on how a socialist State can deteriorate. Mao Tse-tung's preoccupation that the Chinese people should not become chauvinistic, abandon the cause of the exploited and the oppressed, and in turn do what Russia and the USA are doing, is basic to the whole "grand debate", started a decade ago with the USSR.

After 1958-59, with the appearance of revisionism in Russia, it seemed clear that the same phenomenon, though in a Chinese garb (chiefly harking back to a feudalist-

reformist ideal) was present in China; among cultural, educational, propaganda leaders, as well as industry, the army, the trade sector, "loiterers at the cross-roads" and what Mao called "resolute shrinkers" as well as deliberate cliques and hostile factions arose. This trend in cultural circles became more evident in 1960-61 when it began to burst into print. There had been the reverses of the three bad years. Temporary concessions, "the party keeping one eye open and one eye shut," emboldened not only critics but also some pro-Russian elements within the party and outright counter-revolutionary people among the party intellectuals. The influence of this tendency was particularly strong in certain universities and educational institutions because they were staffed chiefly by old-type intellectuals, and even among party members, whose lives had been a perpetual vacillation between KMT and CCP. The young generation was too unprepared, too naive, too inexperienced, not to succumb quickly to these things. To them the "bitter past" was beginning to sound like old wives' tale. Hence, in 1963-64, statues of clay, lifelike representations of heart-breaking scenes of the past had to be made and put on exhibition to remind the young of past hardships.

To fight with the growing revisionism, the party, at the call of Mao Tse-tung, launched the Cultural Revolution and the PLA under the command of Lin Piao started the Clean-up Operation.

*(To be concluded)*

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# Korea's Progress

RAJPAT RAI

“TECHNOLOGICAL and ideological revolutions are part of the same process. They must proceed in parallel.” This slogan is the key to an understanding of the situation in North Korea as well as its impressive achievements. According to the Koreans, if the socialist State neglects the dictatorship of the proletariat and ideological revolution to the slightest degree and slackens the class struggle, it will become impossible to consolidate and develop the socialist system or defend it against external and internal enemies. On the other hand, it is also wrong to put stress only on class struggle and ideological revolution and neglect the building of the socialist economy. If the stress is put only on ideological revolution and technical revolution is neglected, the revolutionary task of relieving the working people from arduous labour will not be accomplished. But when it comes to a question of choice, the Korean leadership gives precedence to the ideological revolution.

In the sphere of technical revolution North Korean achievements are impressive. The country inherited a colonial economy from the Japanese imperialists, who developed a few industries providing raw materials and semi-finished goods. Manufacturing industries were negligible and machine-building industry was non-existent. Whatever existed was almost completely destroyed by the so-called Korean war of 1950-53. But within a short span of ten years after the war the Korean economy was on a sound footing. Here are some statistics: In 1964, the country's heavy industry produced 12,500 million kw.h of electricity, 14,400,000 tons of coal, 1,340,000 tons of pig and granulated iron, 1,130,000 tons of steel, more than 750,000 tons of chemical fertilisers, 2,600,000 tons of cement and large quantities of machinery and equipment. As regards

the consumer goods industry Korea built 3,000 “local industry factories” by mobilising idle material and manpower available in the localities aside from 17 large modern mills constructed out of central funds. The annual rate of growth of industrial production in ten years (1954-63) averaged 34.8%. Industrial output was 11 times that of pre-war 1949 and more than 13 times that of the pre-liberation year 1944. In 1946, North Korean agriculture and fishing industry's contribution to the national product was 72% while industry contributed only 28%. Today the proportion is reversed, with industry accounting for 76% of the national product. While agriculture today employs less than half of the active labour force, its production has grown three times since 1946. Industry now supplies three quarters of the country's national product. The Agro-Industrial Exhibition—a permanent feature in Pyongyang—which I visited in August last—proudly displays such Korean equipment as generating, chemical and metallurgical machinery, motor cars, jeeps, trucks, buses, electric railway engines, tractors, harvestors and various other types of sophisticated machines.

