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THE LONG, HARD WAY

WILL geography bring a quick victory to the people of Bangla Desh? Whether or not the first round is won by the vengeful West Pakistani forces with their tanks, artillery and aircraft and ruthless, genocidal methods depends on one factor: Did the Awami League and other parties draw up any contingency plan to meet the offensive while negotiations were in progress? Was the Sheikh taken in by the flirtations of General Yahya Khan? The announcements broadcast on Thursday evening by the Dacca Betar Kendra, which had been taken over by Awami League volunteers, were, to begin with, optimistic about the outcome of the negotiations. Later in the evening, suspicions of the perfidy about to be perpetrated by Yahya Khan became marked. But almost all through the negotiations, Mujibur had warned the people to be prepared to continue the struggle. Did he have any plan to meet the challenge? Did the negotiators foresee that madness would overcome the ruling military junta, as it does almost all military juntas? Where is Mujib now? Was he flown to West Pakistan, along with some of his colleagues, on that fateful night of Thursday-Friday? Did such rumours provoke the reported attack on Tikka Khan, the Martial Law Administrator?

Even if there had been no plan and the first round goes to the well-equipped army, the battle will not be lost. The people have certain advantages even if their opponents are ruthless and efficient. First, the question of supply over long distances. Fuel, ammunition and food for the army may run critically short if the struggle is protracted. Second, the East Pakistan Rifles, the police and some Bengali battalions are supporting the people. Third, there are, as yet, no puppets in great numbers to back the army. The factor of moral superiority which Marx stressed in his comments on the art of insurrection is entirely on the side of the liberation fighters. And fourth, the parallel government which had been functioning before Yahya Khan struck has provided valuable experience to the cadres. A combination of violent non-co-operation, sabotage and ambushes can be very effective in curbing the enemy. It may not turn out to be another 1942 when the Congress High Command gave the Quit India call and were glad to be arrested, leaving the people to act in blind, spasmodic fury, without a plan.

The way to victory in Bangla Desh will not, however, be paved with

face-to-face confrontations with the army. Some of the exhortations by the clandestine radios quoting Mujibur Rahman can lead to enormous losses and consequent demoralisation. Tikka Khan, it is said, was prepared to kill one million people. There cannot be any quick victory. A protracted guerilla struggle is ahead.

The duplicity of Yahya Khan is on record. For a full ten days he tried to fool the public in order to give his army time for a formidable build-up. But colonial generals are treacherous generals, the more so when their masters and friends belong to the species of sophisticated murderers. Mr Bhutto, who rode the crest of a radical wave both in 1968 and 1970, has, alas, remained true to his class, the army brass, landlords and industrialists. What could have been a joint front against the military-bureaucratic-landlord-industrial complex in one Pakistan has now been disrupted and turned into civil war by the willing game Mr Bhutto played. But the democratic forces in the NWFP, Baluchistan and Sind must be watching with anxiety the rabid chauvinism of the Punjabi clique.

Yahya Khan and his cohorts in Punjab and Sind who have battered on the poor of both the wings forget that it was in Bengal that the bloody groundwork for Pakistan was done. *Lorke lange Pakisten* was put into practice in a blind, almost animal perversion of nationalism and sub-nationalism in those days when both the communities went mad. Chastened by experience and suffering, the people of East Pakistan will now fight with equal passion for Bangla Desh, to end the concept of the Islamic State of Pakistan. It is perhaps too early to be anxious about who is supporting whom for what in this turmoil, about the international alignments that would emerge. What matters is that the people as a whole are fighting and dying. And perhaps, we should not write with such enthusiasm; most of the causes this paper hastens to champion get defeated.

What is being done by the army in Bangla Desh should, however, be a warning to us. No unprecedented

upsurge of Vaishnavite bhairav-bahin emotion in the Lok Sabha should dim our eyes to the fact that when the chips are down, the ruling classes in India and their gendarmes would be no better or no worse than their counterparts across the border. Let us study the statistics of people killed in firing by law-and-order forces in this country over the past twelve months before squealing to the Government in Parliament to give all encouragement to the "secessionist" movement for Bangla Desh. The rulers already have too many skeletons in their cupboard for us to behave like sentimental *kirtan*-singers and look upon the lady as a saviour. Mr Gopalan should know better. Perhaps Hindu mythology dies hard: in the class war between the rich and the poor, the gods and demons, is born an enchantress, and we all look up to her, starry-eyed. But let it not be forgotten that the cup of nectar she holds in one hand is for the gods, the rich, the cup of poison is for the poor, the demons. And many, have already lusted the second cup, in West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, Nagaland, Mizoland and elsewhere. Go and ask the hundreds of mothers at these places about what has been done to their sons.

Much Ado

How puny we look these days! The confabulations for a ministry in West Bengal will have been over and a cabinet headed by that unique species, the Midnapore man, sworn in by the time the week is out. The jackals cried and campaigned for their share of the living corpse. Mr Dhara, once high and mighty, wanted to sneak in. The Muslim League, of seven legislators, wanted five or seven portfolios. The in-fighting between Mr Nahar and Mr Tarun Kanti Ghosh, of the Congress(R) has somehow been papered over. The CPI and the Forward Bloc will be on the sidelines, for a time to come, like stage prompters or, more likely, courtiers.

The wrangling over the number of ministers is a clear sign that the rag-tag band may not last for long. The majority is precarious and a few defections will be fatal, though the defectors may not threaten to go over to the ULF, there being no Ashu Ghosh this time. The ministry will be too busy keeping an eye on the uncertain following and placating it to do anything to rehabilitate West Bengal. The bounty from the Centre will line the pockets of the most clever and the most enterprising.

