

# frontier

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## IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

THE CPM called the battle for the harvest in West Bengal a battle for Indian democracy. The State Committee of the party now claims that the battle has been won, on 400,000 acres of khas and benami land—the total area recovered from the jotedars—despite all-out repression by the CRP and the police acting in collusion with hired goondas and the Congress and Bangla Congress. Twenty-three peasants and Kisan Sabha workers were killed by the police and goondas during the brief period of harvesting, but there is no mistaking the surge of confidence in the countryside, an upsurge which the CPM thinks will be reflected in the “big political battle” of the coming elections overwhelmingly in its favour. Parkalam, as Kamaraj used to say.

Very little of the repression in the countryside comes out in the press. There seems to be a conspiracy of silence, particularly if one believes the CPM remark that this time the local bureaucrats of the President of India unleashed massive repression in the villages but did not attack cities. Let us forget the people who were killed, or arrested and tortured in Calcutta. We have already forgotten Barasat. They do not matter, at least to the CPM perhaps because it was not touched in the cities. In the countryside, however, direct repression apart, there is litigation by jotedars which the poor cannot afford. Thousands of peasants, according to sources other than CPM, have been deprived of any rights they had by jotedars who went to court on all kinds of pretexts. Some of them are famous for their cunning. They keep quiet while the peasants till the land with their meagre resources; before the crop ripens they move the court for application of some section or other of the many august laws against recalcitrant peasants: the application is sent to the local thana for investigation and the police file false reports. All this happens without the knowledge of the peasants. One fine morning they get interim injunctions and show-cause notices. Bewildered, they try to do something to get the injunction vacated but before they can move the jotedars, with police help, carry away the crop. The dispossessed can file a complaint with the local kisan sabha and wait.

A recent enquiry by the Director of Land Records, West Bengal, confirms that the jotedars are still depriving the bargadars of their rights on a large scale by various means. The rich are helped by the chronic

and crushing indebtedness of the sharecroppers. Unable to pay back the loan, very often taken in kind, in paddy, they renounce in writing all their tenurial rights and become landless labourers. What can they do when they have very often to give three maunds of paddy for one maund taken in lean times? How can the destitute till and keep the land they seize? Co-operatives are not in vogue.

So, some people are rather sceptical about report of the growing militancy of peasants claimed by the parliamentary leftist parties which organised the seizure of excess land (beyond 25 acres) while the UF was in power.

The CP(ML), which does not believe in parliamentary methods or land-grabbing of the UF variety, also claims a degree of selective peasant militancy that is surprising. It has even announced the birth of a people's liberation army. We are told that the armed struggle of the peasants has gained strength in every

district—in one or two areas the peasants have snatched rifles from policemen. The liberation army will comprise squads of landless peasants, each to be under a local or regional commander, to be elected, generally, from among the landless. Party members must obey the directions of these commanders in "military matters". Everywhere revolutionary committees of landless peasants are to be formed under the leadership of the party. These committees will help in the redistribution of land left by runaway jotedars, improvement and maintenance of agricultural production in the face of repression and formation of village defence squads. Guerilla war, says the CP(ML), loses direction if it is not accompanied by the establishment of political power. Armed struggle, it is asserted, has created panic not only among the ruling classes and their agents in India but also among reactionaries abroad.

Indeed, faith moves mountains.

## Commonwealth Conference

Predictably, no consensus could be reached, at the time of writing, on principles of a common declaration at the Commonwealth Conference that started in Singapore last week. Predictably, too, the reasons have been the British refusal to reverse the decision to sell arms to South Africa and the continued refusal by the African nations—notably Uganda, Zambia and Tanzania—to back down on the question.

Despite their occasional lip-service to racial equality, the rulers at Downing Street, liberals or conservatives, were never very earnest about sanction of any sort against the racist white rulers in South Africa. Mr Heath has never had any qualms whatsoever. He is no Fabian and has no pretensions. Immediately after he was voted to power, he began to espouse Pretoria openly and wanted to sell arms to it. To the pressmen in

New Delhi on his way to Singapore he said categorically that he intended to resume arms sale and did not like to have the issue discussed in Singapore. The suave British Premier has worked up the phantom of a Russian naval presence in the Indian Ocean to justify this reasoning. When asked about the possibility of Pretoria using the arms to shoot down the African freedom fighters, Mr Heath referred to the Russian arms aid to Fedayeens in the Middle East. But the prosaic diplomats did not explain how could Mr Heath equate the two situations.

Not unnaturally Mr Heath's decision has led to strong protest from the African nations who are helping the liberation movement in South Africa. Some of them have threatened a walk out rather than give in on this point. The preoccupation of others, particularly India, has been

to contain the differences of the arms question and prevent the dissolution of the august association. Interestingly, the Indian Prime Minister has stayed away from the Conference, deputing Mr Swaran Singh to do the unbecoming job of tightroping the Conference. "Spiritually committed" to the African liberation movement, India has decided to play safe this time. She has chaffed at the British for their intransigence but has in the same breath called on the Africans to desist from a showdown.

But to what purpose? To the British the Commonwealth has been a device to keep up the economic hammerlock on their former real estates under the fig-leaf of common interest. And they never hesitated, now as in the past, to let down others for their own interest. On the question of South Africa, they are out to play the same perfidious game. Nothing should prevent others from foiling them. But then it requires some sacrifice which the pettyfogging, Westernised leaders in New Delhi cannot do. The African fighters in the field may be expendable, but the Commonwealth Conference and the annual safari along with it must go on.

## Pre-Poll Canters

Barely five weeks remain for the parliamentary poll, and the hysteria at the hustings is mounting. But the battle-lines are still blurred. The Prime Minister has thrown cold water on the aspirations of parties like the CPI and the PSP which had appointed themselves her cheer-leaders in the hope of securing a few back-bench seats in her post-election cabinet. She has firmly expressed herself against any alliance between her party, which, after the Chief Election Commissioner's verdict, is symbolically in the direct line of descent of the Indian National Congress, and any other party at the national level. Evidently, the Prime Minister is not prepared to share power with anyone at the Centre and is bent on playing

for an outright win. Maybe she has ventured to take to this course because she has confidence in her faithfuls, because she knows that ignoring the present rebuff they will rally round her in the event of her failing to secure an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha. Those who are dismayed at this sudden eclipse of progressiveness in her will not fail to rediscover it to install her in power should the need arise. She wants to eat the cake and have it too, because the left parties have become servile, because in the infighting in the left every warring faction wants to have her on its side. They are her critics not by choice but by force of circumstances created by her.

In the States where assembly elections will be held simultaneously with the parliamentary poll she is prepared to follow a flexible policy. In assembly elections her party is entering into all kinds of arrangements with sundry parties and groups. No quibbling over principles is being allowed to stand in the way of rickety alliances with widely disparate parties. The Congress(R) is ready to be more than generous to its prospective partners in the matter of allocation of assembly seats provided they respond by withdrawing their claims to as many Lok Sabha seats as the Prime Minister wants; it is trading assembly seats for Lok Sabha seats. Parties having pretensions to an all-India status are in a quandary. The so-called national parties cannot satisfy the hunger of the Congress(R) for Lok Sabha seats without incurring the risk of being returned to the house with depleted strength. On the other hand, regional parties having no ambition to capture power at the Centre are delighted to grasp the

offer; they are rejoicing over the projected division of election spoils under which the Congress(R) will rule at the Centre and they in the States. The policy of the Congress(R) in the States is in furtherance of the Prime Minister's policy at the Centre.

The strategy of the Congress(R) has put the eight-party combination in West Bengal in a predicament. The simulated quarrel between the party and the Bangla Congress has ended as quickly as it had developed, obviously at the intervention of the Centre. The Bangla Congress has bitten much more than it can chew, but New Delhi has no objection because it has not made a corresponding claim to Lok Sabha seats. The student and youth wings of the Congress(R) are said to have resented this iniquitous distribution of assembly seats, but their anger is an expression of thwarted ambition which will die down eventually. The CPI will like

to smuggle into this alliance and has become a suspect of the EPC; but it does not know how to, without agreeing to be relegated to the position of a regional party. It is in the EPC; for otherwise it may be left out in the cold. The Forward Bloc is under strain because of pulls from three different directions. The dissident PSP has split, and the double-dissenters are flocking to the Congress(R)-Bangla Congress consolidation. So are two break-way groups of the SSP. All these political acrobatics are being committed in the name of the special situation in West Bengal. It is a handy pretext for it can be invoked as effectively for joining hands with the Congress(R) as for opposing it. The only party which is showing some consistency in this pervasive opportunism is the CPM; because the Prime Minister would not touch it with a barge-pole; maybe New Delhi's hostility has redeemed the party.

## Middle East

The off and on peace negotiations under the aegis of the Swedish diplomat Dr Gunnar Jarring are so much concerned with procedural matters that it has not been possible to take up issues of substance. That the haggling would continue for long has been made abundantly clear by both Mr Anwar Sadat and Mrs Golda Meir in their recent interviews with columnist James Reston. The Israeli Prime Minister was reported as saying that she herself could not say she saw peace in the near future and if there were any slight hope of reaching a real peace with the UAR and the other Arab countries it would take a long time. But the present stalemate is not really to anybody's inconvenience—the Palestinian commandos have ditched the Rogers proposals as disguised traps—which is why it is unlikely that there will be shooting again when the present cease-fire expires on February 5. Mr Sadat has been haranguing his

countrymen to be prepared for "all-out war" when the cease-fire ends. He has made public statements to the effect that it is absolutely essential for Israel to produce a definite timetable for troop withdrawal from territories occupied during the Six-Day War or for the Jarring Mission to make considerable progress if there is to be a renewal of the cease-fire. The first can be straightaway written off, while no one knows what constitutes 'considerable' for Mr Sadat. To what extent the general mood in the UAR has changed will be clear

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from the following few facts: Mr Sadat is finding more resources for public works programme, the people are more concerned with their daily living and to all appearances life goes on as if normality has come to stay. When Mr Kosygin was in Egypt at the time of Nasser's funeral he made Mr Sadat understand that the Russian support to his Government was conditional on its seeking a political solution with Egypt and refraining from doing anything which might disturb the precarious stability that was Nasser's most positive legacy to his people. With Nasser accepting the Rogers framework for peace negotiations the war of attrition was given a good-bye. It is now well known that Mr Sadat's contact with the U.S. Administration ranges from receiving very special visitors from the White House to exchanging letters with President Nixon. Israel and the UAR have also come closer in that Egypt has accepted in principle secure borders for the Jewish State even though Tel-Aviv would not do more than pull back from certain annexed territories. (The brief of Mr Jarring, however, provides for the withdrawal of Israel from territories occupied as a result of conquest). The most important development during the last year was the Palestinian commandos' success in making the world realize that at the heart of the Middle East crisis lay the issue of Palestine. They have rejected the suggestion of a new State in the Arab majority area of the Gaza Strip and West Bank, since that would amount to the recognition of the Zionist State in 78 per cent of the pre-1948 Palestine. But the Palestinians themselves are at the moment facing tactics of ruthless repression by the Jordan regime which sometimes acts in covert collusion with the Israelis.

#### CORRECTION

In 'freedom of the Press' (December 16), it was inadvertently stated, on Page 14, that the management and the employees' union of *Basumati* signed a written agreement on November 16. No agreement was signed.

### View from Delhi

## The Tricked Left

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

A ruling party going for a snap election always has an edge over its opponents. Timing the poll to one's advantage means the wind-fall of a few million marginal votes. The Opposition, unlike in 1967, has been forestalled from mounting any major agitation and building a turbulent climax to the election. The cannon fodder for such agitations is always there but the parties of the left and the right have been outmanoeuvred. The general atmosphere of violence and the near breakdown of law and order witnessed on the eve of the 1967 elections is absent now in most parts of the country. The time gap between the dissolution of the Lok Sabha and the poll is so short that no party can get an agitation off the ground.

The pattern of alliances is very much a crazy quilt yet. Nevertheless, it looks as though the parties of the left will lose relatively more than the ruling Congress would. Even if the ruling Congress improves its position in terms of Lok Sabha seats, the parties and groups of the right would also have gained relatively.

To pollsters in New Delhi, the patronising attitude of the ruling Congress to the left parties and its "big party arrogance" (what the CPI said of the CPI-M until the other day) has been puzzling. Mrs Gandhi is making a bid for independent majority in the Lok Sabha and is taking the CPI and the PSP for a ride. The left parties should be happy if they retain the seats they won in 1967, as things stand today.

The talks between the PSP and the ruling Congress have broken down at the national level. There was no effort at an understanding of the ruling Congress and the CPI at the national level. At the Pradesh level the bosses have had their way. Maharashtra does not want any help

from the CPI or the PSP. In Andhra Pradesh, Mr Brahmamanda Reddy knows better what is good for him and his party though that may not exactly coincide with Mrs Gandhi's interests. The CPI may get a few crumbs in Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and possibly Orissa. But that is no consolation.

The redoubtable Mr S. A. Dange made a star-billed appearance at the Press Club of India on a dry day and one presumes the questions were sombrely sober. Mr Dange, possibly for the first time, said the CPI split in 1964 was over programme. That was a long way from the vicious allegation of the "splitters" acting at China's behest. Mr Dange said unlike the CPI split, the Congress split was over personalities. When cornered he corrected himself saying that policies were also involved. Both the Congress outfits were bourgeois outfits and one was more progressive than the other. From the tone of his guarded answers it was obvious that Mr Dange and his party are annoyed that the Prime Minister is making a drive for absolute party majority in the Lok Sabha and the CPI would not be too happy to see her succeed. Perhaps what the CPI wants is about 200 seats for Mrs Gandhi so that she depends on the CPI and other forces.

Mrs Gandhi's party has alienated the support of the left parties which have been propping her in the Lok Sabha. A *New Age* editorial betrays the party's despair and helplessness. The bosses in the Pradeshes have won hands down and Mrs Gandhi has surrendered to the bosses. The Congress might win a majority if Mrs Gandhi's arithmetic is right but then the Congress Parliamentary Party to come will be more rightist than the one that was. The CPI's drive for

left-oriented Lok Sabha would have failed.

The CPI is hoping to win 30 seats, through adjustments with the ruling party and assuming this target is reached it is no victory because by itself it had won 24 last time. If the "left of centre" shift the CPI claims in the country as a whole is true, even 30 seats is no flattering victory. The CPI-M has realised belatedly the folly of backing Mrs Gandhi in the past. As was to be expected it is going it alone in almost all the States. The two Communist parties together would have fewer seats in the new Lok Sabha than in the last. The two socialist parties together might also have to share the same fate.

A right consolidation is a reality while left unity is an optical illusion. After the elections, the polarisation might well be between what Mr Dange euphemistically described as the liberal bourgeoisie (represented by Mrs Gandhi's party) and the reaction. The left might be eclipsed. The left is paying its price for the unabashed opportunism during the Congress split. Instead of creating a confrontation inside the Government, the left leaders acted as the drummer boys of the allegedly liberal bourgeoisie which now welcomes foreign private capital (Mrs Gandhi's talks with Mr Health) and is reluctant to take the initiative on British arms sales to South Africa at the Commonwealth conference.

The arrogant confidence of the ruling Congress should surprise many. After ditching the entire left and after allowing itself to be pushed around by regional parties like the DMK, Bangla Congress and the Akalis, it still thinks it can win an absolute majority. Mrs Gandhi dissolved the Lok Sabha taking a victory for granted on three assumptions: that the right will never unite, the left would be forced to come to terms with her to be able to survive, and her image is a guarantee of her victory. Mrs Gandhi might have raised all the crores needed to run the campaign but there are many spots in her

image. Going round Haryana with her on January 13, one got the impression that her electioneering was on a defensive note: assuring the audiences that she did not mean to deprive anybody of private property, that she was not a dictator, that she did not believe in toppling, and the like. There is a big gap between what she said at her December 29 press conference (the bravado about making the Constitution an issue) and what she says now. The strident attacks on the Supreme Court and the fundamental right to private property are being toned down as the

*Andhra*

## New Tactics In Andhra

MALLIKARANJAN RAO

**T**WO important developments in Andhra Pradesh in recent weeks should give a new dimension to the serious debate on the tactical line reported to be going on inside the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist).

One is the new style of work decided upon by the Srikakulam Regional Committee of the CPI(ML), which has suspended the "annihilation" campaign. The Srikakulam committee has pledged to mobilise the peasants on patently economic and sectional interests like reoccupation of land from the landlords, and seizure of hoarded foodgrain stocks or forcing the hoarders to sell them at reasonable prices. The switch in the tactical line, evident from a Telugu pamphlet dated "11-1970" (that is November 1970) issued from the "Srikakulam Struggle Area", is away from the party centre's directive. The "annihilation" tactic of the central leadership is based on the rejection of mass organisations and mass participation in armed struggle as preconditions for starting guerilla warfare. Paradoxically and ironically, the tactic

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—Editor

uncertainties began surfacing. There will be no leftism left in the ruling Congress when the polling takes place.

January 16, 1971

was first tried in Srikakulam where there was already a mass movement and so the CPI(ML) could claim some initial successes for its tactic.

The second development is the notification by the Andhra Pradesh Government of three taluks in Warangal district (Mulug, Mahboobabad and Narasampet) as "disturbed" areas to contain the "Naxalite" trouble. These areas have been under the influence of the Andhra Pradesh Revolutionary Communist Committee (Nagi Reddy group, as it is known) which has been trying to develop a contiguous forest area covering thousands of square miles as a "guerilla zone."

If one remembers that about two years ago, areas of Srikakulam were notified as "disturbed" by the State Government, the seriousness of the situation for the Government in these three troubled taluks can be understood.

It would be well to sum up the APRCC's tactical line before recounting the results of its application in this "disturbed" area. The APRCC holds that people's war is the only path of liberation for India and armed

struggle the main form of struggle and the Red army the main form of organisation. At the same time, mass struggles on immediate issues should be co-ordinated with armed struggle, by co-relating mass organisations to the organisation of the red army to make the broad masses of people participate consciously in armed struggle.

Unlike the CPI(ML) which considers the "annihilation" line valid for any part of the country any time and with no relation to the mass movement, the APRCC has divided the State into three zones on the basis of the level of the mass movement: the forest areas where the mass movement has reached the stage of armed struggle; areas where there is a wide mass base and the class struggles are intensifying; and the areas where the mass movement is relatively weak. The APRCC decided to take the mass movement on to the path of armed struggle in forest and mountainous areas; to gradually develop mass struggles into armed struggles in the areas where there were powerful class struggles by expanding and intensifying them; and to strive to develop class struggles in other areas.

#### Guerilla Zone

Its attempt to develop a guerilla zone was in the forest belt through which the Godavari river runs. The forest comprises areas of three Telengana districts (Khammam, Warangal, Karimnagar and Adilabad) on one side of the river, and areas of

three coastal districts, East Godavari, West Godavari and Visakhapatnam across the river. This forest is linked with the Srikakulam forest by a small plain and the same forest extends into Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra States. Lakhs of Girijans live in this area under the same conditions of feudal exploitation and serfdom as obtain in Srikakulam district. The area is economically self-sufficient and poor in communications. It includes the area which guerillas of the 1946-51 Telengana peasant war used as the base for the struggle in the plains.