In the field of agriculture, Korean achievements are equally impressive. Through agrarian reform and the establishment of cooperative farms, North Korea has practically resolved its agriculture problems—no meagre accomplishment when one considers that about 80% of the country is mountainous area unsuitable for agriculture. With a productivity of 42.3 hundredweight of rice per hectare, which compares favourably with Japanese intensive rice production, Korea today is self-sufficient in food. The price of a kilo of rice in Pyongyang was around 30 paise. Mechanisation, irrigation, chemicalisation and electrification are the four prerequisites mentioned by the Korean

Workers' Party in carrying through the technical revolution in the countryside. Now over 90% of Korea's villages have electricity, and 70% have new modern houses. Irrigation has brought all but the most mountainous land under cultivation. Chemical fertilisers are widely used and agricultural machinery is seen in the remotest corners of the country.

With regard to the important question of management of industry and agriculture, a question which led Libermann and Otta Sik in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia respectively to reform projects of a ‘revisionist’ type, the Korean leadership provides its own answers in what are known as the Chongsouri method in agriculture and the Daean system in industry. The Chongsouri method developed out of the repeated visits of Premier Kim-Il-seung to the collective of the village Chongsouri where he lived among the farmers for an extensive period of time to study the problems and to give on-the-spot guidance. The two essential aspects of the method which is now in application all over the country are: (a) Rather than merely issuing directions and quotas to lower organs, the higher organs should seek to help them in concrete ways by actually “going down” to the places where people work and live. This is popularly known as on-the-spot guidance. (b) In all work of economic management priority was to be given to political considerations and to party leadership. The people were to be helped to understand the significance of their efforts, problems and accomplishments in the light of the national struggle for reunification and for building socialism in Korea.

The main features of the Daean work system, which is in fact a refinement of the Chongsouri method as adopted in industry include: (a) Replacement of the former system of one-man management by collective management through factory committees; (b) A system of unified and detailed planning and on-the-spot guidance of production: (c) an

improved system of supplying raw and semi-finished materials to factories and finished goods to consumers.

The Daean system is a device also to fight against the growing of bureaucracy in industry. In this system the director retains his position but within the context of the party committee composed of 60 per cent production worker membership and embracing all branches of the enterprise. The director and the chief engineer become members of this committee and execute its decisions.

According to the Korean leadership, political consciousness of the worker plays a decisive role in production. Neither production nor the development of technology can be advanced without political consciousness. A true people's economy cannot be built on the basis of economic, technological or business orientations alone. The Daean system combines the two factors of technology and politics and leads the way to the construction of socialism and communism under the leadership of the Party. These two methods of management of agriculture and industry are particularly interesting in view of the current trend towards economic and technical "expertise" and the dangerous growth of bureaucracy in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. There is another interesting and instructive aspect to Korea's experience of building a truly independent national economy. Shortly after the Korean war there developed within the Workers' Party a group, later called by Kim-Il-sung "a group of flunkys" aided and supported by "foreign revisionists," which maintained that being a small country, Korea would do better to concentrate on light industry, agriculture, consumer goods and housing and import its machinery and heavy industrial goods from the Soviet Union and East European countries. This line was consistently opposed and defeated by the Central Committee. It maintained that Korea must develop an independent economy complete with its own heavy industry fully

capable of meeting the requirements of the people as well as of defence. The Korean leaders remembered their experience of the Korean war when the Soviet Union supplied some military hardware and a nominal air cover. In 1965, speaking in Indonesia, Kim-Il-sung said :

"The 'revisionists,' talking about 'international division of labour' (within the socialist-camp) opposed our Party's line on building of heavy

industry and maintained, among other things, that our country did not need to develop the machine building industry but would do well to produce only minerals and other materials. Of course we could not follow their view."

During their discussions with us in Pyongyang, the Korean leaders expressed the hope that no other people in the Third World countries building socialism would follow this revisionist advice.

## Calcutta Diary

GYAN KAPUR

IF Government statistics are to be believed, which for once I am prepared to do, foreign tourists are making a beeline for this city and a larger number of them have passed through it than last year. Maybe our travel agents have become more active and sold the charms of the city or the places reached from here or it may be just the population explosion which has hit the tourist trade also. There may possibly be some other explanation. Perhaps there are a sufficient number of jaded Americans who find the unsettled conditions in the city an added attraction for visiting it. If so, they must be sadly disappointed. For, the foreigners are probably safer in this city than in any of their own. It is largely a private war in which only occasionally an unwary passer-by gets bumped off, probably by accident or a case of mistaken identity.