The CPM is perhaps waiting for another election, another chance to achieve absolute majority, after another spell of President's rule. Analysis of election results should boost party morale. Mrs Gandhi's party got barely 28 per cent of the aggregate poll in place of over 41 per cent for the undivided Congress in 1969. Votes cast for the Congress have gone down to 35 lakhs from 55 lakhs two years ago, while the CPM's share has gone up to 45 lakhs from 27 lakhs in 1967. The CPM and its allies have obtained 37 per cent of the total poll as against a bare 20 per cent for the party in 1969. And so on. The heartening figures are being studied by the leaders and passed on to the cadres for wider dissemination. The snag is that this time the Congress(R) was so diffident and so lacking in organisation that it made half-hearted gestures and that a Kerala-type experiment can checkmate the CPM. Between now and the next elections there will always be a big question-mark. Meanwhile, election-anxiety can be pretty debilitating.

To Perpetuate The Interim

It is now generally believed that Mrs Gandhi has been pitchforked into her present position of eminence by her socialist speeches and somewhat socialist acts. There was some expectation therefore that she would try to accentuate her socialist appearance through the President's Address to Parliament and the interim budget.

Even the businessmen apprehended that she might announce nationalisation of general insurance and foreign banks, increasing State participation in the export and import trade, a massive dose of taxation on the corporate industry and capitalist agriculture, State intrusion into the private sector and such other measures. It was a pleasant surprise for the stock market to note that Mrs Gandhi had withheld her shock treatment of the rich, if she has any such intention, for the time being. And what she has told people through her interim budget, the budget on West Bengal and President's Address has been a tonic for the nervous bourgeoisie. The crash programme involving Rs 50 crores outside Plan projects for rural investment, after the Bank Custodians reported that they could create three million jobs in rural areas, is good news. Not that new employment will not be created but that it will be created at the convenience of the merchants. The installation of the Industrial Reconstruction Corporation for rehabilitation of sick industries in and around Calcutta will be relief to the unemployed, retrenched or laid-off; it will be more heartening news for the industrialists who have squeezed all the profit out of these closed-up firms and were on the point of abandoning these; now they will be given public money to put the tottering concerns on a firm basis.

Not that the big bourgeoisie has shed all its anxieties altogether; who can, in this mixed-up world? The more money is spent to create employment, to stimulate industrial growth, to create more opportunities, the more vigorous feel the private sector and bureaucrats in the public sector. Therefore Mrs Gandhi is all welcome to increase the allotment on the Central annual Plan from Rs 1,195 crores. But where will she get the mo-

ney? Nearly all the States have shown deficit budgets and are living on overdrafts from the Centre. The Railways, once a major contributor to the general revenues, is now more indebted to the Central revenues. Mrs Gandhi can't possibly make up the Rs 240-crore deficit as shown in the March budget by taxing the common man, who is on the breaking point. Unless she taxes the rich, (but thank God, she is not a fool), where would the money come from? Is she tackling the Aid India Consortium properly? Will she be able to extract 1,100 million dollars from the donor countries? Will those countries give India more aid so that she can repay her aids? The foreign-exchange reserves are down; there is not the foggiest hope that Indian exporters will repay their gratitude for devaluation; it is no use saving money from money allotted for expenditure as the public sector undertakings have done last year. But funds must be brought into the market to check the inflation, which is crossing the level optimum for the industrialists; wholesale prices, food articles, industrial raw materials, manufactured goods give no sign of going down on the index. Unless people are given the chance to live, the goose will not lay eggs. Therefore Mrs Gandhi is entitled to have her own pleasure by reconstructing the Planning Commission by inducting the New Left, reshaping public sector appointments by declaring to appoint technical people at top positions there (and immediately afterwards sanctioning the appointment of two IAS fellows on two such undertakings), implementing Pay Commission recommendations and keeping the biggest section of the Indian white-collar workers, who dominate the organized labour in the country, happy. But let her not commit the blunder of mopping up resources from within; funds must come from outside. That the Americans have signed an agreement after Mrs Gandhi won the elections is a good sign. Let the leftists quarrel over comprador semantics; the going is good now and will be hereafter.

Clippings

Here Comes Trouble ?

Dacca: Just when the National Assembly is about to meet in Dacca in a thick fog of uncertainty (this piece appeared in the issue of February 28), the arrival here of the American wheeler-dealer for Asia, Joseph Farland, is not without significance.

Farland is wherever trouble is, or rather trouble is wherever Farland is. His presence and perambulations at the centre of events during a critical moment of history may very well spell disaster for a whole nation. We know it at the price of a million Asian lives in Indonesia. It was during his august presence in Indonesia that the monstrous C.I.A., in its brutal and bloody march against humanity, added another feather in its cap by successfully overthrowing Sukarno from power, and delivering Indonesia to the State Department on a silver platter, stained with the agonising blood of a million Indonesian patriots.

Therefore, not justifiably, does it give me the chill down my spine to see him arriving in Dacca at a moment when anytime anything can happen to us.

President Nixon in his State of the World message to Congress made special reference to the political niche in which the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent is now precariously placed. He expressed his great concern at the undesirable level of foreign influence to which we may find ourselves exposed. Whenever the President of the United States feels particularly concerned about the fate of a people in any part of the world, that is precisely when the people should start really worrying. Whenever the policing eye of the American Eagle focused itself on any country, a river of blood flowed from there. Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, Indonesia, Cambodia and now Laos. Whatever the price in blood, tears and toil, it is the proclaimed 'duty' of America to save a country from its people. Korea from the Koreans, Cuba from the Cubans,

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Vietnam from the Vietnamese. Is our country the next on the list to be saved from us because of our vulnerability to undesirable foreign influence?

One may-in his naivete wonder what then the Americans are—are they not foreigners? What American influence is—is it not foreign influence? From the way Joseph Farland moves about in Pakistan and the keen and active interest he takes in our politics, reportedly, one would hardly think that he was a foreigner or the Ambassador of a foreign country.