The APRCC started work in the Mulug taluk and along with the propagation of revolutionary politics, the people were mobilised against local exploitation—by landlords, forest contractors, moneylenders and petty village officials. The people were also mobilised for occupation of forest lands and land with the landlords. Resistance from the landlords was met with guerilla squad actions; as was to be expected, police reserves were thrown in by the Government against the movement. There has been a similar movement in areas of East Godavari district, across the river. Encounters between the squads and police patrols are common. Armed attacks on "people's enemies", seizure of their moveable property, burning of promissory notes, Government records with village officials, re-occupation of land seized by landlords, attacks on police stations, seizure of grain stocks from landlords for distribution among the peasantry all this had added up to a situation euphemistically described in Government's parlance as "disturbed."

In a recent document (*Some Problems Concerning the Path of People's War in India*), the APRCC has summed up its experience: "... when the people's movement is advancing, wherever we lagged behind in forming armed squads to fight back landlords and police repression, the movement has suffered a setback. And similarly wherever we

carried [out] armed attacks without taking into consideration the level of the people's consciousness, their political and organisational level, the movement has suffered a setback. Wherever the armed struggle was correctly co-ordinated with mass struggles on partial issues, the movement has advanced." (p. 37).

To the APRCC, the CPI(ML)'s idea of creating red bases by annihilating the class enemy is un-Maoist, and contrary to Mao's concept of liberated areas. The CPI(ML) thinks the state machinery is smashed at the village level the moment the landlords are forced to flee the village. An earlier APRCC document points out that Mao has laid down three conditions for developing an area into a liberated base area: building the armed forces, defeating the enemy, and mobilisation of the broad masses of the people. As the APRCC understands Mao, building of armed forces means building of the people's armed forces capable of defeating the enemy's armed forces, defeating the enemy does not mean annihilation of class enemies but defeating the class enemy along with its armed forces, and mobilisation of the masses means mobilisation and arming of the masses against the class enemy and its armed forces in complete co-ordination with the people's armed forces.

So "red" power cannot exist without a red army though the CPI(ML) claimed long ago that "red" power has emerged in Srikakulam and that it would soon be India's Yanan.

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# The Prophet Of Mushahari

N. K. SINGH

ONE of the important things about the great Sarvodaya leader J. P. Narayan is that he knows very well how to keep in tune with the times. Take his dress habits: in India he wears his famous J. P. cut kurta and pyajamas, but while abroad he likes to be in costly Western style suits.

Mr Narayan has confined himself for over seven and a half months in the Naxalite-infested Mushahari Community Development Block of the district of Muzaffarpur in North Bihar. He has taken a vow that "either my bones would crumble or I shall succeed in my mission"—of curbing the Naxalites.

Recently Mr Narayan came out with a well-circulated and rather lengthy article "Face To Face With Reality" in which he tells the story of his "mission of peace." The article can be divided into two parts. The first deals with the reality that J. P. had to face in the villages. The second is an effort to criticise (or to malign!) the theory of violent revolution, particularly that advocated by the CP(ML).

The first reaction which the Sarvodaya leader had on coming face to face with reality was that the socio-economic condition in the villages was "ugly and distressing in the extreme. ... In the event what meet the eyes are, utter poverty, misery, inequality, exploitation, backwardness, stagnation, frustration, loss of hope."

Some of his statements are contradictory. Somewhere he says that he is losing faith in constitutional means but at the same time he declares that the Constitution facilitates the peaceful path to social revolution. "If the reform laws already enacted came to be fully and truly implemented, it would amount to a minor social revolution in the countryside." But soon enough, from his experience

which shows that the existing laws continue obstinately to remain on paper, irrespective of whatever the administration may do, J. P. passes on to the other theory: "It is better not to have a law than to have one which cannot be implemented." He cites a number of examples to prove his point.

Mr Narayan tries to find out the causes of the growth of politically motivated rural violence. He says it would never have taken any root had not the ground been prepared for it by the persistence of poverty, unemployment, and myriad socio-economic injustices.

It is not the so-called Naxalites who have fathered this violence, but others who have persistently defied and defeated the laws for the past so many years—politicians, administrators, landowners, moneylenders. The big farmer who cheated the ceiling law through *benami* and fictitious settlements; the gentlemen who grabbed Government lands and village communes; the landowners who persistently denied the legal rights of the sharecropper and evicted them from their holdings and who underpaid their labourers and threw them out of their homesteads; the men who by fraud or force took the lands away from the weaker sections; the so-called upper caste men who looked down upon Harijans and ill-treated and discriminated against them; the moneylenders who charged usurious interest and seized the lands of the poor and the weak; the politicians, the administrators and others who aided and abetted these wrongs; the courts of laws and the procedures and costs of justice that conspired to deny a fair deal to the weaker sections of our society; the system of education and the nature of planning that are producing an ever expanding

army of ill-educated, frustrated and unemployed youth and are accentuating economic disparities and leading to further polarisation of classes; the politicians, whose self-seeking has reduced democracy, the party-system, the ideologies, to a farce—it is they who are responsible for the accumulated sense of injustice, grievance and hurt among the poor and downtrodden that is now seeking its outlet in violence, declares J.P.

## Other Atrocities

But the story has another aspect, too. J.P. keeps himself away from dealing with it. He points to the economic exploitation by the kulaks but is ready to 'forget and forgive' the other atrocities like mass murder, loot, rape etc. committed by them. Actually his Sarvodaya movement has always been blessed by the ruling class as a means of diverting the anger of the people against the inequitable social organs. And perhaps this is why he was called the "tested and tried agent of the reactionary ruling class" and "a loyal lackey of the landlords who have now requisitioned his services at Mushahari", by the Naxalites. "J.P. has abandoned the pose of neutrality and is denouncing and condemning the 'violence' of the peasantry and asking them to obey and worship the landlords as before," the Naxalites alleged.

In his article Mr Narayan comes to the point—rather slowly, indeed—and declares that violence is not the saviour. He gives four reasons: it might produce a reaction and end up in a fascist dictatorship; violent revolution takes time to engineer and there is not a single social revolution in history which succeeded in realising the ideals for which it was made—after revolution a new privileged class of rulers and exploiters grew up.

About the first point J.P. himself is not very sure and it is futile to discuss it here. For his other argument that a violent revolution takes time to engineer, can he cite a single example to prove that non-violent revolution is the 'quickest method'?

Actually, the point that the non-violent method is the quickest does not arise in any case, as not a single non-violent revolution has taken place. To prove his last two points, J.P. knowingly cites the example of the social-imperialist Soviet Russia. Remarkably enough, he keeps himself away from indulging in 'nonsense' arguments like the developments in post-revolution China. He avoids discussing the Chinese Cultural Revolution which took place under the personal guidance of Mao Tse-tung to solve the problems posed by the experiences of the Russian Revolution.

### 'Modest Programme'

However, J.P. has drawn a "modest programme" of intensifying his Sarvodaya movement to counter the Naxalite influence in Mushahari. But ironically enough, Gramdan pledges—the higher form of the earlier Bhoodan movement—were obtained earlier in this Block, that is to say, the region had been donated to the ideals of Sarvodaya long ago. And, yet there is violence! However, J.P. is again 'honest' enough to recognise the fact that Gramdan pledges have not been implemented in this area (like the rest of Gramdani areas!). So his Gramdan has also remained unimplemented just like the laws passed by the legislatures, about which Mr Narayan is so critical.

J.P.'s modest programme—drawn in two parts, the first being related to the implementation of the earlier obtained Gramdan pledges, and the second to the correction of 'mistakes' and 'wrongs' in this respect—sounds good enough (if implemented). Leaders of all hues have assured him of their help in his mission. The enemy is common—Naxalism. According to a recent report, the Socialist Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, the Defence Minister, Mr Jagjivan Ram, and several other like-minded Ministers, MPs and leaders of different political parties have expressed their desire to visit Mushahari where a high-pitched battle between two contradictory thoughts—Sarvodaya and Naxa-

lism—is being fought.

Great as he is, J.P. gives us some high-sounding words: "I have no army (why he should need one when the whole repressive machinery of the Government is in attendance to move at his command in Mushahari?)...to fight the Naxalites with, nor do I look upon what I am doing as a fight against anybody but as a fight for social and economic justice...Mine is not a negative but positive task."

How sane sounds J.P.!

After denouncing the theory of violent revolution, he attempts to differentiate between the Maoists and the Guevarists and jumps to the conclusion that the path adopted by the CP (ML) follows the line of Che Guevara. Leaving apart the question of his competence to judge these methods, one notes that J.P. is afraid to call the CP(ML) Maoists and then he continues slandering them. He is well aware that the days may be fast approaching when he may not get away with his slandering campaign against Mao Tse-tung's thought. So why not subtly try to confuse people by telling them that these Naxalites are not Maoists after all. He pretends to criticise the methods and ideology of the CP(ML), differentiating them from the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung, though he is fully aware that the Naxalite movement in general and the CP(ML) in particular has the approval of the Chinese Communist Party and Mao Tse-tung.

As for the question of violence, it was there before—violence of a counter-revolutionary nature as perpetrated by the kulaks on the rural poor. This monopoly of violence, alas, is gone today. The peasants have risen with revolutionary violence to pay them back in the same coin. Here lies the *fundamental* objection of J.P. and like-minded gentlemen.

To subvert and crush the revolutionary struggle, there is to be a division of labour: the police, paramilitary forces and the hired goondas of landlords should let loose a campaign of terror against the rural people. On the other hand the clever

"Sarvodayi" should subtly preach the gospel of non-violence and attempt to calm down the people's wrath.

### Latecomers

The trouble with people like Jaya Prakash Narayan is that they are always among the latecomers. Something happens somewhere and then they appear on the stage to carry on their "mission of peace". In Telangana, the peasants rebel. The GOI suppresses it. Then comes the great saviour of society, Sant Vinoba Bhave. In Naxalbari the peasants revolt and ten peasants including children and women die. Then comes the great Gandhian Acharya Bhave.

And in Mushahari again the peasants try to capture the state power. Their womenfolk are raped, property plundered and huts smashed. On the scene appears Jaya Prakashji. He comes to remove the socio-economic disparities and exploitation that are there. He asks the people to wait and not hurry and spoil all the things he has done for them. He assures the peasants that they will get their land after he has finished his various donation programmes: Bhoodan, Gramdan, Prakhandan, Ziladan, Prantdan and so on.

One question: was there no exploitation in Telangana, Naxalbari or Mushahari before the revolt? Why didn't all these Gandhians try to tackle it? It is remarkable that only when their class-brethren, the landlords, started getting killed, they rushed to Telangana, Naxalbari and Mushahari.

### Mushahari Today

Let us peep into Mushahari where the Sarvodaya leader has been campaigning for the past so many months. Surely enough, the arrival of a prominent figure like J.P. hampered Naxalite activities. The work which could not be done by the anti-Naxalite cells of the Bihar police along with a network of spies, contingents of the Border Security Force, Central Reserve Police and combatant sections of the Bihar Military Police, has been done by Mr Narayan; Naxalite activities have

# On Torture And Culture

RANAJIT GUHA

been hampered to a certain extent. They had to shift their centre of activity to the nearby Hazipur region; since the arrival of J.P. only three or four annihilations have been included in the 18-man list. However, in the Hazipur region four murders were committed in quick succession in November-December, 1970.

One of the 'annihilations' that took place after the arrival of J.P. at Mushahari was that of the President of the local unit of the Jana Sangh. After the murder, the Jana Sangh tried to make political capital out of it. A highly provocative leaflet issued on behalf of the party said that "the Muslims belonging to the CPI" had killed its political worker. It gave the call *khoon ka badla khoon* (blood for blood). Meetings were held in pockets of Sangh influence and an attempt was made to observe a black day throughout the State. All these things were aimed at the minority community. Obviously the Sangh wanted to kill two birds with one stone: it wanted to create communal trouble as well as propagate an anti-commie feeling.

However, a small pamphlet, with the caption, "the Jana Sangh is the friend of the rich and sworn enemy of the poor: Arise against the communalism of the Sangh!", issued on behalf of the CP(ML) foiled the plans of the neo-fascists. It owned the murder and after listing a number of accusations against the deceased, it said that "the Jana Sangh—the party of blackmarketeers and characterless zamindars—wants to give this incident a communal colour."

So, a major clash between the two communities could be averted. But what the prophet of Mushahari was doing all this time? Significantly enough, he liked to keep mum and not a single statement denouncing the wicked game of the Sanghis did come from J.P., who is supposed to be very alert in these matters.

And perhaps this is why, writing in a Delhi fortnightly, the great Hindu leader, Mr Balraj Madhok, liked to keep Guru Golwalkar, Vinoba Bhave and J.P. in the same category.

THE confrontation between the revolutionaries and the guardians of law and order has reached a significant stage. The sympathizers and activists of the CP(ML) are being subjected to a variety of tortures in police custody. Calcutta is slowly waking up to the fact, although this is not an entirely new development. Already last summer a sensitive and confirmed anti-Communist had taken note of this in the pages of a journal firmly committed to the Establishment. We quote in extenso from Rupadarsi's column in *Desh* of May 30, 1970, because it is representative both as a record of facts and as a point of view.

Recently I happened to meet two young Naxalites just released on bail. One of them is 19 years of age... and the other 21... They both have extremely innocent looks, and they are highly resolute in character, idealistic and courteous.

Both said that they had become Naxalites merely by reading *Deshabrat*... I have no reason to disbelieve them on this count.

One of them was taken away from home at about 2-30 or 3 a.m. by the police during a raid earlier this month. The police had no warrant for his arrest, and had no specific charges to show against him. The other alleged that some CPM boys in his college had tipped off the police to arrest him.

They both were lodged in police lock-ups in the local *thana*, at Lalbazar and in jail for fifteen days before being released on bail.

They said that although there was no specific charge against them, it is only because they read and kept *Deshabrat*—the police search in their houses had yielded nothing but bundles of this journal—and because they subscribed, out of idealism, to the thoughts of Mao Tsetung, that they

were put to severe torture at the police station, at Lalbazar, and at the Lord Sinha Road and Gokhale Road police bureaux. One of them said that when Debi Roy, a chief of the detective department, failed to make him yield any 'information' through bastinado himself, he got a junior officer to beat him up further. And since the boy knew nothing, he had no information to yield. Under the direction of Arun Mukherji, the new SB boss, one of these boys was suspended by handcuffs from the ceiling for three hours and ruthlessly beaten up on the sole of his feet until he lost consciousness—all in order to extract a confession. They also gave him electric shocks. In addition to this, in order to make them confess, they were, during the first few nights, roused from sleep from time to time and abused in the most obscene language... They were not maltreated during their stay in the jail lock-up. There they had an opportunity to meet many other Naxalites, and talking about their mutual experiences, they came to learn a lot more about police repression. A young boy told them that the police had forced an iron rod into his anus, and an elderly chemist displayed cigarette burns made by the police on his body.

In the six\* months since this was written, a great deal more has been heard about atrocities of a similar or even more outrageous sort. Although most of the big 'national' dailies have not yet made up their mind about treating such information as 'news', some of the more outspoken periodicals are already shrieking in agony. See, for instance, the extracts quoted from *Darpan* in *Frontier* of November 14, 1970. Besides, one has simply to ask the

\*This article was written in the first week of December, 1970.

boy next door in almost any *para* of Calcutta, and he will produce oral—and if one has the stomach for it—visual evidence of broken wrists, roasted skin, mangled anus, bruised testicles—his own or those of his friends.

Yet, as the columnist in *Desh* points out, public reaction to such atrocities has been one of near indifference: 'I see nothing but an amazing silence all around!...At a time when we ought to step forward without fear, how is it that we are acting as passive and mute onlookers?'

## II

The onlooker's days of innocence are, however, strictly numbered. When a regime takes to the use of torture as a part of its normal routine of political 'pacification', it must end up by producing a high incidence of mental disorder both among the torturers and the tortured. The Algerian war has left us with ample evidence on this point. This is recorded in the writings of Frantz Fanon who, as a professional psychiatrist, had an opportunity to study the problem from both the warring sides. His work, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Penguin 1967) devotes a cruel and for us highly instructive chapter to a discussion of 'reactionary psychoses' which, according to Fanon, resulted directly from 'the bloodthirsty and pitiless atmosphere, the generalization of inhuman practices characteristic of that conflict. The process, it appears from this account, spares the personality of neither the torturer nor the tortured.

### Broken Minds: the Tortured

To take up the victims first, Fanon discusses a large number of patients suffering from affective-intellectual 'modifications and mental disorders' during and after torture, and shows how a correspondence exists between the characteristic morbidity groups and the different methods of torture employed.

His first category of tortures is particularly interesting for the resemblance they bear to Lalbazar's alleged practices. These are the 'so-called preventive' tortures designed

to make the prisoner talk. 'The principle that over and above a certain threshold pain becomes intolerable, takes on here singular importance. The aim is to arrive as quickly as possible at that threshold'. The methods include beating up by several policemen at the same time and from all directions; skin burnt by lighted cigarettes; injection of water by the mouth accompanied by an anema of soapy water given at high pressure; introduction of a bottle into the anus; forcing the prisoner to remain standing or kneeling in physically the most painful postures for hours without the slightest movement, every movement being punished with severe truncheon blows.

The psychiatric symptoms exhibited by the victims of such tortures include (a) agitated nervous depressions, (b) mental anorexia—loss of appetite arising from mental causes and (c) motor instability expressed in a total inability to keep still.

A second category relates to the use of electricity. Here again we find our guardians of law and order emulating the French colonialists. As *Darpan* writing about Lalbazar's anti-Naxal techniques reported: 'Sometimes the human beasts strip people and make them sit on lighted heaters. The lower limbs of Sahadeb, of Kasba, have been scorched after he was made to sit on a lighted heater' (quoted in *Frontier*, November 14, 1970)

Fanon's patients who had been tortured by electricity, were found to be suffering from (a) electricity phobia. In other words, the victims felt 'pins and needles' throughout their bodies; their hands seemed to be torn off, their heads seemed to be bursting, and their tongues felt as if they were being swallowed. They suffered from inertia, a general sense of disorientation and drift. They would refuse to come into physical contact with any electrical appliance like a switch, a telephone or a radio, making it 'completely impossible for the doctor to even mention the eventual possibility of electric shock treatment'.

In addition to these the author discusses two other methods of torture to which his patients had been subjected, namely, brain-washing and intravenous injections of Pentothal, the so-called 'truth serum': We have no evidence yet whether official torture in West Bengal or elsewhere in India has yet reached such heights of sophistication. But it might do so in due course, and the reader could arm himself in advance by looking up Fanon on the psychiatric consequences of these methods. For the way the regime and its protectors have undertaken to bring back 'a climate of sanity' in West Bengal, might end up by generating mental disorder on an unprecedented scale. The first casualties are already with us. To quote from *Darpan* again:

Many of the arrested have gone mad...for instance, Mihir Sarkar or Kelebabu of Sainthia. Thanks to repeated electric shocks, his mind does not function properly; he faints off and on, gets excited at the most ordinary conversation, and takes everyone for a Detective Department man and becomes delirious. (*Frontier*, November 14, 1970).

It's time that the liberal onlooker started pondering over the price he may have to pay for passivity. He may keep looking on or away at the risk of being condemned to live with broken minds and broken bodies in every street and most homes. His days of innocence are indeed numbered.