The effect on the internal tourist trade seems, however, to have been the reverse thanks to the wide publicity which conditions in the city have received all over the country. Calcutta does not this year appear to be hosting as many conferences as in the past this winter. This may be a deprivation which the city can cheerfully bear.

Calcutta, of course, has lived with many troubles and there are signs

that the city has made up its mind to take the latest in its stride to go its own way. Winter and Christmas, and New Year's holidays are traditionally times of relaxation for all irrespective of age or religion and this year was no different but for the fact that there was an air of caution. Picnickers do not want to get caught up in an unknown place by forces of which they do not know anything, times being what they are. The guardians of the law being themselves jittery, needless to say, can do little to help. In fact a friend reported that a score or so young holiday-makers were inside a police station. Apparently their offence was nothing more serious than pointing a camera at some policemen but they were taking no chances. It could be a new form of gun. Anyway, the young men were lucky to escape being shot at.

In the field of entertainment, children have been the greatest losers. There is no circus worth the name this year. In spite of the big money they used to make every year from the city, the members of the big top have thought it better to shun it rather than face an uncertain situation.

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The poverty of entertainment in this great city is monumental. Apart from the routine ones of the cinema

and the theatre, professional and amateur, there is hardly anything. Which perhaps explains the great popularity of functions organised on pujas and such occasions. The Calcuttan, therefore, is prepared to try anything which claims to be something new.

It is understandable that charlatans and businessmen would try to cash in on this hunger. But it is sad when artistes of past renown get on the bandwagon. The latest to do so is Uday Shankar who has come out with what he calls Shankarscope and which he claims to be something wonderfully new in the world of entertainment. This, of course, is not the place to review his show but I cannot help saying a few words.

The major part of the show is a re-run of selected scenes from his film *Kalpana* and it looks as if we are peeping into the mind of an old man re-living some of his scenes of past triumph. The Shankarscope so-called is a pure gimmick in which some stage actors have been filmed and some of their actions are crudely co-related. Some of the new sequences are crude and vulgar in the extreme and it is shocking to think that they could have the name of Uday Shankar behind them. Whatever one may think of beauty contests, Uday Shankar's caricature of such things is worse. It is sad to think that the great Uday Shankar can produce such shows, to the tune of taped music playing through a third-rate mike which would not be tolerated in the poorest organised function anywhere in the city.

What prompted the maestro to produce such a show? It may be just the need to earn a little cash but for that a bigger certainty could be a pure dance show. But to take him seriously, it only shows how far he has divorced himself from the cultural life of the city and of its young people in particular.

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One of the mercies of winter life here is that prices of vegetables fall. This is a boon to those who have a tolerable roof over their heads and

something in which to wrap themselves up. While winter vegetables have appeared, their prices are yet to fall. But already the price of the new crop of potatoes has become less than half that of the old one at which we had to buy it only some weeks back. A drop from Re. 1.40 to 60 paise does appear to me something of a miracle in our country where prices go up never to come down. Cold storages and potatoes, I am told, go together. Which makes me wonder why we have to pay such high prices later on when, relatively speaking, the price of the new one is

so low. Surely, it does not cost so much to keep it in cold storage.

The explanation seems to be the usual one. With a steady demand all the year round, and no one who does not have a cold storage in a position to stock more than a few days' needs, the field is ripe for cornering stocks, making us all pay the extra paise. After all this is the only vegetable in which business apart from small fry can take a real interest. Who would want to deprive them of their living? Not the Food Corporation of India, nor the State Governments.

## The Indian Pioneers

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

A comprehensive idea of the evolution of the Indian cinema is always difficult to acquire mainly because of the paucity of materials, specially the absence of films of the formative period for which one has to depend on hearsay and some second-hand information. The meagre writings we have on the early period of our film history are devoid of any critical assessment. Lately the National Film Archive of Poona is doing commendable work in acquiring important films and, thanks to the archive authorities and the organisers of the Festival of Silent American Films now being held in Calcutta, we had the chance of viewing the works of two Indian film pioneers, Dadasaheb Phalke and Himansu Rai. Dadasaheb Phalke was the first Indian to take the cinema seriously and to explore the artistic possibilities of the medium, however primitive his ways of exploration might be. He was somewhat of an all-rounder and most of his films he wrote, directed photographed, processed and edited himself. We had a glimpse of Phalke at work during the different stages of the films in an interesting documentary compilation of his career. He was a master technician, and he instantly