Not quite long ago we had a visitation from the Commander of the American Sixth Fleet, Admiral Baines. Presumably, he must be a very quiet man. Very quietly he slipped into Bengal and made a helicopter-tour of our coastal belt and the off-shore islands including Manpura. There was no publicity, no fuss, no fanfare. Since his surreptitious visit, it is learnt from a number of reliable sources that the Americans are probing to set up a naval base in the Bay of Bengal. Admiral Baines' visit fits in very neatly with this closely guarded piece of information.

At a time when the American imperialist posture in south Asia is hardening, the present state of eerie uncertainty in our country may easily tempt them to be drawn directly into our political cauldron. We must alert ourselves of such an eventuality. Let our people warn the American imperialists before they attempt, in their classical fashion, to 'save' our country from us, that we shall, as we must, save ourselves from the Americans at any cost. (Zakaria Choudhury, *Holiday*, Dacca).

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A Poem From Bangla Desh

SHAMSUR RAHMAN

She lived in her quiet remote village,
Engrossed all the while in a thousand and one sundry domestic chores.
She hardly noticed the sun throbbing in the
sky or rafts of clouds sailing by.

Time flew without her ever noticing it.
The whole scene was intensely familiar:
the pot of rice boiling on the oven,
and a fish or two and some spinach
ready for the modest school-teacher husband.
Now and then she glanced up and laid her eyes
on gourd creepers climbing over the fence,
And there sitting on a branch of the jackfruit tree
a yellow bird wagged its tail ceaselessly.

Hours rolled by.
After her bath, with the water drawn from the well
She combed her hair, liberally streaked with grey.
And thought of her baby son in the local school,
Engaged in learning by rote his multiplication table.
And then she packed in a jar homemade country cakes,
decorated with embroidered designs,
And thought of her eldest son,
the one with ever-shining bright eyes,
Studying in the remote city school.

She hardly ventured outside the precincts of her tiny home,
Her life was simple, serene and self-effacing.
Only the memories of her long dead parents
Sometimes brought an ache to her heart.

And then the entire country reared its head like an angry God
News came pouring in from all corners.
Many a sacrifice incarnadined the native soil.
The blood-spattered clothes of the son
drew the village mother inexorably.

The green gourds, the river and the meadow, the Kalai field
and her old familiar tank were left far far behind.
Today one finds her footprints on the wide city roads
and on the narrow side streets,
on all highways and alleys.

Losing her son, the mother has now mingled the bright
tears of her stricken heart
with resonant slogans.

Licked In Laos

A. K. ESSACK

VIETNAMISATION of the world is the imperialists' reply to the revolutionary currents sweeping the continents of Asia, Africa and Latin America. But the Nixon doctrine is meeting its nemesis on the plains of Indochina and it is bleeding to death slowly but surely.

When over 26,000 South Vietnamese troops moved into Laos supported by massive and murderous firepower from land and air, the strategy was to cut the north from the south and thus make the Ho Chi Minh trail unworkable for at least a few months. This meant control of the town of Tehepone and Highway 9 in Laos near the 17th Parallel. The second prong which they nicknamed "Operation Total Victory" was to clean up South Cambodia and pacify it.

The second ended in quick disaster and not much is heard about this. The road that links Saigon with Phnom Penh was cut and this was followed by the blowing up of the largest oil refinery and storage tanks. Thus Operation Total Victory ended in Operation Defeat.

Never has American adventure resulted in debacle and impasse in such a short time as in Laos. Within a month ten South Vietnamese battalions were decimated and ten others badly mauled even before the final retreat 300 American helicopters and planes were downed and 750 vehicles destroyed. As in the past so

too now the Americans have provided free to the liberation army vast quantities of arms and ammunition as the South Vietnamese troops ran marathon races to flee from the battlefield, leaving everything behind. There is no escape from a cruel choice. The aggressor troops are caught between two massive iron claws from which they cannot extricate themselves try as they might. If the aggressor troops disperse their forces, they lose their superiority locally, are put on the defensive and are thus forced into a passive position. However should they want to concentrate, they are forced into enclaves where they are encircled by the liberation forces. In both cases they are doomed. In South Vietnam, with the utter failure of the pacification programmes, the American and puppet armies were forced into enclaves and they saw the noose slowly but surely tightening round their necks as the grip of the encirclement tightened.

To break out from this, Nixon tried his ill-fated adventure in Cambodia and now his latest bungling in a long list of catastrophes has been the invasion of Laos. But this invasion has led to the dispersal of his forces, and this iron law from which there is no escape has gripped him again. The defeat will be more ignominious than before and more crushing than before.

To strike at the Ho Chi Minh trail and Highway 9 meant capturing Tehepone in a surprise attack. It also meant holding at all costs Hills No. 31 and 30. For the latter, two elite battalions named the Rangers were detailed. The surprise attack on Tehepone failed, for with the exception of a few abandoned tanks, only a few stray chickens were there to meet them. But the liberation forces allowed the Rangers to take control of

the strategic hills. And then hell broke loose as the liberation forces counter-attacked.

The western reports said that the liberation forces first attacked the landing zone, pounding it with artillery, mortar and rockets. This unnerved the puppet troops. This was followed by a series of ground assaults, breaking the defenders' outer defences. The puppet troops then panicked and ran helter skelter and fled for their lives towards the South Vietnamese border. The air support which the Americans had promised never materialised; in their own words they "were met with the heaviest task ever encountered in Indochina". However, one helicopter managed to get through. And such was the stampede that puppet troops now killed each other to get on board. But only 19 with one American got away. The exhausted remnants of the battalion then broke through and fled.

The puppet South Vietnamese brigadier of the 3rd Paratroop Batta-

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lion with all his staff was captured along Highway 9. Both the second and third battalions, the "elite" of the puppet armies, were decimated. This broke the back of the imperialist offensive in Laos and forced them to halt and retreat. Not only were none of their strategic objectives achieved, they were forced into a passive position everywhere, preceding the retreat.