### Broken Minds: the Torturers

Even more ominous, perhaps, is the prospect of living in a police state where torture has become habitual with the custodians of the law. For torture, in these circumstances, tends to be compulsive with the torturer. He becomes a prisoner of his habit and his violence remains no longer limited to the officially approved victims. The psychotic process is, of course, aided by social and cultural inducements. A torturer is rewarded well by the regime for his success in eliciting information from

his prisoner. Torture therefore becomes competitive like any other 'normal' job or profession. And in order to do this job well and deserve his rewards, the torturer must have faith in his mission: his cultural identification with his superior's point of view must be altogether complete. As one of Fanon's patients, a European police inspector involved in interrogating and torturing Algerian patriots, put it:

The fact is, nowadays we have to work like troopers...Those gentlemen in the government say there's no war in Algeria and that the arm of law, that's to say the police, ought to restore order. But there is a war going in Algeria, and when they wake up to it, it'll be too late. The thing that kills me most is the torture...Sometimes I torture people for ten hours at a stretch.

...It's very tiring...It's true we take it in turns, but the question is to know when to let the next chap have a go. Each one thinks he's going to get the information at any minute and takes good care not to let the bird go to the next chap after he's softened him up nicely, when of course the other chap would get the honour and glory of it...Our problem is as follows: are you able to make this fellow talk? It's a question of personal success. You see, you're competing with the others....

By the time this policeman came to see the doctor, he was already in an advanced psychotic state. He smoked a lot—five packets of cigarettes a day, lost his appetite, slept badly and had frequent nightmares. He hated noise. At home he wanted to beat up everybody all the time. It became a habit with him to hit his children, one of them a mere baby. Once as his wife criticized him for this, he threw himself upon her, beat her up savagely and tied her to a chair. He couldn't stand being contradicted:

...as soon as someone goes against me I want to hit him. Even outside

my job, I feel I want to settle the fellows who get in my way, even for nothing at all. Look here, for example, suppose I go to the kiosk to buy papers. There's a lot of people. Of course, you have to wait. I hold out my hand...to take my papers. Someone in the queue gives me a challenging look and says 'Wait your turn'. Well, I feel I want to beat him up and say to myself, 'If I had you for a few hours my fine fellow you wouldn't look so clever afterwards.

The police inspector was clearly in the process of turning into a sadist. Trapped, professionally as well as culturally, in his calling, he ended up by asking the psychiatrist 'to help him to go on torturing Algerian patriots without any prickings of conscience, without any behaviour problems and with complete equanimity'. Thus, concludes Fanon, 'we find ourselves in the presence of a coherent system which leaves nothing intact. The executioner who loves birds and enjoys the peace of listening to a symphony or a sonata is simply one stage in the process. Farther on in it we may well find a whole existence which enters into complete and absolute sadism'.

For all who care it is time to wake up to the fact that, so far as political torture is concerned, we already have a bit of Algeria in West Bengal. Between an 'enlightened' police chief, a patron of the arts, who is alleged to have drawn up a list of revolutionaries in need of instant liquidation and his subordinates getting on with torture as a quotidian aspect of their duty, we have an army of potential sadists acting as our protectors. It may not be long before these sadists start over-reacting. The longer they are allowed to go on, the more compulsive they are likely to be in their urge to maim and to kill. The onlooker will get hurt simply because he might happen to be ahead of the torturer in a queue.

### III

Our emphasis so far has been on

broken minds rather than broken limbs. For it is only by recognizing psychosis as one of its characteristic products that we come to acknowledge torture for what it really is—that is, a cultural fact:

### A Fact of Culture

For there is no class or combination of classes that can keep itself in power without cultural coercion. In the halcyon days of class rule over an oppressed majority of the people such 'normal' institutional means of mind-bending as schools, universities, ashrams, mass media etc. serve the purpose. But as the class struggle gains in intensity and official violence starts meeting with revolutionary violence, the regime in its desperation gets energized on all fronts: the innocuous constable on the beat is replaced by para-military forces or regular units of the army; parliamentary procedures and constitutional myths are set aside to make room for 'preventive detention' and other explicit forms of terror; and following the logic of these developments and as a necessary complement to these, the arsenal of official culture is replaced by the regime's *brahmastra*, its ultimate weapon of persuasion, namely, TORTURE.

Nothing illustrates this procedure better than what's going on in West Bengal today. For a large section of the youth the 'normal' institutions of a comprador culture—schools, colleges and universities—and their operational methods—courses, lessons, examinations etc.—have all become obsolete. These young people are refusing to have their minds bent and the old culture forced down their throat. As a result, the purveyors of this culture have started handing these institutions over to the purveyors of official violence. CRP takes over Jadavpur University. When the mind-bending operations in the classroom meet with resistance, the Police Commissioner is asked to help the process of learning with torture, the mindbending operation Lalbazar specializes in.

### Lenin on Two Methods

Such cooperation between torturers

and educators need not surprise us. They stand, respectively, for the sharps and flats of our culture, and neither taken alone, would make the music. Together, they represent that complementarity which Lenin wrote about in 1914:

In all advanced countries throughout the world, the bourgeoisie resorts to two methods in its struggle against the working-class movement and the workers' parties. One method is that of violence, persecution, bans, and suppression. In its fundamentals, this is a feudal, medieval method. Everywhere there are sections and groups of the bourgeoisie—smaller in the advanced countries and larger in the backward ones—which prefer these methods, and in certain highly critical moments in the workers' struggle against wage-slavery, the *entire* bourgeoisie is agreed on the employment of such methods. Historical examples of such moments are provided by Chartism in England, and 1849 and 1871 in France.

The other method the bourgeoisie employs against the movement is that of dividing the workers, disrupting their ranks, bribing individual representatives or certain groups of the proletariat with the object of winning them over to its side. These are not feudal but *purely* bourgeois and modern methods, in keeping with the developed and civilized customs of capitalism, with the democratic system....

In keeping with Russia's boundless backwardness, the feudal methods of combating the working-class movement are appallingly predominant in that country. After 1905, however, considerable 'progress' was to be noted in the employment of liberal and democratic methods to fool and corrupt the workers. Among the liberal 'methods' we have, for example, the growth of nationalism, a stronger tendency to refurbish and revive religion 'for the people' (both directly and indirectly in the form of developing idealistic Kantian and Machist philosophy), the 'successes' of bourgeois theories of political economy (com-

bined with the labour theory of value, or substituted for it), etc., etc.

Among the democratic methods of fooling the workers and subjecting them to bourgeois ideology are the liquidationist-Narodnik-Cadet varieties... (*Collected Works*. Moscow 1964. Vol. 20, pp. 455-56).

It will be futile to seek in pre-revolutionary Russia a precise analogy of India to-day. Parallelisms are of course there. One has merely to reflect on the contemporary political scene in order to identify our own 'liquidationist-Narodnik-Cadet varieties'. For the present purpose, however, we shall take up only that aspect of Lenin's statement which relates to the coexistence of feudal and liberal elements in a culture.

Our educational system represents the liberal, velvet glove of our culture. Fathered as it was by a colonial regime to serve primarily its own needs, it is, twenty-three years after independence, still not free from feudal dross: the values propagated and upheld by many of the courses in the humanities and by the social relations within the faculties and governing bodies of most institutions offer ample evidence on this point. Yet, the system is *on the whole* bourgeois in its orientation. Its aim is to inculcate among the youth rationalism, scepticism, philosophical idealism, acquisitiveness, competitiveness, individualism and nationalism—that is, the classic range of bourgeois concepts, values and attitudes—through the characteristic manner of bourgeois instruction based on empirical analysis and formal logic.

The youth are revolting against this system because it has no relevance to their social existence. There is very little in the modes and relations of production obtaining in our society that links up in any meaningful way with the kind of education it offers. Worse, the liberal trappings of the system are used by the regime and its servitors to cover up the rot-tenes of the infrastructure itself. For the more advanced contingents of our youth, therefore, the rejection of schools and colleges constitutes a

necessary part of their rejection of society itself.

The dominant culture's response to this has been to take off its velvet glove and reveal the mailed fist. Liberalism has given way to the other method of persuasion—the 'feudal, medieval method' of 'violence, persecution, bans and suppression' mentioned by Lenin. Torture represents this method in its *most succinct and clearly defined form* just as in ancient and medieval battles a pair of warriors would detach themselves from their respective sides and meet in single combat to express, in its simplest form, the collective violence of the entire field. This confrontation between the torturer and the tortured is feudal—that is authoritarian and despotic—because, unlike what happens at a seminar, there is no room here for the liberal manner of argument: 'on the one hand'/'yet on the other'. The freedom of choice that the persecutor can allow his victim must be strictly limited, and the terms of his message are simply: 'either'/'or'—*either* the torturer's point of view *or* pain. Mr Debi Roy doesn't waste his time sorting out masses of alternatives.

#### IV

As indicated in the extract above, feudal elements continue to co-exist with bourgeois elements even in a predominantly bourgeois culture. There is no capitalist transformation of society that has ever achieved or *can* achieve a *total* transformation of culture. Even the great bourgeois revolution of 1789 didn't achieve this, and Marx has left us with a classic exposition of the problem in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*. Lenin himself cites some nineteenth-century examples from England and France, the most advanced capitalist countries of those days. Closer to our own experience we have, in the age of Imperialism—the highest stage of capitalism, a wealth of evidence about the feudal element showing up in and often dominating the culture of all capitalist regimes in their conflict with national minorities within their visible or invisible empires.

It is, however, useful to remember that the relative share of the feudal and bourgeois i.e. liberal-democratic) component of a culture has a fairly direct correlation with the level of socio-economic development of the country concerned. As Lenin points out, in generalized terms as well as by a concrete observation about Russia before and after 1905, the more retarded a country is in capitalist development, the greater is the size of the bourgeoisie with a strong preference for feudal methods in its struggle against the working-class. India's 'boundless backwardness' is a statistical and social fact that is beyond dispute. In spite of a certain glitter of modernity among a minute section of the elite, our culture is, on the whole, a dark mass of feudal and quasi-feudal ideas, customs, rituals habits and inter-personal relationships. It is only to be expected, therefore, that the regime, its plans for the promotion of private and public capitalism notwithstanding, would at the drop of a cracker, rush to supplement—and eventually replace—liberal techniques of persuasion by feudal ones.

#### Cutcheries Then & Now

The torturer has, thus, emerged from the lowest depths of our cultural abyss. Like the coelacanth, he is the representative of a species that has long been dead and is yet our contemporary. He is here, right here in 1970, flaunting his gruesome handiwork in every *mahalla* of India's most enlightened city to remind us, in no uncertain terms, that our present is merely a diachronic notion having little to do with our social reality today and that we, in fact, continue to live in our past. A comparison between Lalbazar's methods and those commonly practised in our zamindari *cutcheries* in the nineteenth century, would make this clear.

In an article, written in 1850, the *Tattvabodhini Patrika* presents us with a select list of 'the methods of physical punishment inflicted on the peasants by landlords and darogas and their agents' (Benoy Ghosh,

*Samayik Patrey Banglar Samajchitra*, Vol.2/Calcutta 1963/pp. 122-123). Eighteen items are mentioned as follows. (1) They beat up the peasant with cudgels and canes. (2) They beat him up with shoes. (3) They force him to lie on his back and then pound his chest by rolling a heavily weighted bamboo pole on it. (4) They polish his nose and ears with sharp fragments of broken earthenware. (5) They force him to rub his nose on the ground. (6) They tie his arms behind his back and twist them by inserting a stick into the rope and turning it round. (7) They apply itchy *bichhuti* herbs all over his body. (8) They put his hands and feet in fetters. (9) They make him run around with his hands holding on to his ears. (10) They press his hands in a *kata*—a pincer-like instrument of torture made of two tough pieces of split bamboos tied together at one end. (11) In summer they make him stand astride in the sun with his legs set far apart on a brick platform and his hands loaded with heavy slugs of brick. (12) In winter they sprinkle cold water over him or immerse him in water. (13) They put him into a gunny bag which is then thrown into water. (14) They suspend him by the branches of a tree. (15) In the months of *Bhadra* and *Aswin* they would shut him up in a granary full of paddy seeds with the grain steaming up in the seasonal heat and emitting a foul odour. (16) He is imprisoned in a room used for storing lime. (17) They would put him in a cell and starve him altogether or at best feed him once a day on rice mixed with unhusked paddy. (18) They would keep him captive in a room full of the fume of roasted red chillies.

Compare this now with what goes on in our Police Commissioner's *cutcherry*. Taking together the two accounts published in *Desh* and *Darpan*, we have ten items of torture on our list. (1) At night the police would rouse the prisoner from his sleep and shower abuses on him in the most obscene language. (2) They would generally beat him up.

(3) They suspend him from the ceiling with handcuffs and hit him without respite on the soles of his feet. (4) They try to cripple his hands and fingers by blows. (5) They break his wrists. (6) They insert pins under his nails. (7) They force rulers or thin iron rods into his anus. (8) They burn his skin with lighted cigarette ends. (9) They strip him naked and force him to sit on a burning heater. (10) They give him electric shocks.

#### The Modernity of Tradition

The two sets of torture differ in one significant respect. They differ in technique. Over the hundred and seventy years that separate the agony of the *Tattvabodhini Patrika* from our own, the torturer has become more sophisticated, modern and efficient: one could almost say that he has 'progressed' from a state of nature into the realm of art. The handcuff has replaced the rustic twine, the iron rod in anus the bamboo *kata*, the blazing heater the ordeal by sun, and the mind-destroying electric shock the humiliation and defilement of a shoe-beating. The torturer's 'progress', thus, is a perfect metaphor for our cultural landscape with its pylons of modernity towering over a jungle of medievalism.

Nothing illustrates this more clearly than the fact that with all their 'advanced' and sophisticated techniques Lalbazar's methods bear a close family resemblance to those of the zamindari *cutcherry* of mid-nineteenth century. Both sets of tortures are designed to reach and cross that threshold beyond which, as Fanon says, pain becomes unbearable. In both cases the aim is to treat the captive body as a hostage for the fugitive mind that refuses to bend to the captor's bidding. More importantly, the torturers of both groups are equally representative of feudal authoritarianism. The minions of the law at Lalbazar whose ostensible function is to defend the liberties sanctioned by a liberal-democratic constitution, do not offer their victims any greater freedom of choice than did the neo-feudal barons of nineteenth-century Bengal ruling

by the sanction of the Permanent Settlement. 'Such oppressions', the *Tattvabodhini Patrika* observed, 'have become habitual with these sinister, wicked landlords... They are convinced that their writs are incontrovertible and that they themselves must preside over all matters of life and death'. In much the same way Lalbazar's writs are not to be questioned. And now, with inexorable logic, Asia's most advertised parliamentary democracy has by the new Act armed a foul gang of sadists, literally, with powers to 'preside over all matters of life and death'.

## V

The promulgation of this new Rowlatt Act marks in our country the approach of one of those 'highly critical moments in the workers' struggle against wage-slavery' when, as Lenin says, 'the entire bourgeoisie is agreed on the employment of such (feudal) methods'. It will not be true to say that all sections of our bourgeoisie have already rallied behind such methods. They have not done so because the struggle, in its intensity and amplitude, has not yet reached that critical point which, in the sociology of Marxism-Leninism, is known as civil war. Yet it is an index of a developing crisis that the revolutionary challenge to law and order has evoked a feudal response among large sections of our ruling classes all the way from monopolists to jotedars.

It is on behalf of the latter that the Bangla Congress leader, Mr Ajoy Mukherjee, has come out with his commendation of greater 'freedom' for the police to deal with the rebels. 'If all attempts to persuade the Naxalite youths to desist from their terrorist path fail', he says, 'the police should have the freedom to adopt firmer methods, including firing' (*Times of India*, 20 November 1970). As an authentic sample of the attitude of village tyrants whose interests it is the mission of Bangla Congress to uphold, there is nothing unusual about this statement. What, however, is food for thought and highly relevant to the present discus-

sion, is that Mr Mukherjee should in the same speech, seek in Gandhism a sanction for the use of counter-revolutionary violence. 'Even Mahatma Gandhi has taught us', he says, 'to adopt violent means to deal with violence in some cases. As a follower of Gandhi I have no hesitation to call upon the people in the present situation to meet arms with arms in self-defence if necessary' (*Ibid.*). The 'people' who have responded to this Gandhian call with great enthusiasm are, of course, the police. They are, as the voice of Lalbazar wants us to believe, shooting merely in 'self-defence'.

**Gandhism & Violence**

Now, it is no part of our argument to suggest that in justifying violence in Gandhian terms Mr Mukherjee has been even remotely guilty of misrepresenting the Mahatma's teachings. On the contrary, he has brought to light a significant aspect of Gandhism which, at less critical moments, the apostles of non-violence try their best to hide from public view. If anything, Mr Mukherjee has credited his master with much less than is due. For Gandhi sanctioned violence *not merely in exceptional cases for the sake of an individual's self-defence* against an assailant, he very clearly spoke up *in favour of the generalized violence of the ruling class operating through the armed forces of the State.*

Polemizing against an anarchist youth who had put to him some tricky questions about violence, Gandhi wrote in an article in *Young India* (7 May 1925) :

....I have not the capacity for preaching universal non-violence to the country. I preach, therefore, non-violence restricted strictly to the purpose of winning our freedom... Let him (the revolutionary) take with me the one step to it (universal non-violence) which I see as clearly as day-light, i.e., to win India's freedom with strictly non-violent means. And, then, under swaraj, you and I shall have a disciplined, intelligent, educated police force that would keep order

within and fight raiders from without, if, by that time, I or someone else does not show a better way of dealing with either. (*Collected Works*, Vol. 27, pp. 51-52).

In less pious prose this means : do not resist imperialist violence by popular violence so long as the British rule over India ; after they quit, build up the armed forces of the State as institutionalized violence operating on behalf of the ruling classes. Here we are offered, in its most lucid form, the very crux of comprador political philosophy : non-violence with regard to Imperialism, violence against the people. No wonder, then, that the jotedars who, in West Bengal, represent the fusion of pre-capitalist forms of rural exploitation inherited from the days of the raj with kulak characteristics acquired since swaraj, should have found their champion in a Gandhian advocate of police violence.

*Comprador Liberalism*

Even more insidious perhaps is the attraction that this particular philosophy has, in the present crisis, for the liberals. For lying at the heart of this aspect of Gandhism are two fears—fear of the imperialist oppressor and fear of the people—which our liberals used to share equally with the feudal elements of our society under British rule. Unlike its Western precursors liberalism here has never been the historical outcome of a class struggle between the forces of capitalism and feudalism fought, more or less, to a finish. We received our on behalf of the ruling classes. port in a colonial cargo and had it administered to us through a variety of colonial institutions. We had liberal laws enacted for us by the raj ; it was the judicial and executive apparatus of the regime which enforced these laws ; our liberal values and ideas have been the product of a Westernized system of education planned, promoted and fostered by the colonialists. Consequently, our liberalism since its very inception in the early nineteenth century

grew up with distinctly collaboratorist traits expressed, above all, in a servile reliance on and unswerving faith in *Law and Order—the most formal expression of the culture of a ruling class*. Gandhi spoke as a protagonist precisely of this liberalism in advising the young anarchist to lay down the arms the latter had taken up against the colonialists, although the saint had no objection to an official armed force keeping 'order' in a free India. With all its profession of non-violence as a supreme *dharma* for an individual the political philosophy of Gandhism thus stands for the collective violence of the ruling class as embodied in the armed forces of the State.

This, more than anything else, accounts for the ambiguity of the liberal intelligentsia's assessment of Gandhi. The 'progressive' professor who condemns out of hand the blatantly obscurantist ingredients of Gandhism, would still, when the crunch comes, find it difficult to denounce the doctrine *in its entirety*. For, what is left of it even after excluding its feudal components is a pretty substantial lump of liberal political philosophy pivoted upon the idea of sanctity of law and order. The Law is thus the other holy cow of Gandhism, and taken together, the pair represents the complementarity of the feudal and bourgeois-liberal elements in a comprador culture.