responded to the visual tricks of the films. But unfortunately, while he shared Melies' flair for magic, he lacked the Frenchman's imagination. So in films like *Setubandhan*, *Bhakta Prahlad*, *Krishna Janma*, which are clever pieces of special effects, Phalke excels, but he fails miserably in a film like *Harishchandra* which calls for creative plot-construction and character development. Still, working the hard way in converting the magic box into a tool for artistic expression, Phalke has achieved much to deserve a tribute from posterity. He died a frustrated, broken man, as had been the fate of many pioneers and in his centenary year the little that our film industry can do in righting the grievous wrongs done to him is to honour his talent in the right manner.

Himansu Rai was a different kind of showman, sophisticated, mature and with an awareness of the international film world. His training abroad helped him to pick up a first-class technical crew headed by the German cameraman Franz Austen. His two films shown in the current session were *A Throw of Dice* and *Light of Asia*, both set amid the pomp and pageantry of ancient India. *A Throw of Dice* is a high-keyed melo-

drama of palace intrigues, hardly concerned with an analytical probe into the psychological complexities of the characters, but its main assets are the consistently beautiful photography and the creative use of location. *Light of Asia*, though made earlier is a more serious work than *A Throw of Dice* and if it suffers in comparison with the latter in respect of technical polish, it definitely scores over *A Throw of Dice* in observation and depth. Based on the Buddha legend, the film slowly reveals its beauty, and the accent is always on Gautama the man with all the human nobilities and the human failings. There are some excellent scenes, like the one in which the royal elephant goes out in the streets of Kapilabastu in search of an heir to the king and the mothers treating their haggard-looking kids to a bath in the hope that they would be in for luck, or the sequences in which Siddhartha drives his chariot along the city, only to be shocked by the woes and miseries of the world, or the night of the great Renunciation when the whole world cries for deliverance in a frenzied nightmare. These things were a real tour de force in those primitive, stale and unproductive years of Indian cinema.

#### Hitchcock's Latest

Hitchcock's latest film *Topaze* is a sort of round-the-world sortie, starting with a high-angle view of a Red Square rally and ending with a frozen shot of a Paris backstreet. In between, there are some hectic jaunts from Copenhagen to Cuba with Washington and New York as brief stopovers. A Russian defector, a French secret agent, a Cuban beauty acting against the Castro regime, a flamboyant florist, a Cuban patriot and last but not the least, a suave double-agent in Paris, heading the pro-Soviet spy ring *Topaze*, act the jigsaw pieces against the backdrop of the Soviet-U.S. missile crisis in Cuba and Hitchcock the magician pulls the strings, leading his puppets from one point to another. The film, of course, remains one of Hitchcock's minor creations, but it goes to his credit that he has thoroughly recast Leon Uris' ori-

ginal, shedding much of its coarseness and malice. Hitchcock's Cuban characters have been drawn with sympathy, as members of a budding nation zealously guarding its newly acquired power and not as vile monsters which Leon Uris makes them to be. But one must admit that the Cuban setting is rather impersonal and the same kind of non-involvement is shown in the portrayal of the main characters. But, in patches, this film turns out to be an elegy on betrayals and unshouldered responsibilities and Hitchcock's favourite theme of the transference of guilt comes back at places. And, as one critic has so accurately pointed out, if Hitchcock often lets his camera hover on some irrelevant details or if he chooses to be whimsical about his story and characters, it is surely the master's privilege.

### Clippings

#### Mosquitoes vs. Elephants

...Here we are, some 200 million of us, with the greatest armaments that any country has ever possessed and there are the North Vietnamese, some 20 million of them, with a primitive industrial system. Yet we have been unable to make them do what we want them to do. Why? Because armed peasants who are willing to die are a match for the mightiest power. Elephants cannot clear the mosquitoes from a swamp. The United States has been unable to conquer the armed guerillas of the vast Asian continent. (Walter Lippmann in *Newsweek*).

#### Reds and Cops

...Quoting the reports of district leaders, Promode Das Gupta said that in many places the sons of police sub-inspectors and Congressites have turned Naxalites. "We have proof that the Naxalte boys have links with the police". At some places, the CPI is encouraging them, and at others government officials. But in certain peasant areas the peasants have driven them out under the leadership of

the CPI(M). This has happened in Nadia. In Midnapore the peasants have handed them over to the police. (*Jugantar*).