This crushing defeat has made the Thieu-Ky clique even more desperate. They are calling for an invasion of North Vietnam. However the danger lies not in that, but that in the escalation of the war they would want Nixon to use nuclear weapons.

The invasion of Laos was a slight variation of the Nixon doctrine of Asians fighting Asians. This variation known as the Guam Doctrine means Indochinese fighting Indochinese on land while the Americans would provide air cover. It was on this premise that the puppet troops invaded. However what the Laos adventure has clearly revealed was the American inability to provide this air power. At the time when the puppet troops most needed them, they failed. The whole operation depended on co-ordination between the puppet troops and the air force. Many of the battalions which were encircled depended solely on support of supplies from the air. And this was not forthcoming. One never-failing excuse was that bad weather hampered operations. But the fact of the matter is that it was not American lives the pilots were asked to protect and therefore they were unwilling to risk their own lives in a hopeless war that is not theirs. Being led down in critical moments means this: the Americans are not

to be depended upon. They exhort from the rear, but are not prepared to risk their own lives. This must then increase the contradictions between the puppets and the American masters. The fact that hard-core puppet officers surrendered shows that they too were not prepared to risk their lives for Nixon.

37 of 40 Shot Down

Read these reports taken from the *Times*. Sixty helicopters were sent to the embattled fire-support base Delta One to try to extract three battalions of 1st Infantry Division troops. But in the pilots' minds was Saturday's (March 20) similar operation in which 37 out of 40 helicopters were shot down by North Vietnamese ground fire... It was believed to be the heaviest daily helicopter toll suffered by the Americans in the Laotian campaign and possibly in the whole Indochina war.

Observers... believe that the withdrawal is likely to revive the whole question of Vietnamization—whether the South Vietnamese should be left to take over the fighting.

...Though the helicopter has proved the lifeline back to Vietnam for retreating Government soldiers, it too has been humbled. The unprotected helicopter is no match for heavy anti-aircraft fire, as Hanoi's gunners have proved.

Refuse To Fight

Another report says:

Exhausted American troops from the first squadron of the 1st Cavalry Regiment refused to go into combat... when their commander ordered them for the third time into an ambush zone on Highway 9.

The weary remnants of two platoons had already returned once, during the evening with a volunteer force, to rescue the platoon commander, Captain Poveda, but refused to go back to secure secret equipment and documents left on an abandoned troop carrier.

Specialist Johnny Jeter said that... their commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Breeding, ordered them to go back again. But in the two platoons there were only two men willing to go. "The Colonel said 'Sergeant-Major, take down the names of these mutineers'".

The aggression in Laos has led to further isolation of Nixon from his own people. In one of the harshest verbal assaults made against Nixon in the Senate. Senator Symington charged him of being a dictator in America. Referring to the aggression in Indochina, he said that "neither Congress nor the people have any real knowledge let alone any voice in the formulation of policy, decisions which could well determine the nation's future". Even Rogers, the Senator said, has been kept in the dark as Nixon plots in secret with Kissinger. This figure is at present unassailable, for, according to Symington, "the man who knows never came before the Senate Committee and the numerous appearances of William Rogers have become an empty exercise.

On the other hand the Laos invasion has further cemented the unity of the three Indochinese people.

Nixon in 1969 boasted: "We are a strong people and America has never been defeated in our proud 190-year history. We shall not be defeated in Vietnam." But Nixon and all that he represents is being defeated. And he is being humbled by a force which he and his henchmen will never understand. The people of Indochina and the people of America have cut across national boundaries, put aside differences of race, colour, religion and have united to fight a common enemy—Nixon and the American imperialists.

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The Last Days Of Che Guevara—II

HARRY VILLEGAS

FOUR of us stayed behind: Tamayo, Che and me. At about two in the morning Nato arrived with a message saying that when they were entering the town they met with a patrol that ordered them to halt. Our men approached the soldiers and told them to hand over their arms. They disarmed the soldiers and took a Thompson sub-machine gun, etc. The patrol told them that a peasant had informed the Army that we were going to capture the town, that the authorities had asked for reinforcements, part of which were already in the town. In their message, they asked Che if they should attack the town or withdraw. Che told them not to attack, and wrote that Debray should do whatever he thought convenient, but to keep in mind that his opinion (Che's) was that he shouldn't leave, and that if he did, he shouldn't go to the town.

When our men returned, they said Debray had left with Bustos because the latter had insisted and Debray felt it was his duty to accompany him. We left quickly. In the afternoon we reached the house of the peasant who had treated us well and we looked for him, but couldn't find him anywhere. We were told that he had gone to town taking another road, but the peasant had told us before that there was no other way to town. This made us suspicious. We ate there. At around 3 in the afternoon, a messenger arrived from town in a pick-up truck. We went to meet it and out came the priest, the town prefect and I don't recall who else. They were the three officials who had come to offer us national peace. Of course, we rejected this, but we offered them local peace.

We told them that we would not attack the town if they would supply us with food, medicine, etc. In short, we gave them a list and gave them until 6 p.m. to deliver the things. But instead of sending over

the things we asked for, planes flew over and started to drop bombs. We withdrew at night and on the second day arrived at a village called Tabera or Taberia. Our objective was to take the road that goes from Muyupama to Santa Cruz, the same road we wanted to use for Debray. Now we realized that as we moved, we made too much noise and the peasants heard us. We immediately went out to the road. We spotted a vehicle coming with some people. We stopped and interrogated them. We also stopped other vehicles, but we let a truckload of miners go by; however, they were soldiers in disguise. In the afternoon when we were ready to withdraw, I was on guard duty with Pacho (Fernandez Montes De Oca) and one of the new prisoners we had taken said: "Where's the Captain?" But I didn't connect him with the soldiers who knew of the movement among the other prisoners, among whom there was a rumour that the Army was going to attack us, because they knew where we were. The fact of the matter is that when we were getting ready to leave around seven in the evening, Urbano and Papi (Martinez Tamayo) on their way to tell us to withdraw, clashed with the Army, then coming down the road. They opened fire on the Army and the shooting began. We, down below in the road, did not know what was going on and we began firing upward from our position. We withdrew, some on horseback and others by truck, and carried away a large quantity of plan-tains, etc.