This is why in the current confrontation between the rebels and the law one's attitude to torture—that is, official violence expressed in its most succinct form—is inextricably bound up with one's attitude to Gandhism—the doctrine of official violence represented in the Indian context, in its most generalized form. Whether we are for or against torture will *in effect* be seen to have directly to do with what side of Gandhism we are on. A look at the ideological battle order would make this clear.

The torturers, the party of official violence, have, on one side of the field, hoisted the banner of Gandhism on the nozzle of black marias. Applause from both the wings of our

comprador culture. Leading Gandhites like J. B. Kripalani and Ajoy Mukherjee, avowed friends of princes and jotedars and sworn enemies of the present administration, urge even greater violence in defence of the régime. Outstanding hedonists like the scions of the two leading liberal dynasties in the land, who, respectively, head the West Bengal and all-India organisations of the ruling party, custodians of the régime, are, on their part, pressing for even more draconian measures to deal with attacks on Gandhi statues and shrines. Thoroughly identified with the law, the Mahatma's doctrine has thus brought about the fusion of the two elements of our dominant culture. The beauty of a class struggle fought out in the open is precisely this: it helps to elucidate ideologies in a manner never done in a class-room.

Arrayed, on the other side, are the tortured, the party of revolutionary violence. For them the vehicle of white terror and the white bunting of *ahimsa* it carries, are both equally hateful symbols of the other culture. By attacking both *at the same time* they are trying to expose the necessary connection that exists between the brutal and the spiritual aspects of that culture. The liberal side of Gandhism represents the latter. This is why icon-breaking must be regarded as an integral and essential part of the present phase of insurgency. By physically destroying a variety of liberal images, visual as well as institutional, the rebels are articulating some of the cultural implications of their attack on the infrastructure with great consistency. We are being told in a clear and forthright manner that the liberalism of the college professor is, as much a part of our comprador culture as the medievalism of the village tyrant and that a truly revolutionary struggle can afford to spare neither. In other words, the intelligentsia have been put in the dock.

#### The Tortured Accuse

The tortured, thus, are also the accusers. The youthful fingers that play deftly with grenade are also

those that pick out the liberals and identify them as active agents of a rotten culture. It is this realization that determines and limits the liberals' response to the current orgy of torture. They are standing by 'as passive and mute onlookers', or seeking solace for their injured sensibilities in private expressions of grief, or as Rupadarsi himself does in *Desh*, trying, in the name of democracy, to make the police behave themselves: 'As a democrat I condemn unequivocally this sort of stupid and wholesale cruelty and unconstitutional activities by the police. From whom have they learnt that democracy lacks the means of fighting terrorism?' From whom indeed? From the ruling classes who themselves framed the constitution and imposed their sort of 'democracy' on the people. The constitution is nothing but a basic set of laws which it is precisely the function of 'democracy' to safeguard so long as they serve the purpose of the rulers, and to bypass, subvert—and even overthrow, if need be, when they prove inadequate. The police are acting, in the present crisis, as the guardians of the law which is above the constitution—the law of class rule. An appeal to the torturer's conscience is to ask the cheetah, in the classic Gandhian manner, to change its spots.

It is in such attitudes, all of which *objectively* end up in acquiescence, that the liberal is seen to take his stand on the torturer's side of the dividing line. He is already a champion of legality which it is the inquisitor's task to enforce. They are both equally committed to the idea that all desirable social changes must be achieved through institutional means permitted by the given social order. It is for the liberal to propagate this idea and for the torturer to punish deviations from it. Colleagues, they co-exist in the same culture which it is their mutual responsibility to protect and uphold. There is no other way for the liberal to break away from this partnership than by consciously crossing over to the side of the tortured.

# The New Man In The New China

JOHN W. GURLEY

WHILE capitalist and Maoist processes of economic development have several elements in common, the differences between the two approaches are nevertheless many and profound. It is certainly not evident that one approach or the other is always superior, either in means or ends. What is evident, however, is that most studies by American economists of Chinese economic development are based on the assumption of capitalist superiority, and so China has been dealt with as though it were simply an underdeveloped United States—an economy that “should” develop along capitalist lines and that “should” forget all that foolishness about Marxism, Mao’s thought, great leaps, and cultural revolutions, and get on with the job of investing its savings efficiently. This unthinking acceptance by American economists of the view that there is no development like capitalist development has resulted in studies of China that lack insight.

The practice of capitalism has not, of course, met the ideal specification for it as theorized by Adam Smith. In general, the theory holds that an economy can develop most rapidly if every person, whether as entrepreneur, worker, or consumer, is able to pursue his own self-interest in competitive markets without undue interference from government. Progress is best promoted, not by government, but by entrepreneurs owning the material means of production, whose activities guided by the profit motive, reflect consumers’ demands for various goods and services. Labour productivity is enhanced by material incentives and the division of labour (specialization); economic progress is made within an environment of law and order, harmony of interests, and stability. It is by these means that economic development, according to the theory, can best be attained, and its attainment can best be measured by the national output.

In practice, many markets have been more monopolistic than competitive, government has interfered in numerous and extensive ways in competitive market processes in pursuit of greater equity in income distribution, higher employment of labour, and better allocation of economic resources. Capitalism of the individualist, competitive type has to some extent given way in most parts of the industrial capitalist world to a state welfare capitalism, in which government plays a larger role and private entrepreneurs and consumers somewhat smaller ones than envisaged by Adam Smith and his disciples. Despite these departures from the ideal model of capitalism, however, it is fair to say that the main driving force of the capitalist system remains private entrepreneurs who own the means of production, and that competition among them is still widespread and worldwide.

There is no doubt that capitalist development, whatever importance its departures from the Smithian model have had, has been highly successful in raising living standards for large numbers of people. It has been relatively efficient in using factors of production in ways best designed to provide all the goods that consumers by and large have demanded. It has also encouraged new ways of doing things—innovative activity and technological advances.

At the same time, however, there is a heavy emphasis in capitalist development—as there now is throughout most of the world—on raising the national output, on producing “things” in ever-increasing amounts. Implicit is the view that man is merely an input, a factor of production, a means to an end. Moreover, capitalist development has almost always been uneven in several crucial ways—in its alternating periods of boom and bust; in enriching some people thousands of times more than others; in developing production facilities with much more care than it has devoted to the

welfare of human beings and their environment; in fostering lopsided development, both in terms of geographical location within a country and, especially in low-income countries, in terms of a narrow range of outputs, such as in one or two-crop economies. The lopsided character of capitalist development has been evident historically in those nations that today have advanced industrial economies, but it is especially evident in the underdeveloped countries (with their mixture of feudal and capitalist features) that are tied in to the international capitalist system—those countries that, by being receptive to free enterprise and foreign capital, regardless of whether they are also receptive to freedom, are in the “free world.”

This lopsidedness shows itself most markedly, of course, in the matter of trade. As satellites to the advanced capitalist countries, the underdeveloped regions supply raw materials, agricultural products, minerals, and oil, and receive in return manufactured and processed goods as well as basic food items. Much more trade takes place as between the underdeveloped and the advanced capitalist countries than among the underdeveloped countries themselves. One consequence of this is the poor transportation within South America and Africa—while there are good highways or railroads running from mines, plantations, and oil fields to the seaports, it remains difficult to travel from one part of the continent to another.

The economic development of these poor capitalist countries is lopsided in many other ways, too. A few cities in each of these countries, with their airports, hotels, nightclubs, and light industries, are often built up to the point where they resemble the most modern metropolis in advanced industrial countries—but the rural areas, comprising most of the country and containing

most of the people, are largely untouched by modernization. Industry, culture, entertainment, education, and wealth are highly concentrated in urban centres; a traveller to most of the poor "free world" countries, by flying to the main cities, can land in the middle of the twentieth century, but by going thirty miles out into the country in any direction he will find himself back in the Middle Ages. Education is usually for the elite and stresses the superiority of the educated over the uneducated, the superiority of urban over rural life, of mental over manual labour. The burden of economic development, which is essentially a restraint on consumption, is shared most inequitably among the people; the differences between rich and poor are staggering—they are nothing less than the differences between unbelievable luxury and starvation.

While some of these characteristics are not peculiar to the poor countries tied to the international capitalist system (they can be found in the Soviet socialist bloc, too), and while some are related more to feudalism than to capitalism, much of the lopsided development is intimately connected with the profit motive. The key link between the two is the fact that it is almost always most profitable, from a private business point of view, to build on the best. Thus a businessman locates a new factory in an urban centre near existing ones, rather than out in the hinterlands, in order to gain access to supplies, a skilled labour force, and high-income consumers; to maximize profits, he hires the best, most qualified workers; a banker extends loans to those who are already successful; an educational system devotes its best efforts to the superior students, and universities, imbued with the private-business ethic of "efficiency," offer education to those best prepared and most able; promoters locate cultural centres for those best able to appreciate and afford them; in the interests of efficiency and comparative advantage, businessmen are induced to specialize (in cocoa or peanuts or

coffee)—to build on what they have always done best.

This pursuit of efficiency and private profits through building on the best has led in some areas to impressive aggregate growth rates, but almost everywhere in the international capitalist world it has favoured only a relative few at the expense of the many, and, in poor capitalist countries, it has left most in stagnant backwaters. Capitalist development, even when most successful, is always trickle-down development.

#### Maoist Emphasis

The Maoists' disagreement with the capitalist view of economic development is profound. Their emphases, values, and aspirations are quite different from those of capitalist economists. Maoist economic development occurs within the context of central planning public ownership of industries, and agricultural cooperatives or communes. While decision-making is decentralised to some extent, decisions regarding investment versus consumption, foreign trade, allocation of material inputs and the labour supply, prices of various commodities—these and more are essentially in the hands of the state. The profit motive is officially discouraged from assuming an important role in the allocation of resources, and material incentives, while still prevalent, are downgraded.

Perhaps the most striking difference between the capitalist and Maoist views concerns goals. Maoists believe that while a principal aim of a nation should be to raise the level of material welfare of the population, this should be done only within the context of the development of human beings, encouraging them to realize fully their manifold creative powers. And it should be done only on an egalitarian basis—that is, on the basis that development is not worth much unless everyone rises together; no one is to be left behind, either economically or culturally. Indeed, Maoists believe that rapid economic development is not likely to occur unless everyone rises together. Development as a trickle-down process is

therefore rejected by Maoists, and so they reject any strong emphasis on profit motives and efficiency criteria that lead to lopsided growth.

In Maoist eyes, economic development can best be attained by giving prominence to men rather than "things."

Recently, capitalist economists have begun to stress the importance for economic growth of "investment in human capital"—that is, investment in general education, job training, and better health. It has been claimed that expenditures in these directions have had a large "payoff" in terms of output growth. Although this might seem to represent a basic change in their concept of man in the development process, actually it does not. "Investment in human capital" means that economic resources are invested for the purpose of raising the skill and the educational and health levels of labour, not as an end in itself but as a means of increasing the productivity of labour. Thus economists are concerned with the "payoff" to investment in human capital, this payoff being the profit that can be made from such an expenditure. Indeed, the very term "human capital" indicates what these economists have in mind: man is another capital good, an input in the productive engine that grinds out commodities; if one invests in man, he may become more productive and return a handsome profit to the investor—whether the investor is the state, a private capitalist, or the labourer himself. Thus the preoccupation of capitalist economists is still with man as a means and not as an end.

The Maoists' emphasis, however, is quite different. First of all, while they recognize the role played by education and health in the production process, their emphasis is heavily placed on the transformation of ideas, the making of the Communist man. Ideology, of course, may be considered as part of education in the broadest sense, but it is surely not the part that capitalist economists have in mind when they evaluate education's contribution to economic growth. Moreover, ideological

training does not include the acquisition of particular skills, or the training of specialists—as education and job training in capitalist countries tend to do. The Maoists believe that economic development can best be promoted by breaking down specialization, by dismantling bureaucracies, and by undermining the other centralizing and divisive tendencies that give rise to experts, technicians, authorities, and bureaucrats remote from or manipulating “the masses.” Finally, Maoists seem perfectly willing to pursue the goal of transforming man even though it is temporarily at the expense of some economic growth. Indeed, it is clear that Maoists will not accept economic development, however rapid, if it is based on the capitalist principles of sharp division of labour and sharp (meaning unsavoury or selfish) practices.

The proletarian world-view, which Maoists believe must replace that of the bourgeoisie, stresses that only through struggle can progress be purpose will release a huge reservoir of enthusiasm, energy, and creativeness; that active participation by “the masses” in decision-making will provide them with the knowledge to channel their energy most productively; and that the elimination of specialization will not only increase workers’ and peasants’ willingness to work hard for the various goals of society but will also increase their ability to do this by adding to their knowledge and awareness of the world around them.

It is an essential part of Maoist thinking that progress is not made by peace and quietude, by letting things drift and playing safe, or, in the words of Mao Tse-tung, by standing for “unprincipled peace, thus giving rise to a decadent, philistine attitude . . . .” Progress is made through struggle, when new talents emerge and knowledge advances in leaps. Only through continuous struggle is the level of consciousness of people raised, and in the process they gain not only understanding but happiness.

Mao sees man engaged in a fierce

class struggle—the bourgeoisie against the proletariat—the outcome of which, at least in the short run, is far from certain. The proletarian world outlook can win only if it enters tremendous ideological class struggles.

Maoists believe that each person should be devoted to “the masses” rather than to his own pots and pans, and should serve the world proletariat rather than, as the *Peking Review* has put it, reach out with “grasping hands everywhere to seek fame, material gain, power, position, and limelight.” They think that if a person is selfish he will resist criticisms and suggestions and is likely to become bureaucratic and elitist. He will not work as hard for community or national goals as he will for narrow, selfish ones. In any case, a selfish person is not an admirable person. Thus Maoists de-emphasize material incentives, for they are the very manifestation of a selfish, bourgeois society. While selflessness is necessary to imbue man with energy and the willingness to work hard, Maoists believe this is not sufficient; man must also have the ability as well. And such ability comes from active participation—from seeing and doing. To gain knowledge, people must be awakened from their half slumber, encouraged to mobilize themselves and to take conscious action to elevate and liberate themselves. When they actively participate in decision-making, when they take an interest in state affairs, when they dare to do new things, when they become good at presenting facts and reasoning things out, when they criticize and test and experiment scientifically—having discarded myths and superstitions—when they are aroused, then, says the *Peking Review*, “the socialist initiative latent in the masses will burst out with volcanic force and a rapid change [will take] place in production.”

For Marx, specialization and bureaucratization were the very antithesis of communism. Man could not be free or truly human until these manifestations of alienation were eliminated, allowing him to be-

come an all-round communist man. Maoists, too, have been intensely concerned with this goal, specifying it in terms of eliminating the distinction between town and countryside, mental and manual labour, and workers and peasants. The realization of the universal man is not automatically achieved by altering the forces of production, by the socialist revolution. Rather, it can be achieved only after the most intense and unrelenting ideological efforts to raise the consciousness of the masses through the creative study and creative use of Mao’s thought. Old ideas, customs, and habits hang on long after the material base of the economy has been radically changed, and it takes one mighty effort after another to wipe out the proletarian world outlook. This transformation of the “subjective world” will then have a tremendous impact on the “objective world.”

#### Building On The Worst

In many ways Maoist ideology rejects the capitalist principle of building on the best, even though the principle cannot help but be followed to some extent in any effort at economic development. However, the Maoist departures from the principle are the important thing. While capitalism, in their view, strives one-sidedly for efficiency in producing goods, Maoism, while also seeking some high degree of efficiency, at the same time and in numerous ways builds on “the worst”: experts are pushed aside in favour of decision-making by “the masses”; new industries are established in rural areas; the educational system favours the disadvantaged; expertise (and hence work proficiency in a narrow sense) is discouraged; new products are domestically produced rather than being imported “more efficiently”; the growth of cities as centres of industrial and cultural life is discouraged; steel, for a time, is made by “everyone” instead of by only the much more efficient steel industry.

Of course, Maoists build on “the worst” not because they take great

delight in lowering economic efficiency; rather their stated aims are to involve everyone in the development process, to pursue development without leaving a single person behind, to achieve a balanced growth rather than a lopsided one. Yet if Maoism were only that, we could simply state that, while Maoist development may be much more equitable than capitalist efforts, it is surely less efficient and thus less rapid; efficiency is being sacrificed to some extent for equity. But that would miss the more important aspects of Maoist ideology, which holds that the resources devoted to bringing everyone into the socialist development process—the effort spent on building on “the worst”—will eventually pay off not only in economic ways by enormously raising labor productivity but, more important, by creating a society of truly free men who respond intelligently to the world around them, and who are happy.

The sharp contrast between the economic development views of capitalist economists and those of the Chinese communists cannot be denied; their two worlds are quite different. The difference is not mainly between being Chinese and being American, although that is surely part of it, but, rather, between Maoists in a Marxist-Leninist tradition and being present-day followers of the economics first fashioned by Adam Smith and later reformed by John Maynard Keynes. Whatever the ignorance and misunderstanding on the Chinese side regarding the doctrines of capitalist economics, it is clear that many Western economic experts on China have shown little interest in, and almost no understanding of, Maoist economic development. Most of the economic researchers have approached China as though it were little more than a series of tables in a yearbook which could be analyzed by Western economic methods and judged by capitalist values. The result has been a series of unilluminating studies, largely statistical or institutional in method, and lacking analysis of the really distinctive and interesting features

of Maoist development.

Like seagulls following the wake of a ship, economists pursue numbers. The main concentration of numbers pertaining to the economy of Communist China is in *Ten Great Years*, which was published in September, 1959, by the State Statistical Bureau. This volume contains a wealth of data on almost all phases of economic activity, and so it has become one of the main sources for much of the empirical work on Chinese economic development. But throughout the nineteen-fifties economic data were published in hundreds of other sources—in official reports, statistical handbooks, economics books, and articles—so that altogether massive information, of varying degrees of reliability, became available on the first decade or so of China's development efforts. After 1958, however, the release of aggregate data just about came to a halt. So little research on the nineteen-sixties has been done by economists outside of China. The data of the nineteen-fifties continue to be worked over, adjusted, and refined, though there is no longer much more that can be said about them.

Much of this research has been concerned in one way or another with China's national output—its absolute size; its rates of growth; its components, like agriculture and industrial output has been affected by international trade and Soviet aid; and the planning methods utilized in its production.

There are, of course, scores of studies, though mostly of an empirical nature, on specialized aspects of the economic process. A few Western economists have actually visited China in recent years and have returned with much information, but mainly of a qualitative nature.

Economic research on China suffers from an ailment common to most of economics—a narrow empiricism. Thus most of the research studies of the Chinese economy deal with very small segments of the development process, and within these tiny areas the researchers busy themselves with data series—adding up the num-

bers, adjusting them in numerous ways, deflating them for changes, and doing a lot of other fussy statistical work. Each economist tills intensively his small plot, gaining highly specialized knowledge in the process finally ending up an expert in his cramped quarters. There are not many economists in the China field who try to see Chinese economic development as a whole, as “the comprehensive totality of the historical process.” If the truth is the whole, as Hegel claimed, most economic experts on China must be so far from the truth that it is hardly worthwhile listening to them.