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It is reported (in Krishnagar) that the Congress(R), Bangla Congress, CP(M) and some other parties have jointly formed anti-Naxalite squads and have demanded lathis, spears and torches from the District Magistrate. They have also asked for police help and co-operation in case of necessity. But they are against forming anti-Naxalite squads under the leadership of the police. (*Jugantar*).

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...The police are taking stringent measures to arrest the Naxalites. The CPM(M) workers caught hold of a person who was a suspect in the attack on the Mayor and informed the police. The Tollygunge police later came and arrested a wounded person.

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...While addressing a meeting in Baruipur, Hare Krishna Konar lamented that instead of suppressing the Naxalite menace with the help of the PD Act the police are arresting CP(M) workers. (*Ananda Bazar Patrika*)

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...While speaking in Parliament on the two Presidential Acts, Ganesh Ghosh said: the CRP was hardly fighting the Naxalites. In connection with the Basanti incident, he said: "The CRP men then raped six of the women. Were the women Naxalites. that Mrs Gandhi sent her policemen to rape them?" (*The Statesman*).

#### Thursday Crisis

"You can tell the average working bloke about the economic crisis in the country and he'll tell you that there's an economic crisis in his house every Thursday when he brings home his pay packet. How does he make twenty shillings stretch when life demands 21 shillings? (A British shop steward).

#### Drugs and the People

Opening the Indian Pharmaceutical

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# frontier

**Winter Number**

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Congress... Professor P. C. Mahalanobis... said that the rate of increase (in the production of drugs) as had been stated by the president (of the Pharmaceutical Congress), was good but not enough. The present value of drug production was about Rs 300 crores for a population getting near to 600 million; that worked out at about Rs 5 per person per year. The top 10% of the population consumed nearly 60% of the total manufactured drugs, the poorer half about 8% and the poorest, representing 10% of the population, consumed only about 1%. (The Statesman)

### Wines and the People

Official Government figures show that 22,130 Frenchmen died of cirrhosis of the liver last year, a rate ten times as high as in the U.S. One third of all traffic accidents are caused by drunkenness and every third bed in France's psychiatric hospitals is occupied by a victim of alcoholism... the most common complaint by women seeking divorce is their husbands' drunkenness; when charged with excessive drinking the men deny it with the retort "I drink like everyone else"... a social worker recalled the thirst of a drunken mother who delivered her own child while her alcoholic husband was dying beside her. As soon as she got up, she staggered to a nearby cafe "to toast the birth and wet the baby's lips with cognac." (Newsweek)

### Riding a Rhino

A spokesman of the (Alipore) Zoo said that "a daring but uncalled for feat" was... witnessed on Christmas Day when two boys scaled the wall around the rhino's enclosure and got on to its back. It was quite some time before the zoo authorities could persuade them to get down. (The Statesman)

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Business Manager  
Frontier

JANUARY 2, 1971

## Letters

### The Writer And His Role

The Afro-Asian Writers Conference which took place in Delhi from November 18 to November 23 neatly illustrated the extent to which the Soviet revisionists have gone. The conference was entirely corny.

As the PAIGC delegate from Guinea-Bissau tersely pointed out, it was odd that there was no representation on the Draft Resolution Committee of members of any one of the liberation movements in Afro-Asia. Instead, the committee was solely composed of delegates from countries like Ghana, Kenya, Egypt and Russia.

Moreover, when one innocent Gambian asked why Israel was not represented at the conference, the frigid Russian response was: "Considering the purpose of this conference" (i.e., anti-imperialist) "the question is surprising." Everyone nodded righteously. But was it the State being represented by the delegates, or the People? And if it was the State, then why were reactionary countries like Kenya and Ghana represented?

To top it all, who won the coveted Lotus prize? Dear old Bacchan, author of *Madhusalla* (written decades ago), extolling the revolutionary virtues of wine bibbing! To see the assortment of servile creeps who represented the Indian delegation was enough to make one switch over to the protest being organised by a group of young, dissident writers in and around the halls of Vigyan Bhavan, where the conference was being held.