The Priest's House

On the morning of the 23rd we reached a place called La Caca del Cura (the priest's house). We searched the place and found that the priest had crops of corn, peanuts, melons and also marijuana. This was the priest's country home. He

was the same priest who had come to offer us peace before.

We left there to make contact with Joaquin. Three days had already gone by and we could not go back along the same route that we had taken to leave the Nancahuazu river; it was impossible. The Army knew we were there, that we had that trail and it would have been normal for them to have placed a lookout just in case we returned that way again. We split up into two groups. We found out that we could take a path from the priest's house to the Inquiri river. Che sent Benigno and Aniceto to make contact with Joaquin and bring him back. He also sent Coco, Nato and I don't remember who else, to look for a way to the Rio Grande. Now, our objective was to join with Joaquin. Well, we had to return again to the zone where we fought, although it was not the place we had selected for that, but we had to go there, to Joaquin's group, because we were morally obliged to run the same risks as they, and share their fate.

The day of the tragic outcome at Vado del Yeso when Major Vilo Acuña and his men fell into an enemy ambush because of the information given by a peasant of the zone, Che and the rest of the column were fairly close to the scene; however, they did not hear the gunfire nor were they informed of the presence of enemy troops, or of the presence of the guerilla force, by the peasants of the area. (Prensa Latina)

When Che decided to set out for the area where he was to meet his death, he knew that he was running a risk by going to Higuera, and from there to Pucaro, and there he made a decision regarding the sick men and contacted the city to ask for a reinforcement of 50 men who had already been recruited.

...The Army knew we were in

this zone, and that it was a good one in which to attack us. We had to take the risk of being spotted or of provoking an action against us that could annihilate us in this almost barren zone, which had no forests at all. We were taking that risk; the last leg of our journey would be the Pucaro road and there in a place called Jagüey, we would decide whether to leave the sick or not, whether to go on foot or by vehicle. We planned to make all these decisions in Jagüey. Now, to get to Jagüey, we had to go to Higuera first and come out of the woods in search of the trail from Pucaro to Valle Grande. When we got to Higuera, we saw, from Abra de Picacho, that there was no one in town; just as in all the other towns we went to, the people fled to avoid complications and left us the villages. In some places, we prevented the people from leaving, but in others, we could not.

When we got to Higuera, we found one woman. The men and all the young people had left. The woman looked like one of those people who say: I'm not leaving and I'll stay, and so she did. When the Army came through here, the same thing happened to them; they found an empty town. After talking with the woman we decided that something strange was going on. When we were searching all the houses we found a copy of a telegram that had arrived by telephone in the home of the Magistrate, asking him to send a wire to the government if he saw any stranger in the town. We found out everything. Then we heard shots; the woman became frightened, but since there was a holiday being celebrated at Picacho, we thought the shot was only fireworks. That's what we told the woman. Why did the woman become frightened? Because she knew very well that there were soldiers about. As a matter of fact, later the Army even asked how we got to Higuera without running across them. And I now ask this question myself: why did not we see them if they moved in the same direction we did, and arrived appro-

ximately one hour before we did? They made their camp in Higuera and decided to climb to the top of a hill to rest and from there they spotted us. It was already dark. When we arrived in town they already had their look-outs posted. While we were resting in Higuera, they were going about, analyzing and seeing that there were only two ways out: one Higuera; and two, the banks of the river, towards the mouth of the Miche river which leads out of the Department of Santa Cruz and into the departments of Cochabamba or Chuquisaca.

But they thought it would be wiser to climb up to Pucaro and head north instead of south, which was more barren and less populated, and that we would head north and enter the wooded area where they could ambush us. We were in a barren area and they knew we were there. They knew we were moving in this direction for more than ten days, and that we were taking the trails, and not the mountain sides; in other words, everything was in their favour for an ambush. And Miguel (Manuel Hernandez) even said that they had to be very stupid not to close in on us now.

The Trap

Our people started to move around one o'clock. The vanguard left first and we waited until they could cover us from above. That's why all our troops were not caught in the trap. Benigno was the spearhead of our column's vanguard. Now, what happened? A stone got in Benigno's boot, he stopped to take it out, and Miguel went to the front. And in less than five minutes, the enemy opened fire on us. Miguel was killed; Julio and Coco wounded. Benigno reached Coco and slung him over his shoulder. A bullet finished off Coco and also got Benigno. When he saw that Coco was dead and that he could not move forward with him on his shoulders, he left Coco, jumped a fence and withdrew. We had already begun to retreat when we heard the gunfire. Che ordered our withdrawal toward the

river, to take positions at a hill close to the bank of the river. We tried to take a path towards the hill, but the Army was on to us and rapidly cut us off before we could reach it, concentrating their fire on us. We advanced along the trail, but some people could not cross. Che crossed over. Then more gunfire broke out and we could not cross. We threw ourselves on the ground, except el Chino, who stood there, facing the barrage of fire but not a bullet touched him. Then I said, well, if we stay here we'll be separated from the rest of the group, let's advance and cross the line of fire, and we took off. We all managed to make it, except Inti, who threw himself into a ravine and Leon who fell into another one that's on the left, both moving towards the bank of the river. That's why Inti was lost for some time; when he found us later, he had no shoes and his feet were destroyed.