Moreover, it is often painful. Even a casual reader of the economic research on Communist China cannot help but notice that many of the researchers are not happy—to say the least—with the object of their investigation. This is immediately noticeable because it so very unusual in economics. Ordinarily, economists are utterly fascinated and almost infatuated with their special areas of study—even with such an esoteric one as “Game Theory Applied to Non-linear Development.” But not so our China experts. Indeed, it is quite apparent that many of them consider China to be, not the Beloved, but the Enemy. And in dealing with the Enemy, their research often reveals very strong, and undisguised, biases against China.

These biases show up in a variety of ways, from such trivial things as changing Peking to Peiping (à la Dean Rusk), which reveals a wish that the communists weren't there; to the frequent use of emotive words (the communists are not dedicated but “obsessed,” leaders are “bosses,” a decision not to release data is described as “a sullen statistical silence,” the extension of the statistical system becomes “an extension of its tentacles further into the economy”); to the attribution of rather sinister motives to ordinary economic and cultural policies (education and literacy are promoted for the purpose of spreading evil Marxian doctrines, economic development is pursued for the principal purpose of gaining military strength

for geographical expansion—which is the theme of W.W. Rostow's book on *The Prospects For Communist China*); to dire forecasts of imminent disaster based on little more than wishful thinking and on up to date manipulation of the most questionable sort.

This strong propensity to treat China as the enemy has led to some grossly distorted accounts of China's economic progress. The picture that is presented by these studies as a whole is one in which China, while making some progress for a time in certain areas, is just barely holding on to economic life. It is a picture of a China always close to famine, making little headway while the rest of the world moves ahead, being involved in irrational economic policies, and offering little reason for hope that the lives of her people will be improved. Our China experts, furthermore, know what is wrong, and that, in a word, is communism. They seldom fail to pass judgment on some aspect or other of Chinese economic development, and this judgment is almost invariably capitalist-oriented. Thus national planning and government-controlled prices cannot be good because they do not meet the criteria of consumer sovereignty and competitive markets; communes violate individualism and private property; ideological campaigns upset order and harmony; the de-emphasis on material incentives violates human nature and so reduces individual initiative and economic growth; the breakdown of specialization lowers workers' productivity. This sort of thing pervades much of the economic literature on China.

Given all this—the narrow specialized studies that are sometimes useful but not often enlightening, the distortions by omission or commission, the capitalist-oriented approaches and assessments, not to mention those evaluations of Communist China that are inspired by a strong allegiance to Chiang Kai-shek—given all this, it is little wonder that a fair picture of China's economic progress seldom gets presented. Seldom, not never: Barry Richman's book on *Industrial*

*Society in Communist China*, Carl Riskin's work—for example, in *The Cultural Revolution 1967 in Review*—and several other research efforts are refreshingly objective, relatively free of capitalist cant, and approach Maoist ideology in a serious way.

#### Advance on all fronts

The truth is that China over the past two decades has made very remarkable economic advance (though not steadily) on almost all fronts. The basic, overriding economic fact about China is that for twenty years she has fed, clothed, and housed everyone, has kept them healthy, and has educated most. Millions have not starved; sidewalks and streets have not been covered with multitudes of sleeping, begging, hungry, and illiterate human beings; millions are not disease-ridden. To find such deplorable conditions, one does not look to China these days but, rather, to India, Pakistan, and almost anywhere else in the underdeveloped world. These facts are so basic, so fundamentally important, that they completely dominate China's economic picture, even if one grants all of the erratic and irrational policies alleged by her numerous critics.

The Chinese—all of them—now have what is in effect an insurance policy against pestilence, famine, and other disasters. In this respect, China has outperformed every underdeveloped country in the world; and, even with respect to the richest one, it would not be farfetched to claim that there has been less malnutrition due to maldistribution of food in China over the past twenty years than there has been in the United States. If this comes close to the truth, the reason lies not in China's grain output far surpassing her population growth—for it has not—but, rather, in the development of institutions to distribute food evenly among the population. It is also true, however, that China has just had six consecutive bumper grain crops (wheat and rice) that have enabled her to reduce wheat imports and greatly increase rice exports. On top of this,

there have been large gains in the supplies of eggs, vegetables, fruits, poultry, fish, and meat. In fact, China today exports more food than she imports. The Chinese are in a much better position now than ever before to ward off natural disasters, as there has been significant progress in irrigation, flood control, and water conservation. The use of chemical fertilizers is increasing rapidly, the volume now over ten times that of the early nineteen-fifties; there have been substantial gains in the output of tractors, pumps, and other farm implements; and much progress has been made in the control of plant disease and in crop breeding.

In education, there has been a major breakthrough. All urban children and a great majority of rural children have attended primary schools, and enrolments in secondary schools and in higher education are large, in proportion to the population, compared with pre-communist days. If "school" is extended to include as well all part-time, part-study education, spare-time education and the study groups organized by the communes, factories, street organizations, and the army, then there are schools everywhere in China.

China's gains in the medical and public-health fields are perhaps the most impressive of all. The gains are attested to by many fairly recent visitors to China. For example, G. Leslie Wilcox, a Canadian doctor, a few years ago visited medical colleges, hospitals, and research institutes, and reported in "Observations on Medical Practices" (*Bulletin in the Atomic Scientists*, June, 1966) that everywhere he found good equipment, high medical standards, excellent medical care—almost all comparable to Canadian standards. As William Y. Chen, a member of the U.S. Public Health Service, wrote in "Medicine in Public Health" (*Sciences in Communist China*), "the prevention and control of many infectious and parasitic diseases which have ravaged [China] for generations" was a "most startling accomplishment." He noted, too, that "the improvement of gene-

ral environmental sanitation and the practice of personal hygiene, both in the cities and in the rural areas, were also phenomenal."

While all these gains were being made, the Chinese were devoting an unusually large amount of resources to industrial output. China's industrial production has risen on the average by at least eleven per cent per year since 1950, which is an exceptionally high growth rate for an underdeveloped country. Furthermore, industrial progress is not likely to be retarded in the future by any lack of natural resources, for China is richly endowed and is right now one of the four top producers in the world of coal, iron ore, mercury, tin, tungsten, magnesite, salt and antimony. In recent years, China has made large gains in the production of coal, iron, steel, chemical fertilizers, and oil. In fact, since the huge discoveries at the Tac'ing oilfield, China is now self-sufficient in oil and has offered to export some to Japan.

From the industrial, agricultural, and other gains, I would estimate that China's real G.N.P. has risen on the average by at least six per cent per year since 1949, or by at least four per cent on a per-capita basis. This may not seem high, but it is a little better than the Soviet Union did over a comparable period (1928-40), much better than England's record during her century of industrialization (1750-1850), when her income per capita grew at one half of one per cent per year, perhaps a bit better than Japan's performance from 1878 to 1936, certainly much superior to France's one per cent record from 1800 to 1870, far better than India's 1.3 per cent growth during 1950 to 1967; more important, it is much superior to the postwar record of almost all underdeveloped countries in the world.

This is a picture of an economy richly endowed in natural resources, but whose people are still very poor, making substantial gains in industrialization, moving ahead more slowly in agriculture, raising education and health levels dramatically, turning

out increasing numbers of scientists and engineers, expanding the volume of foreign trade and the variety of products traded, and making startling progress in the development of nuclear weapons. This is a truer picture, I believe, than the bleak one drawn by some of our China experts.

The failure of many economic experts on China to tell the story of her economic development accurately and fully is bad enough. Even worse has been the general failure to deal with China on her own terms, within the framework of her own goals and methods for attaining those goals, or even to recognize the possible validity of those goals. Communist China is certainly not a paradise, but it is now engaged in perhaps the most interesting economic and social experiment ever attempted, in which tremendous efforts are being made to achieve an egalitarian development, an industrial development without dehumanization, one that involves everyone and affects everyone. All these efforts seem not to have affected Western economists, who have proceeded ahead with their income accounts and slide rules, and their free-enterprise values, to measure and judge. One of the most revealing developments in the China field is the growing belief among the economic experts that further research is hardly worthwhile in view of the small amount of economic statistics that have come out of China since 1958. Apparently, it does not matter that seven hundred and seventy-five million people are involved in a gigantic endeavour to change their environment, their economic and social institutions, their standard of living, and themselves; that never before have such potentially important economic and social experiments been carried out; that voluminous discussions of these endeavours by the Maoists are easily available. No, if G.N.P. data are not forthcoming, if numbers can't be added up and adjusted, then the economy must be hardly worth bothering about.

### What Can Be Done?

What can be done? Probably not very much until a substantial number of younger economists become interested in China. It is a hopeful sign that many young economists are now breaking away from the stultifying atmosphere of present-day "neo-classical" economics and are trying to refashion the discipline into political economy, as it once was, so as to take account of the actual world and not the world of highly abstract models, scholastic debates, and artificial assumptions—all designed to justify the existing state of things and to accept without question the rather narrow, materialistic goals of capitalist society. This reformulation by the young will have to take place first, but once this task is well along, China is bound to be attractive to many of these "new" economists. Only then will we begin to get a substantial amount of research on China that makes sense.

The research that would make sense is any that takes Maoism seriously as a model of economic development, in terms both of its objectives and of the means employed to attain those objectives. A thoughtful consideration of Maoism means paying proper attention to Marxism-Leninism as well as to the Chinese past of the Maoists. The Marxist-Leninist goal of the communist man within a classless society in which each person works according to his ability and consumes according to his needs—this goal of the Maoists should be taken seriously in any economic analysis of what is now going on.

There is a core of development theory that would probably be accepted by both the capitalist and Maoist sides—that economic growth can be attained by increasing the amounts of labour, capital goods, and land used in production, by improving the quality of these factors of production, by combining them in more efficient ways and inspiring labour to greater efforts, and by taking advantage of economies of scale. Now, Maoism undoubtedly affects every one of these ingredients of economic

growth, and often in ways quite different from the capitalist impact. For example, it is likely that Maoist ideology discourages consumption and encourages saving and investment, and so promotes the growth of the capital stock; it does this by preventing the rise of a high-consuming "middle class," by fostering the Maoist virtues of plain and simple living and devoting one's life to helping others rather than accumulating "pots and pans."

As another example, it is possible that Maoist economic development by de-emphasizing labour specialisation and reliance on experts and technicians, reduces the quality of the labour force and so slows the rate of economic growth. On the other hand, as Adam Smith once suggested, labour specialization, while increasing productivity in some narrow sense, is often at the expense of the worker's general intelligence and understanding. It was his view that "the man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations...generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become." The difference between the most dissimilar of human beings, according to Smith, is not so much the cause of division of labour as it is the effect of it. Consequently, while an economy might gain from the division of labour in some small sense, it could lose in the larger sense by creating men who are little more than passive and unreasoning robots. A major aim of the Maoists is to transform man from this alienated state to a fully aware and participatng member of society. The emphasis on "Reds" rather than experts is just one part of this transformation which, it is felt, will release "an atom bomb" of talents and energy and enable labour productivity to take great leaps.

In addition to this argument, which is based on Maoists' interpretation of their own history and experience, it is also possible that the "universal man" in an underdeveloped economy would provide more flexibility to the

economy. If most people could perform many jobs moderately well, manual and intellectual, urban and rural, the economy might be more able to cope with sudden and large changes; it could with little loss in efficiency mobilize its labour force for a variety of tasks. Further, since experience in one job carries over to others, a person may be almost as productive, in the job-proficiency sense, in any one of them as he would be if he specialized—a peasant who has spent some months in a factory can more easily repair farm equipment, and so on. Finally, a Maoist economy may generate more useful information than a specialist one and so lead to greater creativity and productivity. When each person is a narrow specialist, communication among such people is not highly meaningful. When, on the other hand, each person has basic knowledge about many lines of activity, the experiences of one person enrich the potentialities of many others.

The point is that this issue—which, I should stress, includes not only labour productivity (that is, the development of material things by human beings) but also the development of human beings themselves—this issue of generalists versus specialists, communist men versus experts, the masses versus bureaucrats, or whatever, is not to be laughed away, as it has been, in effect, by some China experts. How men, in an industrial society, should relate to machines and to each other in seeking happiness and real meaning in their lives has surely been one of the most important problems of the modern age. There is also another basic issue here: whether modern industrial society, capitalist or socialist, does in fact diminish man's essential powers, his capacity for growth in many dimensions, even though it does allocate them "efficiently" and increases his skills as a specialized input. Is man Lockean in nature—reactive to outside forces, adjusting passively to disequilibrium forces from without? Or is he essentially Leibnizian—the source of acts, active, capa-

ble of growth, and having an inner being that is self-propelled? If the latter, how are these powers released?

The Maoists claim that the powers exist and can be released. If they are right, the implications for economic development are so important that it would take blind men on this side of the Pacific to ignore them. (Mr Gurley is Professor of Economics at Stanford University.)

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JANUARY 23, 1971

# The Relevance Of Economic Theory

JOAN ROBINSON

THE controversy which has been going on for many years amongst theoretical economists about the meaning and measurement of capital must appear to outsiders (including the bulk of the profession itself) as mere scholasticism, yet it has important implications both for the formation of ideology and for understanding the world that we are living in.

Academic teaching for the last hundred years has been concerned much more with the first task than the second. It has been concerned with propagating the ideology of *laissez faire* and of the beneficial effects of the free play of market forces; it has done more to distract attention from the actual operations of the capitalist economy than to illuminate them. Yet it does not consist merely of slogans; it has an intellectual structure which has fascinated generations of students and provided generations of professors with position and with reputation for the brilliance with which they expounded and elaborate it.

Marxists generally dismiss the whole thing as a deception without bothering to understand it. Their own categories such as surplus value, variable capital and organic composition are not defined in a way that brings them to bear on the questions that the academics discuss. Thus the two systems of ideas are not confronted with each other in logical argument and the choice between them is left to ideological prejudice. Prejudice, of course, as well as academic funds, is heavily on the side of orthodoxy, which thus grows and flourishes undisturbed.

The new criticism, inspired by Piero Sraffa, does not merely mock at orthodoxy. It penetrates into its theoretical system and exposes its weakness from within. The debate is carried out on the plane of logical analysis; when the logical argument

has been refuted, the orthodox ideology is left floating in the air deprived of what it used to claim was its scientific basis.

To understand the criticism, we must first survey the scheme of ideas that it is replacing. Modern doctrines are derived from the neoclassical school which established itself as orthodox in the latter part of the nineteenth century and continued in vogue right up till the great slump of the 1930s. They set out in terms of industrial capitalism and at best were ill adapted to the problems of what is nowadays called development. One of its main elements was the principle of optimum allocation of scarce means between alternative uses. Consider a situation in which there are given production resources, fully specified in physical, engineering terms, a given body of technical knowledge and a specific list of commodities to be produced. Resources can be used in various combinations to produce any one commodity. This is most easily seen in the case of agriculture, from which the idea was originally derived. An annual output of so many tons of corn can be produced (in the same weather conditions) by a larger labour force working more intensively on a smaller area of land or by a smaller labour force working on a larger area. Again, the same labour force and the same area of land can produce a variety of crops—say more corn and less turnips or vice versa.

This construction illustrates the concept of *efficiency* and of *opportunity cost*. For any particular combination of commodities, there is a maximum quantity that the given resources could produce when they are fully utilised. It would be inefficient to use them in such a way that more resources produce less output. When production is efficient, in this sense, it would be impossible to produce

more of any one commodity without reducing the production of something else. Thus, at every point in the range of possible efficient patterns of productions, each commodity has a marginal opportunity cost in terms of the sacrifice of other commodities which would be required in order to produce a little more of this one. There is a pattern of relative prices, for any given combination of commodities reflecting marginal opportunity costs of each in terms of the rest.

Now, within its proper sphere of operation, this principle is of great importance. Its sphere is the use of limited specific resources for specified ends, in conditions of full employment and full utilisation of capacity. This is the reason why the mathematical school in the USSR has been attracted to the neoclassical theory, which offers them something that they could not find in Marx. In Western orthodoxy, the argument was puffed up to cover the whole of economics. The linchpin of the orthodox defence of *laissez faire* was the doctrine that, under conditions of perfect competition, a free market will always allocate resources efficiently in the above sense. This part of the argument has never been convincing. The textbooks dwell upon the characteristics of an equilibrium situation while being excessively vague about how a competitive market would actually reach it. But even if it was perfectly correct, this analysis leaves out the most important part of the problem. The market demand for commodities, which allocates resources between uses, is discussed in terms of the tastes of consumers, not of the distribution of purchasing power amongst them. The prices of the "factors of production" are derived from the prices of commodities. All factors are on the same footing—the muscle of a labourer, the knowledge of an engineer, the capacity of a blast furnace to produce iron, of a loom to produce cloth or a field to produce corn is each "rewarded" according to the relation of supply to demand for the type of factor to which it belongs. The dis-

tribution of purchasing power amongst the families who derive their incomes from these "rewards" is discussed in another chapter. It is usually admitted in the orthodox textbooks that inequalities ought to be corrected but the main emphasis is upon the proviso that interference must not impair the delicate mechanism of the market.

### "Theory of the Firm"

A different application of the principle of efficiency is the notion of a competitive firm producing a given output at minimum cost; here we are concerned not with physical resources but with expenses. Wage rates, the rate of interest on borrowed finance, and the prices of equipment, materials, power etc. all given by the market; competition compels the individual seller to adopt the method of production with the least expenses per unit of output and keeps the price of the commodity from rising above its cost. Here again the argument has a certain sphere of application but it is hardly adequate as the "theory of the firm" for latter-day capitalism.

There was another layer in orthodox theory which came from a different source. It was a garbed version of Ricardo. Ricardo set out to find the principles which govern the distribution of the produce of the earth between the classes of society, "the proprietor of the land, the owner of the stock or capital necessary for its cultivation and the labourers by whose industry it is cultivated". This was turned into a theory of distribution between the factors of production, land, labour and capital. These are factors in quite a different sense from those in the "scarce resources" argument. The capital which receives a "reward" is not a blast furnace or a stock of copper already in existence. It is a fund of finance which can be invested in the physical equipment and work in progress appropriate to some line of production. When the investment is successful, the business gradually re-

covers the original finance from gross profits and re-embodies it in whatever form, within its horizon of competence, that appears to promise the greatest profitability. The service for which the capitalist receives a "reward" more or less proportional to the amount of finance that he controls (that is, a rate of profit on capital) is described as "waiting" because investment precedes receipts. The factors of production, then, are land, labour and waiting, receiving rent, wages and profits. This construction was used as an answer to the labour theory of value—not only labour produces value, capital produces some too. The labourer is worthy of his wage and the capitalist is worthy of his profit.

All this was under the rule of Say's Law—supply creates demand. Equilibrium with full employment of the labour force will always be established except when the monopolistic combinations of workers in trade unions are so foolish as to demand wages in excess of their marginal product.

The whole structure of ideas came to a crash along with the world market in the great slump. Keynes attacked Say's Law and supplied a theory of effective demand but he did not penetrate into the confusions and sophistries of the underlying doctrines.

After 1945 it was taken for granted in the West that near-full employment was henceforth to be maintained by government policy and the ideology of "growth" displaced *laissez faire* as the main defence for private enterprise. The economists, therefore, had to bring the accumulation of capital into the centre of the picture. They plunged in without a moment's thought, failing to notice the ambiguity in the conception of capital and profit in the neoclassical system. The doctrine that the rate of profit corresponds to the "marginal product of capital" was propagated without inquiring what it was supposed to mean. A whole prosperous profession has been busy for more than

twenty years deriving mathematical propositions, interpreting statistical evidence and putting out text-books on this basis while smothering criticism by a conspiracy of silence.