Actually, the dissidents were composed of two groups. One was only protesting against the composition of the Indian delegation, while it expressed itself in sympathy with the conference as a whole. The criticism of this group was directed at individuals like Bacchan who have long since dried up as poets and writers, and who should have given way to younger voices. The other group consisted of revolutionary writers, mainly from Punjab and Andhra Pradesh, and

their aim was to expose the conference as nothing but a revisionist sham and Soviet front.

Under the leadership of the revolutionary Andhra poet Sri Sri, the demonstrating writers distributed pamphlets, leaflets etc., exposing the conference as bogus, calling upon the delegates who were sincere revolutionaries to denounce it and join instead the revolutionary Afro-Asian Writers Association based in Peking.

Quoting from Toure, Sartre and Fanon, they showed clearly what the role of the writer is in the people's liberation struggle: the writer is in the vanguard of the armed struggle. Using the simple and dynamic language of the common people, he exhorts them to rise, to unite and to take to arms. He exposes their enemies and steels the people's courage. He does this by his pen and by taking up the gun as well.

The revolutionary writers realised that aiming their blows at individual delegates at the conference was not correct. The only correct way was to expose the conference as bogus from start to finish, and to form, there and then, an alternative revolutionary writers' organisation dedicated to the politics of armed struggle, and not to passing anti-imperialist resolutions around a conference table.

The Punjab comrades have announced the formation of the All India Co-ordination Committee of Revolutionary Writers, "so that all the writers who are committed to people's war are brought on to one platform".

All revolutionary writers, poets and playwrights are called upon to unite in this revolutionary writers' front and to advance the struggle of the peasants and workers of our country.

ABC

Bombay

### Time To Rethink

A debate, it is reported, is going on inside the CPI(ML) ranks over their tactical line. It is welcome. Their method of opposition to the present educational system, identified

with incendiary and destruction, has of late become less and less pronounced. But in a short few months it has succeeded in making many people apprehensive and these apprehensions have now pervaded the party itself. No doubt the entire system of public education is meant to reinforce capitalism, to select the most gifted to serve capital. In India in particular the system is in a horrible mess, ridden with corruption and inefficiency from top to bottom. Indeed, it needs to be dynamited. But to be as good as the word here is to take the simple for the figurative. The cultural sector is one of the most important in revolutionary struggle. Without this juridical emancipation the masses cannot forge ahead, but the method of struggle must be altogether different. Shock tactics to awaken the inert masses, and individual terror for the corrupt, the greedy and the tyrant are not unknown attributes in history, often they are symptoms of and preludes to great upheavals. But in excess they are surely the seeds of failure. For this disaccustoms the masses from fighting—haven't they a few heroes who are able to act for them? The concessions this intimidation may wring from the bourgeoisie are not permanent, as the fear is transient and fleeting in the absence of organised mass sanction. Politics without masses is adventurist politics. However, mere propaganda is a poor substitute, at best it recruits some sympathisers, not the soldiers of revolution. Capitalism and feudalism would not willingly abdicate, they would have to be overthrown by armed struggle. This is a truism accepted by all Marxists. But many of them imagine armed struggle as a spontaneous revolt of the people, as one of those elemental phenomena of revolution that are so inevitable that little preparation and planning are needed. Lenin treated such Marxists contemptuously as the harmful romantics of revolution.

Young Naxalites strike a different note. Often they affront our established modes of thought

and action. Generally speaking, revolutions tend to appear less costly and awesome the farther they recede into the past, becoming abstractions in the process; revolution in the present tends to repel or disturb us. Naxalites disturb and repel us a great deal. Yet many observers, native and foreign, sense that something of historic significance has been happening in India. The reforms and concessions that the left parties claim to have obtained here and from the Centre are the byproducts of this 'menacing' Naxalite struggle—a noted bourgeois journalist remarked only recently in a Calcutta newspaper.

And not without truth. By courage, skill and sacrifice, the young Naxalites, inexperienced though they are, have opened up a perspective not hitherto detected, grave mistakes notwithstanding. Let us not be too shocked by the dead—only blood can paint history in new colours, as Gorky said. By their deaths they have made us realise the fatal difference between the reformer and the revolutionary, a difference we hardly notice but which confuses us terribly. The people we regard as revolutionaries are only reformers. The very conception of revolution has to be deepened.