When we managed to cross, Che decided to move forward. To everybody's surprise, the doctor, Moro, the one whose health was the worst, managed to break through a stone wall. Everyone was looking for a place to go through without having to stand up, and the doctor simply turned around, flung the weight of his entire body against the stone wall, toppled it, led his mule through, with the rest of us following behind. Che stayed with Tamayo and Pacho holding off the Army coming down after us. Che ordered me to take position on a hill, and later, he arrived with the rest of the troops and we stayed there, defending the area. Later in the afternoon, when we were resting, Inti arrived in a very bad shape. And it was here that Che decided not to cross the river, but to turn and circle around toward our point of departure at Higuera. We figured the Army would think we'd take any way out as long as it was going away from Higuera, but we did just the opposite. We returned to our original point of departure and were on a barren hill for three days, in front of Army headquarters.

Sugar-Loaf, Magnesium

From there we saw every move of the enemy. One day some soldiers stopped to talk close to us. They talked about having seen us and they pointed toward us but an officer said over the radio that there was no one there... We didn't have any water, the only thing we had to eat were two small cans of sardines... then on the third or fourth day, Che told us to eat half a can of sardines... I made a mistake and understood one can in the evening and another in the morning, so we were left without sardines... This caused a terrible quarrel, he wanted the food to last longer and I made a mistake and passed out all the sardines in one day. It was a critical situation. We ate Chancaca, a sort of sugar-loaf, like ours but a little harder, that's what we ate... sugar-loaf with magnesium... this loosened our bowels so much that everything came out of us in streams. We decided to look for a better zone, so we climbed to a solid high land where we could improvise a stove. We built a small shack and made a tiny fire in a hole in the ground.

On the 6th, Che decided we should move down from the highlands, so we started, but we got lost. The problem was that I was on guard duty on the highest part of the land, they told me about moving downward, but I didn't think it was necessary to hurry, so I arrived late. Antonio, Arturo and Willy stayed back waiting for me; Pacho was also with me, we both had guard duty. Che had gone ahead with the centre and the vanguard... What happened now? We knew there was a trail going down to the stream, but someone suggested to Che that they go down another way which was supposed to be shorter, so they started down this trail, we saw no indication that they had taken the other path, so we continued and this was how we split up... Around four in the morning, quite near the Rio Grande, we heard a noise. It turned out to be Tamayo, whom Che had sent out to look for us; he had got lost but finally found us near dawn.

On the fourth day of our march, we entered a ravine in which we found a large stone house and an immense stone cave. We decided to cook. We were actually in the Yuro Ravine.

The Yuro Ravine is formed by the merger of the Yuro-San Antonio ravines. The point of merger is called the *Filo* and it was in this zone, more or less, that the battle took place.

In the ravine, we met an old woman tending sheep at pasture, and we detained her. She pretended she was deaf at first, then she changed her mind and told us she didn't understand because she spoke only quechua. Some of our men spoke to her in quechua. She told us that we were close to a wide trail, half-a-day's march away and that there were no soldiers around, which was a lie. At any rate, we didn't trust her and held on to her until the afternoon when we sent Inti and Aniceto to take her home. The old lady didn't want to go. Anyway, she went and when they arrived at the house, our men saw a pathetic sight. The old woman had two paralyzed, sick daughters, so they gave her 50,000 Bolivian pesos. Che ordered us to move that very night. Walking was very difficult. We found a very deep pool covering the centre of the ravine, and we couldn't find a way to wade through it. We tried to get out by climbing up the sides of the ravine, but we couldn't. The men told Che that it was impossible to cross it. And here is where Che's determination and decision-making abilities were demonstrated. He said that it could be crossed, and in spite of his poor physical condition, and contrary to what those more familiar with the woods and much younger than Che had said, Che climbed up, jumped over the pool and crossed.

Moving Light

We moved forward. Around three in the morning, we saw a light, which according to the men, moved. I passed on the word to Che and he told me to watch it. My opinion was that it was an optical illusion

and that the light wasn't moving. Later, when we discussed the matter, we decided that the light had moved and that probably it had been a peasant who had seen us and later reported us to the Army. The first informer was the old lady. With her information the enemy decided to comb the area in the morning and try to locate us. They said they knew of our whereabouts at 5-30 a.m., but this was false. They knew long before, and we had sighted them on 5-30 a.m. This means that they weren't far from the ravine. We hid when we spotted them. Che decided to stay under cover for two reasons. The first is that it took us all night to get to this point and we also knew we could defend ourselves here because the place had favourable tactical conditions for defence against the Army and for preventing them from closing in on us. Second, if we left at night, we would have to take to the trail again and arrive at our point of departure at early dawn. Here, again, we had to weigh probabilities. Che knew that the Army was there but we didn't know if the Army knew where we were. We saw them, but we didn't know if they saw us. So, we decided to lay low and hide in the little ravine, the San Antonio ravine. If they saw us in the early hours of the night, we would break the encirclement and have the rest of the night to move out of the area. If they hadn't seen us, we would withdraw to a better place to battle in.

Che ordered a group of men to go to the top of the ravine and another group went to the rear. Antonio, Willy and Chapaco commanded the entrance to the ravine; Benigno, Inti and Dario, the left flank of the ravine; Pacho was the look-out on the right flank. Tamayo and I took turns watching with him. Later, Che sent us to the top of the ravine. It was around one when Pacho sighted the Army.

I don't know the details, because I wasn't there at that moment. Che, expecting combat, proceeded to give out combat orders. If the battle began at the top of the ravine, he said,

the men there would hold them off until the rest withdrew. If action began at a lower part of the ravine or at the entrance, we would withdraw to the left. Those on the left flank would cover our withdrawal. If combat started on the right flank, we would go to the left. We would use the entrance only if combat started at the top. There would be a meeting place on the left flank, at the very top of the hill.

We would regroup on the top of a certain hill. If we had to retreat, we would meet there. If we couldn't get there, Che continued, we would meet at Rio Pidelparga at night—that was one of the rivers going north, toward Valle Grande—at the millhouse. From there we would go on to the Alto Beni zone, which we had chosen as our second front, where Che was going to send San Luis. This was more or less how Che viewed the different combat possibilities.