### The Fallacy

For anyone who has not been mesmerised by neo-neoclassical teaching, the fallacy is easy to see. It consists in confusing the two meanings of capital; finance controlled by capitalists, which earns profits, is identified with the physical equipment and stocks which assist labour to produce output. A fund of finance is a sum of money to be invested by buying equipment at current prices or paying for it to be built at current costs. The rate of profit enters into the determination of prices. When the level of money-wage rates is given, the prices at which goods are sold have to be higher if they are to yield a higher rate of profit. The value of a stock of equipment, whether reckoned in terms of money, of labour time or of a representative "basket" of commodities, is not independent of the rate of profit. The concept of the "marginal productivity of capital" was an illegitimate extension of the "scarce commodities" concept to the sphere of accumulation. The argument is kept going, pupils bewildered and critics exasperated, by constantly jumping from one concept of capital to the other without distinguishing between them.

The formal argument can be stated in a rough and ready way (those who want it rigorously must go to Piero Sraffa's *Production of Commodities by Means of Commodities*). Suppose that, with X-ray eyes, we can see the actual flow of production that is going on over a period of time in an industrial economy, set out in physical terms—tons, pints and yards, and man-hours of labour. From the goods in being at the end of the period, subtract the physical equivalent of those in being at the beginning. We then have net output in physical terms. In the Marxian scheme,  $c+v+s$  are quantities of labour-value. Here  $c$  on one side and  $(v+s)$

on the other consist of lists of physical items. These physical specifications cannot tell us the prices or rates of exchange between commodities. (There are  $n$  equations for  $n$  products and  $n-1$  prices). Nor can they tell us how net output is shared between wages and profits.

Now let us suppose that "prices of production" obtain in this economy, with a uniform rate of profit. Conceptually (not, of course, in real life) the rate of profit may be anything between zero (when wages absorb the whole net product) and the maximum that would obtain if wages were zero. Consider how prices and the value of the stock of capital behave as the rate of profit is notionally varied. If the special conditions required for labour-value prices obtain—the capital labour ratio is identical for all products—then there is one pattern of prices that is independent of the rate of profit; (At every rate of profit, "prices of production" are proportional to labour values. The relative prices of commodities are proportional to the labour-time required to produce them and the value of capital is governed by the "labour embodied" in physical equipment and stocks. In the general case relative prices vary with the rate of profit. Products for which the ratio of the value of capital to the wage bill is higher than the average at one rate of profit, will show a rise in price relatively to the average when the rate of profit is higher, and contrarywise. (The "transformation of values into prices" was nothing to make such a fuss about.)

This is a sketch (not an exact statement) of the formal demonstration that a "quantity of capital" has no meaning apart from the rate of profit.

The marginal productivity argument, however, does not rely upon a single set of technical relations. The essential point for the neo-neoclassics was substitution between labour and capital. In the "scarce resources" case, if more land becomes available to a given labour force, output per head goes up. Similarly, they main-

tained, with more "capital" (without any change in technical knowledge) output per head would rise, while the "marginal product of capital" and the rate of profit would fall. Sraffa's argument goes on to show that, when a variety of techniques are compared, a lower rate of profit may be associated with a lower level of output per head just as well as with a higher level.

#### Parable

This was rather shocking. At first the neo-neoclassicals sought refuge in a parable. If "capital" were made of some homogeneous and malleable substance such as putty, physical equipment would be just like finance. A business is continually recovering finance invested in one physical form from amortisation allowances, and may reinvest it in other forms. Similarly putty-capital can be remoulded at will. Indeed, putty is more convenient than finance, for finance has to submit to risk and is recovered only over a period of time, while putty-capital, in the parable, can be instantaneously adjusted whenever there is a change in the state of demand. The problems concerned with getting into equilibrium and, indeed, the whole problem of historical time, moving from an irrevocable past into an uncertain future, is left out of the story.

A more subtle line of defence was to confine the argument to the case of labour-value prices (though, of course a neo-neoclassical would not put it like that) so that a higher value of capital is necessarily associated with a higher output per head. Next, a sally was made to try to prove Sraffa wrong in the general case. At last the conspiracy of silence was broken. In 1966 (in the so-called reswitching debate) a flood of mathematical argument came in from England, Italy, Japan, India and Israel. The neo-neoclassics had to admit that Sraffa was right. But:

He who is convinced against his  
will  
Is of the same opinion still.

#### Formal Argument

The formal argument is just a formal argument but it opens up questions of the greatest importance.

It destroys the presumption that the rate of profit measures the contribution of investment to national income (let alone to human welfare).

It exposes the fact that the orthodox school have failed to answer Ricardo's question. Indeed, they do not have a theory of distribution at all.

It calls in question the benefit to society of "economic growth" which consists mainly of the accumulation of capital by the great corporations under their own control and for their own purposes. ("What is good for General Motors is good for the United States".)

It throws a new light on the meaning of the "export of capital" which is supposed to be a benefit to so-called developing countries.

Indeed, it requires a radical reconsideration of all the slogans of orthodoxy, as they apply to capitalist industry and, till more as they have been foisted upon the so-called developing economies.

The transformation of values into prices is also a purely formal argument. The question which lies behind it concerns the manner in which a capitalist economy operates. Does the rate of exploitation dominate the rate of profit? That is, does the balance of power in bargaining between employers and workers determine the share of wages in net proceeds, or is it rather the requirements of profits that determine what is left over for wages from a given level of physical output?

The wage bargain is made in terms of money. Marx once argued (in *Value, Price and Profit*) that strong trade unions can raise real wages and squeeze profits to any extent. We know now, for instance in the UK, that they can sometimes squeeze profits a little bit for a little time, but, in the main, rises in money-wage rates are offset by rising prices (percentage gross profit margins vary very much less than the level of money-wage

rates). In a general historical sense, obviously, the social, political and economic forces that determine the workers' bargaining power are of dominant importance, but from day to day in the private-enterprise system profits have the upper hand.

The theory of profits which is called Keynesian really derives from Kalecki (Keynes did not interest himself very much in the problem of distribution). It belongs to that part of Marx's scheme which is concerned with the "realisation of surplus value". The capitalists clearly could not get any profit out of selling commodities on which no more was being spent than the wages earned in producing them. The receipts to cover overheads and profit must come from other sources. The wage bill for investment and rentier expenditure (out of rents, interest, distributed profits and realised capital gains) come back through the shops to cover the elements of gross profits in sales. "The workers spend what they get and the capitalists get what they spend".

An important corollary of this way of working at things is that the proper function of profits in a capitalist economy is to be saved and invested. Expenditure out of "unearned income" (as the tax collectors neatly describe it) merely raises profits at the expense of real wages without contributing to production.

Another corollary is of the utmost importance in understanding the "fiscal crisis" of the modern state; government outlay (which has the same effect as capitalist investment) reduces real wages even if the whole increment of expenditure is covered by taxes on profits. Capitalists do the saving but the burden of 'abstinence' does not fall on them.

The hollow doctrines of the neo-neoclassics have a great vogue in India; they have been highly successful in distracting Indian students from studying Indian problems. Uncritical acceptance of them is, no doubt, largely due to the fact that they come with all the glamour and prestige of the dollar, not to mention

the prospect of a chance of being brain-drained to the United States. The Indian intellectual tradition of high-flown abstraction lends itself very well to elaborating a scheme of thought that sounds as though it had some meaning in spite of a total absence of empirical context; a number of Indian professors have distinguished themselves as stars in the neo-neoclassical galaxy. Moreover, the economic problems are daunting; escapism that can be made to look respectable is bound to be at-

tractive. Yet the position is precarious. Students have grown restive. In the United States the latest defender of orthodoxy is reduced to declaring that "placing reliance upon neoclassical theory is a matter of faith."<sup>1</sup> The profession in India would be wise to cut the tow-rope before the leading vessel gets into trouble.

<sup>1</sup>C. E. Ferguson, *The Neoclassical Theory of Production and Distribution*, p. xvii.

## Role Of The Left Intellectual

ASHOK RUDRA

THE left Intellectual in India defines himself primarily by his bad conscience. The typical member of the tribe suffers from a sense of guilt for not doing anything of what he thinks he ought to do. This brings out two things. The first is that the Left Intellectual has got a sensitive conscience. The second is that he lacks any active commitment as an intellectual.

One of the typical postures which the left intellectual likes to adopt is to say that as a matter of fact there is nothing for an intellectual to do in the struggle for bringing about a social revolution. What was necessary were men with rifles. One had to be a guerilla fighter to serve the cause of revolution. If not a guerilla fighter at least a trade union leader or a Kisan Sabha leader. But one is fallen and has become a mere intellectual. The guilt complex regarding this imagined sin allows the intellectual to behave totally irresponsibly: the alibi is, once fallen one cannot fall any more. It is the same psychology which makes a woman once violated give up all inhibitions and all restraints. "Having lost chastity once I cannot recover it nor lose it a second time. What does it matter what I do now?" The left intellectual builds up his career and leads a comfortable private life thanks to the bounties which bourgeois society pro-

vides for the more compliant among the more useful of its members, while lamenting all the time the fact that he is merely an intellectual, not an organisation man.

A second posture of the intellectual is to say that nothing can ever be achieved by any individual. It is the revolutionary party that matters. But, alas, there is no true revolutionary party. The parties that are there are all set in incorrect paths or have moved away from the revolutionary goal. As a result there is no party which the intellectual can join. And as he is not a party member and therefore quite useless, it does not matter after all what he does in his professional field. This once again leaves the intellectual free to ride the curve of maximum efficiency to the fulfilment of his professional ambitions.

The resultant state of affairs is that leftism for the left intellectual is something like a hobby in gardening or an amateur interest in music. The point we are making is not about his degree of sincerity: that in any case would vary from person to person. The point is that it is not a part and parcel of his life as an intellectual. He makes two compartments in his intellectual life. In one compartment he is a Marxist; in the other a professional intellectual or academician, just like any other professional

intellectual or academician in the same field; that is a bourgeois intellectual. The second compartment brings him money, fame and success; the first is meant to keep him in good humour in relation to his conscience. In most cases the leftism of the left intellectual expresses itself in no more than forming along with some colleagues in the same situation a Marx club which rapidly turns into a comfortable and smug tea club. These must be very few if any Marx clubs in the country that have resulted in the development of any new ideas.

Yet there cannot be any doubt that there are several important roles which the left intellectual can play.

To begin with, it is just not possible to be part-time Marxist or in part Marxist. The philosophical totalitarianism of Marxism does not permit of any such compartmentalisation of a personality. Left intellectualism ought only to mean leftism in one's intellectual life. The description 'left intellectual' ought to be reserved for one who is a leftist in his intellectual field. Leftism in one's professional field can be judged and defined in terms of the following four criteria.

- (a) the choice of subjects the intellectual studies;
- (b) the scientific methods he follows in his studies;
- (c) his professional relations in the professional world;
- (d) his relation as an intellectual with the rest of the society.

#### Choice of Subjects

There is nothing in the choice of subjects of the left intellectual in India that demarcates him from the non-left intellectual. There may be a few professional fields where there might not be any means of making a leftist or rightist choice of subjects. Thus, if one is working in the field of mathematics or medicine or astrophysics there is no means of proving one's leftism by the choice of one's subject. But in the social sciences one demonstrates by the choice of one's subjects one's social values; and by the method of treating them, one's un-

derstanding of the nature of social problems. The artist and the writer also reveal their attitude to man, society, and the world through the choice of their subjects and their treatment of the subject, though admittedly it is not always easy to distinguish different degrees of leftism in works of art. The lack of any expression of one's ideological convictions in the left intellectual's professional work in India is an indication of his failure to imbibe the ideology as to absorb it in his very system of thought. Marxism remain in his thought and works like an extra piece of baggage in the free allowance category. It does not make its presence felt anywhere in the work the intellectual does to advance or at least retain his position in his professional field.

Take the particular case of economics. Given the importance attached to political economy in Marxism, given the importance attached by Marx to the economic aspect of all social questions, economics as a subject attracts left-minded students and there is a significantly high proportion of leftists among our economists. However it is difficult to discover much of Marxism in the work done by these professional economists or the economics taught by them. It is a fact that there are very few, if any, comprehensive Marxian studies of the Indian economy and society. It is a fact that most of the more thoroughgoing studies of the Indian economy are by authors from Western countries. It is also a fact that in the few pieces of empirical research on the Indian economy that any Leftist Indian economist might have done there is very little that can be pointed out as application of any Marxian method.

In his social relations in his field of work the left intellectual often plays a leading role in trade-union type of activities—in the organisations and associations for defending the interests of teachers and research workers. It is very rarely however that he ever devotes his energies to influencing the orientation of the institution in which

he works in a leftist sense. Making a virtue of economism and anti-authoritarianism for its own sake, his energies mostly get devoted to making himself and his research workers work less well even in fields where there are possibilities of working in such a fashion as to contribute to the leftist cause. There are few if any social science departments in our universities where left-minded teachers have worked for the replacement from the syllabus of stuff they consider to be bourgeois rubbish by matter they consider to be the real essence of the science. Similarly, in the very large number of research institutions that have been set up large number of left-minded social scientists are pursuing a peaceable, pseudo-scientific career though many of them occupy leading, decision-making positions. It is very rarely that they have taken advantage of their positions in making use of the resources that they are in a position to command to conduct any serious investigations from a Marxian stand-

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point into problems affecting society. Even when participating in any such programme of investigations without any Marxist orientation it is not on record that their leftist ideology made them contribute to the programme in qualitatively superior fashion in comparison with their non-left colleagues. It is for this proved innocuousness that the Indian establishment is not only tolerant of but positively patronising to the left intellectual. It knows that he is a dog that barks but does not bite.

Coming now to his relation with the people at large, the left intellectual finds it easy not to take any strong stand on any issue of public interest by using the formula, "What does the stand of an individual matter? What do matter are the positions taken by the parties". Whatever role the mystique of the infallibility of the "party" might have played at other times in other countries, the multiplicity of parties each claiming to be Marxist and revolutionary is so great now that "the Party" has ceased to mean anything. There is therefore every need and every justification for intellectuals to take stands on issues, even individually if necessary, so that the uncommitted public at large can get a better understanding of the issues involved as well as a better appreciation of the stands taken or policies pursued by differed political parties.

But the primary role of the intellectual—we have in mind in particular the social scientist—vis-a-vis the non-intellectual but literate masses is that of the conveyor, interpreter and propagator of knowledge and information about various aspects of the world and society. In any kind of movement there has to be a division of labour and one has to choose one's role according to one's comparative advantage. The intellectual's comparative advantage lies in the field of knowledge. There are few times and few situations, even in the thickest middle of actual battle—Vietnam is no exception—that one can do without some people occupying themselves with

knowledge and information. There is a task for the left intellectual that is not being done at all. It is necessary for the lay public in general, but more particularly for the radical young man or student, that current social and economic problems are analysed, interpreted and written for their benefit by people who are competent to do so in a language that is shorn of the heavy technicalities and yet not simplifying the issues involved to the point of falsifying them. The young radical student encounters such terms as "feudalism" and "imperialism" and "crisis of capitalism" etc., but he may be studying chemistry or engineering or Bengali. In the good old days, the young aspirant Marxists had the benefit of going to classes organised by party intellectuals. It is true that the knowledge rationed out in those classes used to be encased in the rigid and dogmatic framework of Stalinist orthodoxy. But despite that severe handicap these classes at least familiarised the students with the fundamental categories of Marxian history, sociology and political science. Even this facility is lacking for the students of today. The absence of such organised study classes with rigid stereotyped syllabi can be put to advantage by the left intellectual of today. For it gives him a freedom of interpretations not available to the teachers of the study classes of earlier days.

#### Collective Action

We might have given the impression that the left intellectual has to act individually. But actually there is plenty of scope for collective action. The last mentioned task in particular, that of acting as conveyor of information and interpreter regarding the events and changes taking place in the world around, can be successfully performed only if a group of left intellectuals from the social sciences work together as a loosely formed team. Unless there is some teamwork, any one individual's effort would result in sporadic and disjointed writings involving partial treat-

ment of problems—partial in coverage as well as partial in viewpoints expressed. A co-ordinated, loosely planned effort by a group of intellectuals can however give rise to a continuous stream of writing, covering various aspects of the same problems and various viewpoints clashing with each other, thus helping the reader to form his own judgment.

As soon as it comes to collective effort the typical intellectual faces or creates a special problem. Being an individualist—an intellectual cannot but be somewhat of an individualist, for if he does not think and react individually he is not an intellectual, he is at the most a member of the intelligentsia—at the best of times he finds it difficult to act as a member of any group. The difficulties are apparently more acute now, for what does after all "left" signify today? A little reflection would however show that whatever the multiplicity of parties, the great dividing line today is between those who believe in future possibilities of the parliamentary path and those who believe in the necessity of armed struggle. The choice is certainly not so sharp on an all-India level; but it is very much so in certain regions, in particular in West Bengal. There is little possibility of any serious collective effort in any matter by left intellectuals belonging to the two sides of this dividing line. But for the kind of collective effort spoken of it is enough that the intellectuals so working as a loose team belong to the left of that line. This demarcation is narrow enough for the team to have a certain focus, yet broad enough to allow of fruitful controversies.

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# Returning Home

ROBI CHAKRAVORTI

**H**OW does an Indian feel returning to his homeland after having lived in the West for several years?

The 'returning' native, in many cases, cannot adequately answer the question. If he is inarticulate, he keeps his thoughts to himself and behaves as his particular situations demand. If he is articulate, he may be afraid to express his feelings completely and honestly, without giving in to hostility or nostalgia.

If he is a political ideologist, he selects his thoughts and packs them in neat bundles, and then, puts stickers on them. If he views himself as a hometown boy who has made good, he struts like a peacock and hides his thoughts behind his plumed behaviour.

Since I did not fit into any of these categories, I found it hard to describe my feelings when I returned home after having spent five years in the U.S. The desire to pose as an Anglicized intellectual was tempting. But I never felt like an expatriate as some gifted writers like Ved Mehta or Naipaul did. In any case, whatever my feelings, I wanted to share them with my countrymen rather than package them for selling abroad. I felt little kinship with angry, bitter intellectuals like Frantz Fanon, who saw the world in clear, sharp, simple colours of Black and White.

I sought assistance from other, to my mind, more acceptable sources. Nehru, I remembered, once described himself as "belonging to two worlds, at home nowhere." I had heard this phrase described as a succinct summary of the psychological condition of the Westernized intellectual in India. I must confess that I myself had once liked the phrase. Yet when I looked at it closely, I found that it did not say as much as it pretended to. It is a statement of an intellectual posture which is not only condescending to both worlds, but worse, it feeds on itself. You stew, so to

speak, in your own juice of intellectual separateness—and let's be honest about it, you enjoy this make-believe world of *Trishanku*.

A far better description of the returning native was given by an American writer. Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote what may be described as a good epitaph for an expatriate: "The years, after all, have a kind of emptiness when we spend too many of them on a foreign shore. We defer the reality of life, in such cases, until future moment, when we shall again breathe our native air; but, by and by, there are no future moments; or if we do return, we find that the native air has lost its invigorating quality, and that life shifted its reality to the spot where we have deemed ourselves only temporary residents. Thus, between two countries, we have none at all, or only that little space of either in which we finally lay down our discontented bones."