Meanwhile let the Naxalites unite themselves, review their activities self-critically and purge themselves of their errors, of their subjective longing for quicker results. Marxists are not afraid of mistakes. History indeed would be very easy to make if there were no mistakes and if the struggle were taken up only on condition of infallibly favourable chances. But to persist with wrong policies too long just because they are widely criticised would be disastrous. In any case, the future belongs to the revolutionary youth, not to the 'tired old men, revolutionaries who 'have become wiser' and renegades.

S.G.  
Calcutta

## What Marxism !

During the recent by-election to the Punjab Assembly from the Anandpur Sahib and Dakala constituencies the CPI supported Congress (R) candidates because "Akalis are feudals, reactionaries and responsible for repressive measures". The CPM supported the Akalis because the "Congress(R) has perpetrated a police raj on the Indian masses".

The Akalis have been responsible for the cold-blooded murder of 15 revolutionaries in the State in a short span of 10 months from March 1970. What a creative application of Marxism in the concrete conditions of Punjab !

PRITAM  
Chandigarh

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JANUARY 2, 1971



## if this were your home...?

Going up in flames as you watch, helplessly.  
Things you cherished... objects with  
a lifetime of memories irrecoverably lost.  
Your life, itself shattered, as it were.

Yes, this has happened to many. It could  
happen to you, me, ... any of us.

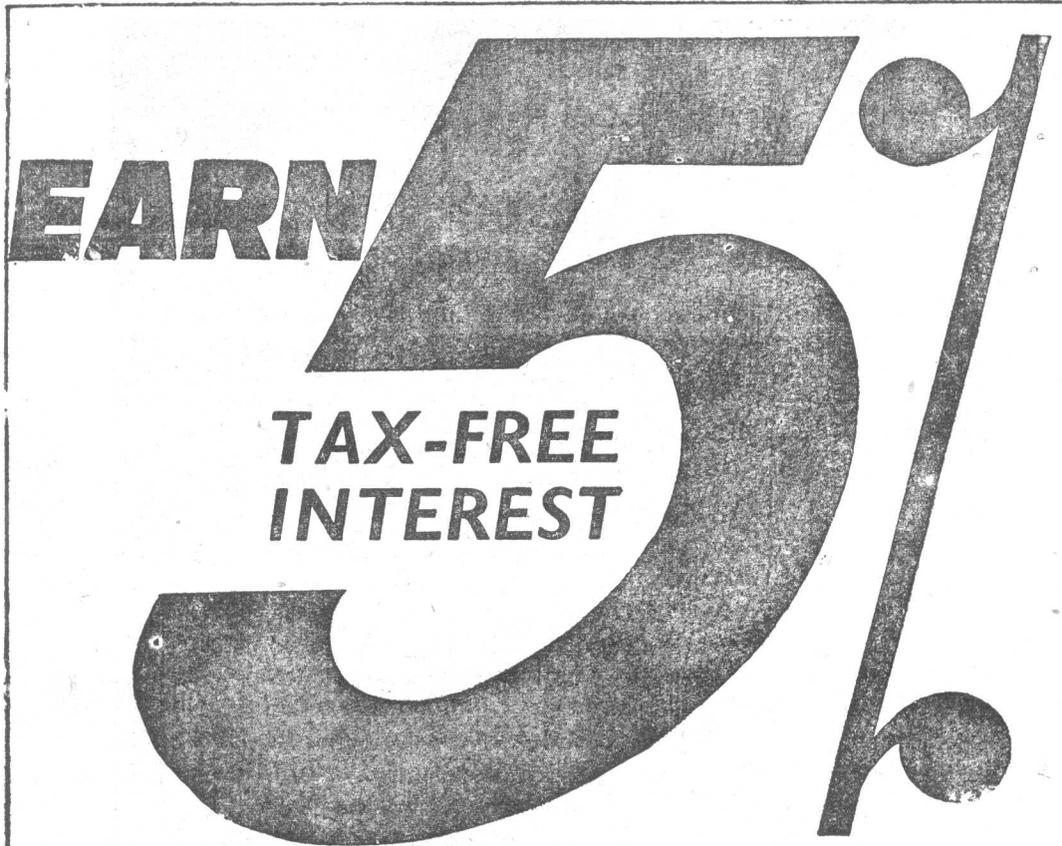
Communalism, regionalism, no 'ism' is excuse  
for violence and destruction of  
lives and property.

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- Form mohalla committees
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