Now when Pacho saw the Army coming in our direction, he immediately sent for Tamayo and me so that we could be with him. But just when our reliefs were on their way to the top of the ravine, the Army saw them and opened fire. The battle began, but not on the top. It began simultaneously from all sides because the Army had combed all the area except down below in the ravine, and they were more or less at our level. None of the possibilities that we had considered had occurred. We sent down to ask for instructions: what should we on the top do? And what about those on the left flank? Pacho was shot down almost immediately. We sent one of our reliefs, Aniceto, to ask for orders. When Aniceto arrived at the command post, Che had already gone with the others, leaving six men behind and taking eleven men with him. We lost all contact with Che. Coming back to tell us that Che had gone, Aniceto got a bullet through his eye. They said Aniceto was captured alive and killed later, but that's not true. He was already dead when we left the San

Antonio ravine... They shot him around two in the afternoon and we left at about four-thirty, close to five. Nato had a chance to talk to the wounded man, or maybe it was before he was shot. Aniceto told Nato that Che had left, but Nato didn't want to shout this out to us because this would have tipped off the Army that we were in the ravine.

Calm Spell

There was a calm spell. We heard a few isolated shots at the bottom of the ravine, over at the Yuro ravine, but they were very sporadic... as if they were shooting someone who was going by their positions. Nato signalled us around five and told us that the Major had ordered us to retreat. We understood the signal and proceeded to withdraw. I went first, they saw me and fired. I had one of those American jackets and the bullets grazed it front and back. Tamayo thought I was wounded, but they didn't touch me. Now, how did Tamayo get out? Because I was already out and with Nato. I looked at Aniceto and saw that he was dead... Then I saw that they were concentrating their fire on Tamayo... They tossed a hand grenade at Aniceto and as it exploded, Urbano took advantage of the smoke and dust it raised, and he got out. We formed a group and headed for where Che was. We arrived at the command post. We saw that they left my knapsack, and Inti's also and the knapsacks of all the men who stayed behind, but they took the documents from my knapsack. Che had taken my diary, the money and a radio, everything of value. As we were leaving, climbing to the place where Che had ordered us to meet him, some one whistled. We stopped because we wanted to take every precaution... It was Inti, Benigno and Dario, signalling to us that the Army was on the opposite flank, that they had seen us and that we shouldn't climb any further because they would kill us. But we didn't understand, so we continued. Then they shouted; Don't move, they'll kill you!

We went down into the ravine and the three of us formed a small defence

squad. I was at the centre of the ravine and placed Urbano and Nato on the side up above to prevent the Army from passing. They spotted us and around six-thirty, they said: "There are people in the ravine, let's go in and hit'em with the mortars..." I don't know why they didn't do it. We heard the men above on the flank tell the others behind the ravine that we were in there. We met with Inti and the others during the night. They came down to where we were, thinking that Che was with us, and we thought that Che was with them. Everybody was confused and we realised that there were six of us there, and that the rest of the people had gone. We decided to carry out Che's instructions and climb to the spot where we were supposed to meet. We destroyed a number of things we had, a panoramic lens, etc... We knew one thing, that our men had produced quite a few casualties for the Army. Our men controlled the opposite flank; there was no constant line of fire and the enemy only fired when they heard a great number of shots cracking the air. Our men killed a sublieutenant who led the group and two or three soldiers during the clamour of the skirmish.

Che Seized

We sensed that the Army was demoralised and wanted to retreat. We figured out the following: that Che, when he decided to withdraw, got stuck in the Yuro Ravine and sensing that the Army was right behind him, he had decided to resist with the men in good physical condition. He divided the group in two, and in one he put the sick under the custody of Pablito and took with him the men in a condition to fight and others who even though they were not fit for action, he considered it a moral obligation to take them with him, for a number of reasons, considering that they were men of great revolutionary spirit, with a great spirit of sacrifice and a long revolutionary background, like Chino, who was Peruvian and couldn't see without his glasses. Che felt obliged to Chino and that's why he kept him by his side. So Che stayed with

these people marking out a line of defence. He stopped the advance of the Army. This allowed the sick to break out of the ambush, but when Che was ready to leave, he found himself surrounded, right in front of an oncoming patrol. Gunfire broke out and Che was wounded in this action. He climbed up to the flank where we were supposed to meet. He advanced somewhat and according to their report later, they found him by accident. They were about to install a mortar, when they heard something, and it was Che dressing his wound: They jumped and seized him. They saw that his rifle was useless and that Willy was with him.

In some reports they tried to change the events of this battle and brought out some different points of view, which are not true. They said that they clashed with Che in the ravine and that they killed Chino—that is false—they captured Chino because he dropped his glasses and he couldn't see, they got him while he was looking for his glasses on the ground. He's one of the prisoners that they took, and the other one was Willy, and these were the men they killed the day they assassinated Che...

This is more or less what I think happened: that Che put up a strong resistance, the focal point of the action, which permitted the sick to withdraw. This is another example of Che's humanity, because Che could have retreated, and left one of his subordinate officers in charge of resistance. This is an example from the leader, his attitude of teaching by example.

(Concluded)

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Learning Home Truths

A. P. M.

THE Engineering Units Revival Committee has been dealing with a little over twenty cases of sick and closed engineering units in West Bengal. The Committee is actually being run by an organisation of the engineering industry, the Indian Engineering Association, though its Chairman is B. B. Ghose, who has been de-facto Chief Minister of the not-so-disinherited State. The findings of the Committee and the behaviour of the Government and industry representatives on the Committee can be studied here with some profit.

Talks with the people sitting on the Committee reveal that the most sensational discovery of the gentlemen, after dealing with various kinds of industrial, managerial and labour crooks and innocents, is that mismanagement is at the bottom of the sickness of the units. This Committee, along with the three-man committee which has already submitted its report, has also studied the Braithwaite and Gresham & Craven cases. In both these cases, the Government and industry representatives were bold enough to agree that through deliberate mismanagement the riches of yesteryears were looted and, when the State Government takes over their management (which has already happened), the previous management should by no means be allowed to purchase a come-back.