The problem with this kind of attitude is that it assumes two countries, and living in both—in one in body, in the other in soul. In the case of Indians, passing their lives in the twilight era of Western colonialism, this kind of living in two countries is opportunistic. To be frank, you live in the West for physical comfort and for little else, but since it does not sound proper to admit this openly, you make up some ideology, some value-judgment, add some nostalgia, and rationalize your way of life for public consumption.

Another variety of expatriate mentality is harsh, intellectual isolation. George Kennan expressed this admirably in his Memoirs. After a visit to his Wisconsin hometown, Kennan wrote: "I came away from the Summer's visit aware that I was no longer a part of what I had once been a part of—no longer, in fact, a part of anything at all...I would not be a part of my country...I would conti-

nue to pay it my loyalty. This was a matter of self-respect and of a deeper faith in the values of our civilization. What else, after all, could I be loyal to? But it would be a loyalty *despite*, not a loyalty *because*, a loyalty of principle, not of identification. And whatever reciprocation it evoked, could never be one based on a complete understanding." (Italics mine)

The harsh intellectuality of Kennan is Helgelian. I am alienated from my country, he said in effect, because I am trying to be de-alienated from the Idea, the Principle which is supposed to be behind it and from which it has alienated itself. It is an interesting piece of logic. But somehow I found Kennan's analysis too intellectual, too dry, lacking the sap of concrete experience of a returning native.

What none of the above writers describe is that mixture of feelings that can be experienced only by an outsider who is also an insider, a mixture that lends a distinctive colour to his perception. It is a process rather than a product, but it evaporates quickly, as your native environment from which you have detached yourself slowly establishes control.

In the first few days of renewed physical contact with the world in which you were born and brought up, you see things differently, as if with a third eye which dims and finally closes as you become again a part of your native environment.

Soon after my arrival in New Delhi, I met an anthropologist, an old friend of mine, and described my feelings to him as well as I could. He advised me to write down my experiences quickly before they disappeared. Time and cultural space, he said, have a way of rubbing away the sharpness of first impressions of one who can be called a native stranger. I followed his advice partially. As I look over my notes, which are spotty and disorganized, I regret that I did not spend more time on writing a diary. I present below a few excerpts from my diary which captures, I think, that strange but refreshing

way of looking at things, which escapes one who has never been abroad and is denied to a foreigner who has never been an integral part of the Indian environment.

### Palam

The 707 jet landed in the midst of a downpour. The rain became a drizzle as we prepared to step off the plane. A few hours ago I had been over Europe. The change in scenery is remarkable. Empty, damp, mouldy green around the airport, unkempt, untidy. Signs of poverty visible, even from the descending plane, in isolated huts from which thin wisps of smoke curled upwards. As I began to step down from the plane, the heat and the overhanging clouds seemed to envelop me like a blanket. I felt as if I were entering a huge sauna bath.

The Customs officials did not create any problem at all. I caught the glint of greed in the eyes of an official as he picked up and fondled a watch I had bought in Zurich for my niece. I declared everything I was carrying, and quipped, "I would like to test whether honesty is the best policy." The inspection of my luggage was over in five minutes. A pleasant surprise.

But the unpleasant aspects of Indian life lay in wait for me. They pounced upon me as soon as I left the Customs counter. The Supervisor of the Customs at Palam kindly offered me the use of his telephone so that I could call my friends, none of whom, I found to my distress, had appeared to receive me at the airport. The reason for their delinquency? They did not receive my letter airmailed from San Francisco eight days ago. I had a shrewd suspicion that the Supervisor let me use his phone because he had noted the name of my Delhi host on my disembarkation card—he is the joint secretary of a Ministry.

I tried unsuccessfully to call my friends for over half an hour. Every time I picked up the phone the line was busy. I heard the droning, desultory pieces of conversation which

seemed never to end.

The taxi ride from Palam to the Delhi School of Economics was exciting. I'd travelled this road before, but missed noticing how fragile most of the taxi-cabs were. The seats of the taxi-cab were stained, linings hung out like cobwebs, wires peeped out from under the dash boards. I could hear the creakings and groanings as the car sped along.

The driver, a young man in his early twenties, wore a shirt, the smell of which even the strongest perfumes of Arabia could not suppress. He and his companion were no less clean and healthy than the vehicle. And yet, this is the important thing, the car moved and the driver was quite skilful. We passed pedestrians, motor cycles, pedal cycles, other cars (in different stages of decomposition) and it appeared that they all enjoyed infringing traffic rules. There is an air of disorder and disorganization all around. And yet, this is important, I repeat, things moved—like driftwood, following a tide with numerous eddies.

As I looked around, a quotation from Nirad Chaudhuri's *The Continent of Circe* came to mind. "Occidentals", Chaudhuri wrote, "come from a clean and tidy material world in which dirt, squalor, and disorder are sins. But I declare everyday that a man who cannot endure dirt, dust, stench, noise, ugliness, disorder, heat, and cold has no right to live in India."

I had been used to a "clean and tidy material world" for over five years. But, believe me, I had also seen dirt, squalor and disorder in American slums and ghettos. I did not find dirt or disorder unendurable in New Delhi. But certainly they were striking, they made their presence felt.

Simultaneously, two thoughts came to my mind. People go from one place to another. Accidents are few and the wonder of it all is that they are so few. Taxi-cabs look like makeshift machines; and they run like wooden horses on a merry-go-round, as it were. There is disorder,

but it is not chaos. There is an order behind apparent disorder, a pattern knitting a jumble of lines.

If there is a sort of order amidst disorder, I thought, it was not deliberately planned. The order in daily lives which exists is of the nature of a happening, an emergence. There is a vitality and ingenuity in individual adaptations to increasing disorder in the material world which I found both fascinating and distressing.

You have to be alert and inventive to live in the untidy Indian world. Inventiveness as a feature of intelligence does not necessarily take the form of making machines. It may take the less tangible forms of adaptation to a changing environment.

While acknowledging this I also thought, what a waste—The individual ingenuities, displayed every day in mastering material hazards, are being dissipated. Indian life is disorderly, but at the same time, Indians are hardy and ingenious. The very fact of their survival proves this simple fact. But their hardiness and their ingenuity are individualistic, self-centred. A friend of mine once admiringly looked at a traffic policeman directing traffic in 100-degree heat and exclaimed, "Who says we are weak and lazy? Imagine these people getting organized for a purpose. They can move mountains!"

### Calcutta

Still struggling to absorb impressions which are flying at me from all directions. The world in which I find myself is the same old world in which I was brought up. But it seems so alive. This is perhaps an illusion. I am more alive; I am seeing things with a thousand eyes, like an Indra. My perceptions are sharper. I notice things I neglected before. Stimuli bombard me like an incessant series of pellets.

There are moments when little inconveniences peeve me. To do little things such as visiting friends or shopping requires planning, if I want to avoid physical inconveniences such as crowded buses. Simple daily

chores require advance planning. Life seems to be a series of five-year plans. I am often on the point of losing my temper, but then, quickly control my impulses. And, as I do so, I suddenly realize why we are so patient by temperament. The simple truth is that to us the alternative to patience is hostility, which will either destroy us individually or the world in which we live. The patience is, it seems to me, as existential as hostility which is a possibility at the other pole of a continuum of behaviour.

Coming back to the theme of patience. It appears so charming in an Indian, but is it not a simple act of self-defence? And, can we depend on patience as an eternal feature of the Indian posture? Assuming it has been the dominant characteristic of the Indian personality, is it an unchanging, unmixed entity?

It is better, perhaps, to look at this patience in polar terms. At the other pole is hostility. The average Bengali character seems to be located at the patience extreme of a continuum. Suppose the needle shifts to the other extreme, then what happens? It is not frequently that a Bengali remains in the centre, that is to say, mixes patience with hostility. Viable revolutionaries, I suppose, stay at this point of the Socratic golden mean.

### Roof Watching

The sky has cleared after a drizzle. It is late afternoon. As I look out roof-watchers appear all around my third-floor apartment. I had been a roof-watcher in the past, but this is the first time I noticed myself engaging in this great middle-class pastime in urban Calcutta. People leaning against rails watch pedestrians on the streets, and then lift their eyes and watch other roof-watchers. Young girls demure in their saris, gangling teenagers singing a film song, fatherly and grandfatherly types, sombre like Buddha, solemnly pacing up and down, inspecting the floor now and the darkening sky the next moment, as if bent on solving a difficult mathematical equation.

Is there a loneliness in the deep recesses of the Bengali heart, I wonder. Loneliness, some American and European writers say, has afflicted Western life. But Bengali loneliness, if there is one, is of a different kind. Americans are lonely because the social base of their life has shrunk. As they grow up, they detach themselves from their parents, aunts, brothers, sisters. Annual exchanges of cards at Christmas are often the only link with the larger family. They live in what anthropologists call a nuclear family. And, this too is breaking up. The competitive society has created a situation where an American is forced to fall back upon himself. Alone and afraid in a world I never made, as the rhyme says. His home or apartment is a castle where he lives in a state of siege.

Bengalis are lonely for a different reason. They are lonely because they cannot share all their thoughts with members of the family to whom they are bound by strong affective ties. Here is a gap which cannot be explained by the simple Western concept of generation gap. But, there is a gap, I assume, and this may be due to an inconsistency in Bengali social relationship. The very principle of relationship which shapes social bond also inhibits self-expression. A Bengali has, therefore, to find for himself an inner world where he moves freely and adventurously. This world, I suppose, is full of memories, desires, and dreams. It is like a great cavern where as you call out, your voice echoes back in a steady roll.

Is this the reason, I wonder, why Bengalis have been so furiously creative—in writing poems, stories, novels, in making films, staging plays, in music and in painting, and, ah yes, even in political adventurism?

### Snapshots

Near Southern Avenue, a four-year-old child holding on her lap a child about a year old—both crying aloud. The older child trying to calm the little one, but not succeeding. Their mother has apparently gone

somewhere on some personal errand.

A wizened old woman—looking almost like my mother—enters a Punjabi hotel and asks plaintively, "Babu, is there a spare roti for me?" The restaurant owner says something and she quietly leaves the place.

A cripple, a polio patient, on the footpath of Rashbehari Avenue being fed by her mother. Both talking. Mother wiping the corner of son's mouth after a mouthful.

Away on Park street, the Olympia Bar is full. Bar Barrel, a new addition to Calcutta's garish night life, hosting a rock and roll group. They are comic imitations of American rock groups. In Kwality and Waldorf, all the tables are occupied. In front of these rendezvous of the elites hover riff-raff urchins and adults in rags working frantically as middle men for taxis. I can detect faint traces of leer around the mouths of a couple of young men in tight, uncuffed trousers as they watch girls crossing the street.

How, I wonder, can an Indian reconcile these contradictory sensations? If he is well-off, that is, if he can afford to visit restaurants and bars on Park Street, he has to wade through acres and acres of poverty and human misery. How does he reconcile the scene outside with that inside these airconditioned havens? It is as if a Burra Sahib drives through the 'native' quarters to reach his club which is segregated. The psychology, it seems to me, is little different from that of the white colonizers.

The contradictions, I suggest, are reconciled with a philosophical sleight of hand. Take up a spiritual world view or a comic view of the world as absurd in which the reality of the present and the near dissolves.

Here, indeed, you find the philosophy of poverty and the poverty of philosophy, joining hand in hand, in a supreme synthesis!

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# The Theatre Scene In Delhi

ASHOK DESHPANDE

LIKE many things else in India the theatre shows a wide disparity in achievement and development in the different regions where it is not altogether unknown. In Delhi it has some special features—it is basically a nurtured theatre enjoying patronage and help from above which come to it not only because it is near the centres of power and money but also because it is considered a useful vehicle for the uplift and spread of Hindi. What is noteworthy is the keenness it has displayed in absorbing the stylistic exercises of theatres in India and abroad, and the use it has made of the facilities the various limbs of a benign Government shower on it. The Delhi theatre presents the phenomenon of a hothouse plant which has no roots and yet grows, spreading branches and attractive flowers.

It would be surprising if it were not so and the Delhi theatre had something less to show. With the facilities and the patronage, and an affluent elite hell bent on culture for an audience, the enthusiasts can afford to concentrate on dramatic and production niceties with undivided zeal and attention and without undue worry about resources, financial and otherwise. Nor are gifted practitioners in short supply. There is of course no other place which offers a greater prospect of fame and other benefits to culture aspirants than Delhi. Inevitably there is a steady supply of potential playwrights, actors and technicians in search of the abundant plums. And even if, for any particular production, available talent is not considered adequate, aid borrowed from abroad need not always be too difficult to arrange. For instance, the National School of Drama (why this institution is called the National instead of the Hindi School of Drama is difficult to explain since the medium of instruction

is Hindi and the plays produced by it are also in Hindi) for two of its recent prestigious productions—Hindi versions of two of Brecht's plays—managed to get the services of two eminent Brechtian experts from abroad. With such a salubrious climate and favourable circumstances some of the productions of the Delhi theatre could not very well be less than excellent, as they indeed are.

The theatre in India has, in greater or less measure, to depend on translations and adaptations, Indian dramatic literature being what it is. The Delhi theatre is no exception and has indeed to depend on plays written in other languages to a greater extent than other regional theatres, Hindi dramatic literature being what it is. What evokes admiration is the manner in which the different theatre groups in Delhi have turned the dependence to advantage, and have laid a foundation of theatrical expertise. Good original plays in Hindi may not be there in plenty but probably in no other language in India have so many translations been made of plays written in other Indian languages. And also of European and American plays. Whatever else it may suffer from, an acute shortage of the basic ingredient of a theatre is not one of its ailments. The area of its choice is comparatively wide.

### Unreal

How actually has the choice been exercised? Looking back over the plays produced by the established and better known groups during the last two or three years one is uncomfortably aware that, barring exceptions, the plays chosen seem to be curiously unrelated to the reality of the lives of the people around. What seems to attract the groups when not engaged in providing drawing-room entertainment is either reported success achieved elsewhere or the latest innovatory techniques with, perhaps, a preference for disembodied psychological wrestlings as theme or subject.

While inconsequential and dated plays like *The Admirable Crichton* or *You can't take it with you* or *The Sound of Murder* have been fre-

quently chosen, an equal number of plays by, say, Lorca or Beckett or Wesker have also been chosen. Apparently anything goes from *Charley's Aunt* to *Rhinoceros*. Of Indian plays in other languages Vijay Tendulkar's plays in Marathi and Badal Sarkar's plays in Bengali appear to be great favourites as, in a lesser degree, are the plays in Telugu of Adya Rangacharyya. Plays by others such as Khanolkar's interesting Marathi play, *Ek Shoonya Baji Rao* or Madhu Rye's involved Gujrati play *Kisi Ek Phool Ka Nam Lo* have also been successfully staged.

The choice in original Hindi is, as yet, severely limited but slowly it is widening. *Adhe Adhure* by Mohan Rakesh has deservedly been acclaimed as a sort of breakthrough in Hindi dramatic literature. Its brilliant production by Dishantar has also been a sort of landmark for the Delhi theatre. It is the one play in Hindi which touches the core of reality in India and which at the same time displays considerable virtuosity in the craft of playwriting. Other recently staged plays such as L. N. Lal's *Mr Abhimanyu* or B. M. Shah's *Trisanku* suffer greatly by comparison.

The Delhi theatre has not thus yet acquired a form and a tradition except in a negative sense. Not unexpectedly it has shown a bored indifference to what Eric Bentley calls the theatre of commitment. This has not come from any conscious political stand reflecting the Jana Sanghi climate of the city. It is rather a reflection of the attitude the residents inevitably develop—an attitude of dissociation, bred of an artificial ambience of well being. It is true that several of Brecht's plays have been

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produced—and produced remarkably well. But in the productions the, perhaps, unconscious emphasis was on the externals of Brechtian techniques and visual pace. Brecht, in any case, is a safe proposition, having been successfully appropriated by Western countries as one of their darlings, and thereby rendered harmless.

Somewhat similar was the approach which Ebrahim Hamid Alkazi, the energetic director of the National School of Drama, brought to bear in his direction of the Hindi version of Badal Sarkar's play on the bombing of Hiroshima. An enormous set with all sorts of electronic and cinematic devices represented the court-cum-control room where the accused and the victims sat in two raised platforms backstage taking their turn to come down to the witness box. To what purpose and for whose benefit the abundant resources were mobilised was not clear. Likewise it is not clear what impelled the best known college dramatic group in Delhi to choose Mario Fratti's *Che Guevara*. Armed revolution was obviously the last thing in the mind of the glittering gathering which applauded the excellent production.

The main trouble with the theatre in Delhi is its unwillingness to acknowledge the primary truth that a theatre has to acquire an audience. For all its devotion to and knowledge of plays and productions it just does not seem to be aware that a theatre will not start growing unless it grapples with the problem of inducing a steady public to the box office. It is on the cards that the Delhi theatre will blissfully continue to remain unaware. Delhi induces the belief that money buys everything. The theatre, probably, thinks that, if it comes to that, it will buy its audience.

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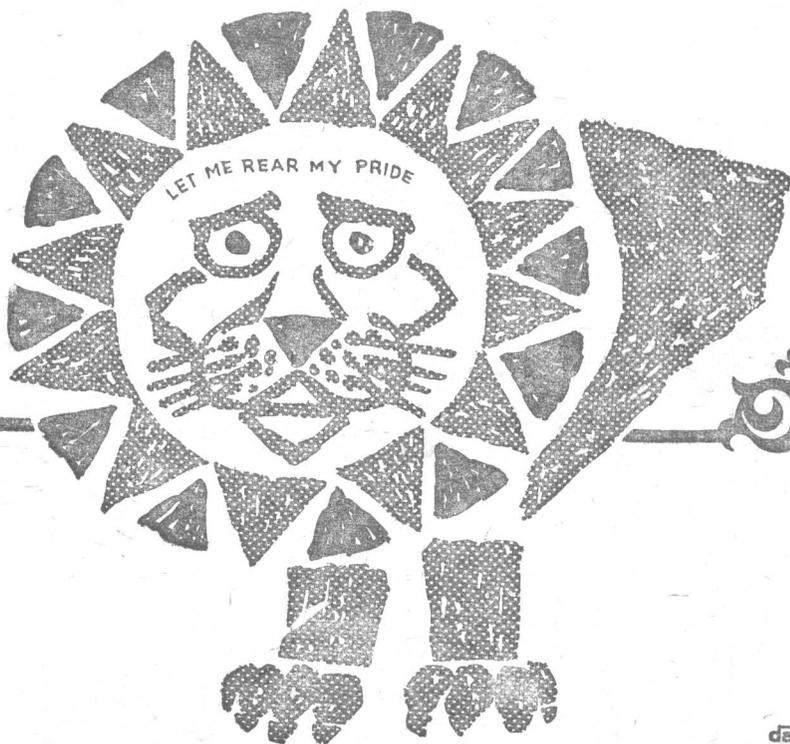
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# Eloquent Silence

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

THE silent era of the American movies was a real treasure-grove. The gradual rediscovery and the revaluation of this period confirm the idea that the traditions of the American silent cinema have played a genuine creative role in the evolution of this visual art form. The first onslaught of sound did obliterate much of the achievements of the silent cinema, relegating those into the background as obsolete museum-pieces, but the achievements were too solid to be forgotten. And from time to time, film-makers have derived inspiration and instruction from these pioneering masters, as the artists in other media have often gone back to their primitive roots. The silent period in American movies is a glorious parade, a shining cavalcade of artistic brilliance. Recently a festival of American silent films organised by the Federation of Film Societies of India, Museum of Modern Art, and U.S.I.S. Calcutta featuring much of the representative works of the silent film-makers of different genres, has been of tremendous impact on the film-enthusiasts of Calcutta.

## The Clowns

One of the purest forms of silent cinema is the slapstick comedy evolving a truly visual style. Drawing much on vaudeville and pantomime, the slapstick comedy relies on a combination of perfectly-timed visual gags and rhythmic cutting. There is an element of creative anarchy in every film comedy of this type, where the artistic truth comes out of the demolition of the organised structure of situations and events. Mack Sennett's films shown in this session are superb examples of this sort of inspired mayhem. *Comrades*, built on the impersonation of an aristocrat has a slightly Gogolian flavour and Mack Sennett's performance as the disgruntled companion and the fluid editing

devices contribute much to the tempo of boistrous humour. *Mabel's Dramatic career* is a magnificent illustration of Mabel Normand's comic talents and it also offers us an inside-view of the contemporary film-making. *His Bread And Butter* starts off with funny antics of Hank Mann as a restaurant waiter ending up with a maddening chase-sequence. Mabel Normand also stars in *Mickey*, the story of a rustic tomboy trying to adjust herself into an urban setting. Although Mabel's acting is excellent, yet the director has failed to interpret the dramatic complications in visual terms. Chaplin has been represented by three shorts: *Getting Acquainted*, *A Woman* and *Police* showing the crystallization of his comedy techniques and especially *A Woman* has some bravura patches of Chaplin's female impersonation. Laurel and Hardy are also there with their funny bits. *Two Tars* and *Big Business* where these two innocents entangle themselves in a host of absurd and funny situations. But the gem of this session must be Buster Keaton's *The General*, a masterpiece of screen comedy. Set against the fiery background of the civil war, the film describes the exploits of Keaton, a southern railwayman, who has only "two loves", his engine named "The General" and his fiancée Anabella. When the northern spies steal the engine and kidnap Anabella, Keaton sees red and riding on another borrowed engine chases the miscreants. What follows is unadulterated fun and Keaton's fast-moving impromptu gags, controlled, spontaneous movements add new dimensions to the whole show. Some of the sequences really stand out, like the one with Keaton riding on the front of the engine with a piece of log on his lap and his predicament when the wood starts bouncing back and Keaton playing tipcat and dislodging the wood. His deadpan face is more expressive

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than a thousand words and he lives upto the classic image of the slapstick comedian who is constantly at loggerheads with inanimate objects, be it a locomotive, or an ocean liner or a movie camera, behaving as Dilys Powell has put it, "like one possessed." His wonderful agility is the result of his vaudeville training and the fluid gestures are fine examples of mime acting. Keaton as a film-maker has an excellent sense of timing, and the masterful weaving and staging of sequences, fast cutting and brilliant camerawork fully exploiting the locations and capturing the mood of the period, display Keaton's thorough grasp of his medium.

### The Cowboys

Like the slapstick comedy, the "Western" is another original American contribution to the world cinema. The gradual westward thrust and the consequent opening up of the new prospects created new legends, new myths and new heroes. As the covered wagons trekked across the wild west, conflicts and complexes arose, clashes between the groups of the prospectors, clashes with the Red Indian world crumbling down before the inroads of white men. Land and property brought in the protectors with the gun. A new figure loomed on the horizon, the cowboy on horseback, often equated with the classical Greek heroes. A new milieu came into being, a new setting was built up with churches and whisky-saloons, sheriffs and outlaws, representing the rival forces of order and anarchy: Out of these emerged the spiritual concept of the Western which almost became the American national symbol. As William S. Hart has said, "In this country western film means the very essence of national life; the spirit is bound up in American citizenship". For the movie-camera, the western symbolized cinema's urge to go out in the open, into the world outside the studios where one could find abundant dramatic material. Every Western film, good, bad or indifferent has this minimum quality, a feel of the physical reality. Thomas

Ince was the first to polish the art of the Western, acting as a trend-setter. *The Deserter* starts off as a love-triangle and then acquires a larger dimension running along the classical pattern. Ince's film displays an intimate knowledge of the Red Indian setting and a deep, understanding of their problems. The construction is simple but taut, effectively capturing the visual splendour and the dusty ruggedness of the West. Another of the pioneers, Broncho Billy, infuses a bit of fun into this tough world, and in the two films *Broncho Billy's Capture* and *Shot in Mad*, we have the big, burly figure of Broncho Billy as the strong man with a childlike innocence. He is a man of tender heart, a little shy with women, but quite at ease with horses, and fights and *Shoot in Mad*, a sort of light-hearted version of Hart's *The Toll Gate* is full of Billy's astounding feats. Tom Mix was another important name in this genre, a refined stuntman who almost did all his tricks without a double. His film *Sky High* has a rather trite story, but one marvels at the staggering bits of Mix's hair-raising acrobatics. But the man who has perfected the techniques of this genre and raised it to the level of great art is John Ford and his film *The Iron Horse* describes the building of American transcontinental railway in an epic style. Ford's mobile camera, his handling of difficult movements, the astonishing build-up of the action sequences, his insight into the simple nobility of the common people and a sense of rustic and robust comedy, all these ingredients make this film a true representative of Ford's creative experiments. The period atmosphere is authentic and the majestic grandeur and the epic-sweep of the film has rightly earned it the title "An American Odyssey".

### Sci-fi and Macabre

The other two types which were gradually growing into maturity were the science-fiction fantasy and the crime thrillers tinged with horror element. Melies fathered the science-fiction fantasies, transplanting Jules

Verne stories onto the screen, dishing those with his typical stylised form. The American cinema was quick in following Melies and Stuart Paton made *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea*, one of screen's memorable excursions into the fantastic world of Jules Verne. The film has three episodes (the deserted girl on a lonely island, a sort of She-Tarzan and the balloon adventurers, an expertly-photographed Indian episode with elaborate and gorgeous design, and of course, the Captain Nemo and the Nautilus story) and Paton has done a good piece of constructive editing by combining these three independent plots into a well-integrated whole. Credit is also due to the exciting underwater photography investing the film with a surrealistic charm. *The Unholy Three* by Tod Browning stars Lon Chaney, the master of the macabre. Browning has done an excellent job of mixing suspense with comedy and his use of apparently innocent surroundings as the breeding-ground for criminal propensities definitely marks him out as the precursor of Hitchcock Mystique. Lon Chaney's acting is a stroke of rare genius, especially his marvellous impersonation of a nice old lady and his sudden transformation from brutality to sadness towards the end.

#### The Stars

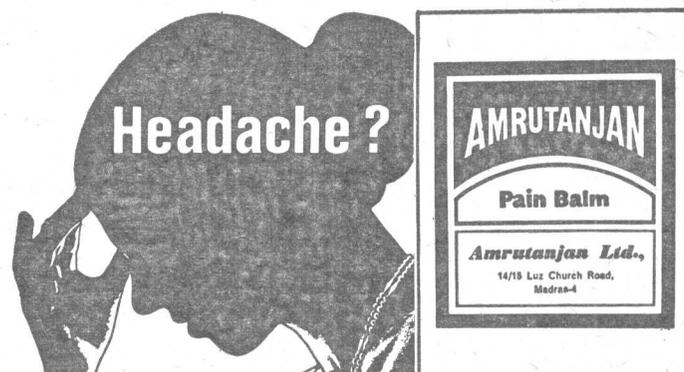
The stars are the idols of the celluloid age, the new gods of the screen pantheon. The silent period in American movies saw the rise of the stars and the full flowering of the star system. Garbo, Valentino, Gilbert, Fairbanks these were household names. But these people were not merely the fantasy-images of a dream-world, but they were great performers and their consolidated achievements elevated the silent film acting from the primitive level of rolling eyes and grossly exaggerated gestures and made it an effective means of registering the nuances of subtle emotions. Frank Powell's *A Fool There Was* features Theda Bara as a full-size vamp, destined to spell ruin

to her victims and also with an undercurrent of protest against the conventional notions of respectability. This film is remarkable for its clever unfolding of the Grand Guinol passions, for the elegant acting and for its beautiful atmospheric lighting. It is not known whether Sternberg saw this film before making *The Blue Angel* but the similarities between the two films are too distinct to be missed. Greta Garbo in Clarence Brown's *Flesh And The Devil* appears as another femme fatale of a more sophisticated variety and the combined talents of Garbo and Gilbert do inject some compelling force into this otherwise inconsequential and trite Sudermann triangle melodrama. Valentino's performance, has, however failed to stand the test of time and his roles of a tough bull-fighter in Fred Niblo's *Blood and Sand* and of a gay Lothario turned a hero in Rex Ingram's *The Four Horsemen Of The Apocalypse* are just stale shows. *Blood and Sand*,

a hoary period piece, is, of course, of no importance, excepting as a contemporary document of Valentino's projection into stardom, but Ingram's film has been able to outgrow the star-image and to create some impact on posterity. The film is a powerful blending of rich drama with historical reality and the dark mood of the doomsday during the outbreak of the First World War has been powerfully evoked. The film's weaknesses are a little novellish digressions, occasional lapses into literariness, obvious and therefore obtrusive symbolism and the unnecessary interpolation of the character of the Stranger acting as a commentator on the events and piecing together the different episodes.

#### The "Invaders"

The Hollywood businessmen were always shrewd and quick enough to rush for the current fashions and to spot a marketable commodity. When during the twenties, German and



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Swedish film-makers started revolutionising the European screen, naturally Hollywood could not afford to miss them. Thus began the import of talents from abroad and the European invasion of the American film scene. Many people came, producers, directors, stars, cameramen, designers and a host of others. Many struck roots, but quite a few of them returned baffled, dejected and doomed. But initially this onrush was quite extraordinary. Murnau, the German director of *Dracula* and *The Last Laugh*, exploded on the American screen with *Sunrise* with excellent photography by Charles Rosher. But again, this film seems now terribly dated in content and approach. Murnau seems to be handicapped by the weak source-material, Sudermann again, a commonplace story of a peasant ensnared by the wiles of a vile woman and his ultimate realisation of true love residing in the soft heart of his wife. Murnau has used all his technical tricks in this film,

perhaps to get over the poor content and some of the sequences like the walk along the moonlit swamp or the city scenes with the whirling merry-go-round and the glittering dance-halls, are real marvels of studio-decor and cameraman's artistry. Lubitsch's *The Marriage Circle*, set in Vienna, has an air of sweet decadence and a penchant for Gaullic wit, making the film as enjoyable as a wholesome Sardou farce. A neatly done comedy of situations, the film's scenario could be a model to any learner of the craft. The film is a bundle of amorous intrigues, but Lubitsch has kept aloof from the stock boudoir frivolities and his players have all given a balanced portrayals of their types. Victor Seastrom, the Swedish director, is quite neglected by the Hollywood historians, but he was able to maintain his individual identity in this alien set-up. His *The Wind* starring Lilian Gish, as a city girl forced to marry a rough hand in the prairies, goes deep into the

emotional problems of the heroine, integrating the disturbed state of her mind with the unleashed elemental furies, the gushing dust-storm of the prairies. Seastrom's technical grip is never at fault, but what keeps on haunting us is the superb pictorial rendering of the Injun myth, the roaring wind as the ghost-horse stalking the wild prairies. Really, a true Swedish mind at work.

#### **Stroheim: Hollywood's Rebel Child**

Stroheim is by now a film legend and all his whims, his pranks, his bluffs, his genius, his monstrosous extravagance, have gone down in film history. He could not fit himself into the conventional pattern of Hollywood. In fact, he was too big for the commercial film-world anywhere. His schemes were always larger than-life and Hollywood could not hold them. So Stroheim has to go on an enforced exile, as had happened years later to Orson Wells, another of Hollywood's enfant terrible. But

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Stroheim's films, even though extant in truncated versions bear proof of his command over the medium and his original outlook. *Blind Husbands* and *Foolish Wives* are penetrating studies in human frailities and Stroheim as the master seducer dominates the scenes. His eye for visual

details, is never erring and the clinical analysis of the characters and situation is a clever catwalking between the comic and the grotesque. Stroheim's eroticism is quite palpable and uninhibited and his films always successfully register the intended feeling of void.

## Letters

### Class Enemies

Comrade Kunnikal (Letter, December 5, 1970) seems to be mistaken in his understanding of who is the oppressor and the people's relation with this oppressor in a revolutionary movement. Though the State is the institution by which the bourgeoisie subjugates the people and the armed forces are the means of guarding this class rule, the principal enemy of the people is no one else but the bourgeoisie. Needless to add, a revolutionary movement is the outcome of the antagonism of the people against the bourgeoisie and annihilation of class

enemies is nothing but the expression of this antagonism. The bourgeoisie has already created an extensive network for its defence and all of them will suddenly jump upon the people. They might let loose a reign of terror, as in West Bengal. Then what happens? The masses, fully convinced of the nature of disguised institutions, fight them back, thus making clear the differentiation between the people and the enemy. On the other hand, an attack on the armed forces of the enemy without taking any action against the bourgeois

oppression directly will not only mean no participation of the masses in the struggle but will be suppressed by the enemy, without much impact on the people, thus isolating them. In this respect Mao had said, "we should pay close attention to the well-being of the masses, from the problems of land and labour to those of fuel, rice, cooking oil and salt. All such problems concerning the well-being of the masses would be placed on our agenda. We should help masses to realise that we represent their interests, that our lives are intimately bound up with theirs. We should help them to proceed from these things to an understanding of the higher tasks which we have put forward, the tasks of the revolutionary war, so that they will support the revolution and spread it throughout the country, respond to our political appeals and fight to the end for victory in the revolution." It is this phase of the movement which I had explained in my previous letter (August 22, 1970).

Now let us examine the arguments put forward by Comrade Kunnikal.



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He asks with surprise, if the people's retaliation is against the armed forces, then how it would be possible without creating the base area beforehand? I would like to put a counter-question. What do you mean by a base area? Do you mean a place where you can find some sympathisers, some activists and some friends who would offer you shelter? If so, you are mistaken. An area becomes a base area only after the people have liberated it from the enemy forces, destroying the bourgeois institutions in that area and where the masses are the principal sources combating the enemy. As the enemy is strong with its vast military power, the base area may be a no-man's land in the initial stages. It is a place which offers itself for the self-preservation of the revolutionaries. A base area can never be created beforehand as Comrade Kunnikal says. For the participation of the masses in the struggle, for fighting back the enemy forces, they must be fully convinced that the success of the movement reflects the success of their struggle against oppression. It is this logical relation between the annihilation of class enemies and the creation of base

pockets which I hinted at in my previous letter.

A class enemy represents the most naked oppression of the people. To annihilate him is the most sincere desire of the oppressed. Thus, by annihilating the class enemy you give expression to the most sincere desire of the people. Then the armed forces come out against the people. The result is that people fight them back and liberate that area.

Mao has never said that no class enemy should be killed. Like all other revolutionaries and humanists he liked less killing and less oppression. But when the enemy was more repressive, he had to insist on the annihilation of the enemy in larger numbers. When the Japanese imperialists were the principal enemy in China he said, the collaborators and the Japanese imperialists should be killed. "But China has fought the Japanese imperialists for two years and the issue is not yet decided. The collaborators are still rampant and very few of them are killed." The implication is significant. Though Japanese imperialists were the principal enemy, Mao had marked the class enemies at that time and stated

what should be done with them. About a peasant uprising he said, "they (the peasants) will smash all the trammels that bind them and rush forward along the road of liberation. They will sweep all the imperialists, warlords, corrupt officials, local tyrants and evil gentry into their graves."

It is high time to understand that the sources of the most cruel oppression are class enemies. Whether these are landlords, industrialists, usurers or police officers it does not make any difference. If the people's desire is to annihilate them, to be critical about annihilation on one pretext or another does not make any sense.

MADAN MOHAN  
Bombay

Hats off to you, Mr Editor. For once you have taken your courage in both hands to disapprove the wanton killings perpetrated by the CP(ML)—no matter—in a tone of a fond mother chiding her lispng child. You are likely to develop cold feet about printing this letter for obvious reasons. What is noteworthy is your brazen disregard for objectivity—certainly not a strong point for a journalist. That apart, all is right with your journal.

SUBHA GANGULY  
Berhampore

## Murder

Oh how class feeling tells! So long as the killing was at a distance constables, smalltime businessmen, landholders, you did not know or wish to know, you were sure that such blood-letting is the stuff of revolution. And now that mindless murder is stalking those of your own set, people you know and live with, out comes *Frontier* unctuous and whining for "the battle for the minds of men" (January 9). You gentlemen must forgive us reactionaries if we laugh. But there is nausea also.

TARUN DATTA  
Calcutta

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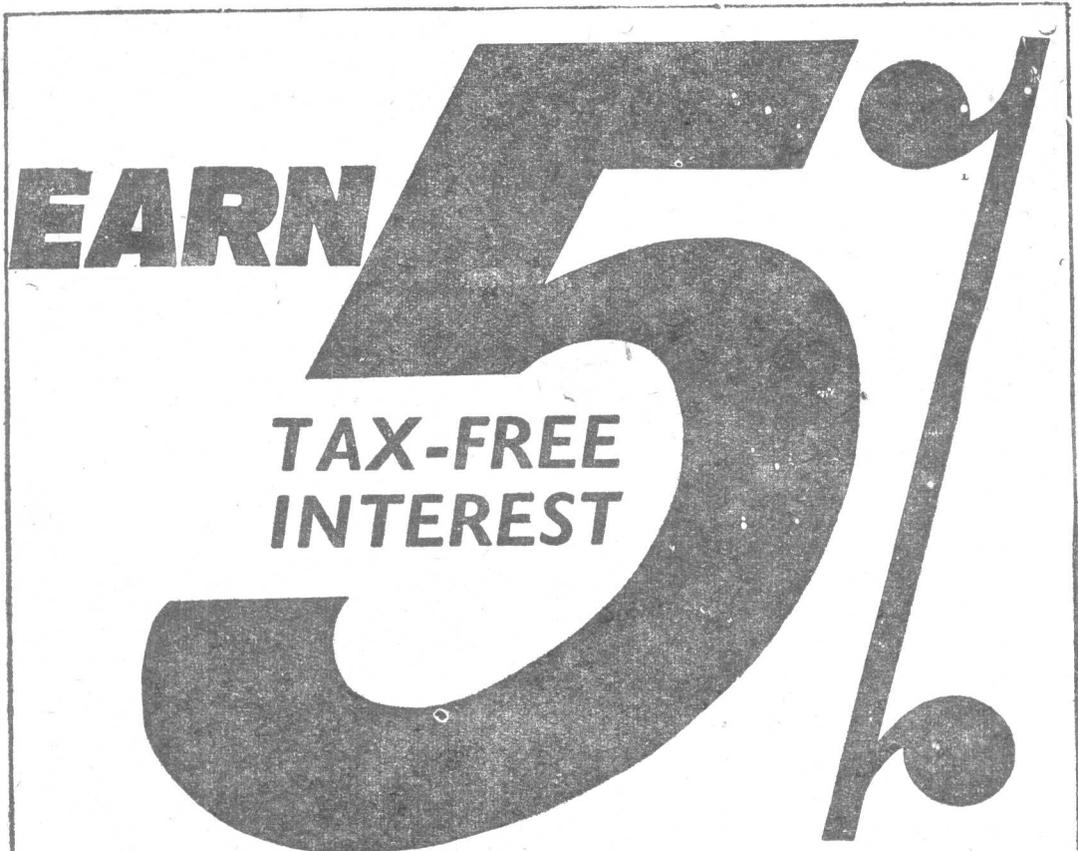
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