While on these cases, it is important to add that the Gresham & Craven case was submitted to the Committee by its actually disinherited employees. How does the Committee look upon its experience of dealing with the unions? The young gentleman who answered this question almost sounded idealistic; yet, he was speaking officially. "A good many cases have been brought to us by the unions," he said. "And in some of these cases, the management was not only reluctant to come to us for help but persisted in being so even after we had

contacted them after learning from their employees of the situation in the units." "What is your conclusion in such cases?" "Well, it is apparent that the management is afraid of losing its control once we look into the affairs of a unit."

Has the Committee actually recommended substitution of the management of any unit? The young man revealed another home truth. "We have, in quite a few cases," he said. "It was of course quite easy to recommend withdrawal of control from the present management in cases like Braithwaite and Gresham & Craven. But there was hesitation in cases like the Britannia Engineering. As a matter of fact, I was the only man arguing in favour of changing the management. The others were visibly reluctant!" "Why?" "Well, the main reason was, of course, that it is a company controlled by the Bajoria group. Mr Ghose was quite nervous that we should recommend something that would go against Mr Bajoria." "But what's so special about Mr Bajoria?" "Precisely. I asked him the same question." the young gentleman permitted himself a self-congratulatory smile. "And do you know what he said? He said he was afraid because Mr Bajoria has pulls in New Delhi. He can outwit the State Government any time he likes."

And what did the Committee finally recommend? It has recommended substitution of the present management by an independent professional manager. This is the recommendation which has been made in some other cases as well. But a far more interesting recommendation the Committee has made in connection with the State take-over of certain companies is that when such a take-over is contemplated, the Government should make use of the provisions of the proposed West Bengal Relief Undertaking Bill. This Bill has been prepared by Mr Ghose's Government, the first sensible thing done in its field in West Bengal.

"This Bill enables the Government to avoid the very pitfall in which Jyoti Babu neatly landed when he so valiantly took over Westinghouse Saxby

and the CTC. That symbolical payment of Re. 1 was a good publicity stunt and awfully foolish. For, thereby the Government acknowledged its responsibility to repay the sums borrowed by the previous managements," enlightened the young man.

"Under this Bill" he continued, "the Government, after a take-over, undertakes to repay only the small creditors, like the ancillary units which are always supplying components to a big concern. And declares a moratorium on debts repayable to resourceful creditors, like large suppliers. The advantage of applying this provision is that immediately after a take-over, the Government is not obliged to pay a huge sum of money merely to clear the debts."

Would the Committee say that it is satisfied with the behaviour of the managements it has come in contact with? "No." "That is interesting, isn't it?" "Well, it is like this. We will say that the Committee not only faced reluctance on the part of some managements to help it, but there have been positive attempts to obstruct our work as well." "How has this been done?" The gentleman elaborated: "You see, it has been our practice to involve both the management and the employees of a concern we are investigating at every stage of our work. Employees have been co-operative for understandable reasons. As I have already told you, in many cases it is these people who have come forward for help and not their management. Now, when we have asked both the management and the men to participate in our discussions, some managements have been dilatory. But our work has not been hampered actually, because we received all necessary information from the men."

The gentlemen who have been sitting on the Committee have chosen to be surprised at the revelation of these examples of the crookedness of deshi and bilaiti managements. That is about the best thing they could do, since most of them are in the industry themselves. But, looking a bit more objectively, it can be said that the truths they faced are home

truths, waiting so long to be driven home. The experience of the Enquiry Committee on the cotton textile industry was different, because it was manned by Government employees. The EURC, on the other hand, consists of both Government and industry men. Therefore, when this Committee admits that most of the sick

and closed units are in their present state of affairs because they have been deliberately let down by their unscrupulous managements, and poor productivity and labour indiscipline are more myths than truths, the significance should not be lost. At least, certain home truths are being learnt, even if belatedly.

Relations With Nepal

R. P. MULLICK

SOME time has elapsed since the breakdown of trade talks between India and Nepal and it is necessary to take a second look now at the entire gamut of India-Nepal relations.

Before one focuses attention on the trade aspect of it, a primary issue interposes itself: should India—or should she not—recognise the basic right of Nepal, as a landlocked country, to have access to overseas markets for her commerce across the territory of India? It has to be remembered that Nepal is not merely the most proximate neighbour of India, she is also connected to her by a thousand and one strings of affinity. From this flows the rationale—not the legalistic one, in terms of Barcelona convention or Geneva agreement—that India should let Nepal have the right of unhampered transit across India in times of peace.

The question is no longer confined to the pattern or periphery of bilateral trade between India and Nepal, the total volume of which has been shrinking over the years, but touches upon other issues dovetailed with India's international relationship, international diplomacy and international morality. It would be a defeatist attitude to take that India has traversed the whole length in accommodating Nepal's point of view, or that India need not open the overland route via Radhikapur for facilitating Nepal's trade with Pakistan since the latter has not offered, or is not likely to offer, India a quid pro quo in

terms of like facilities across West Pakistan for trade with Afghanistan.

Available facts point to a gradual fall in the value of India's trade with Nepal. From Rs. 30.9 crores in 1965, exports fell to Rs. 27.3 crores in 1969-70; likewise imports fell from Rs. 17.7 crores to Rs. 14.4 crores. There is also the other aspect of proportionate magnitude of these figures in relation to India's total export earnings and import bill, which would hardly exceed 2 per cent. This economic truth prompts both ways: to try to downgrade the significance of Indo-Nepalese relationship (as some diehard officials in the Administration's upper echelons would prefer), or encourage liberal thinking towards giving Nepal her due. After all a country, howsoever small or underdeveloped, has its own social system, pattern of economy and a particular direction (also momentum) of development which determine its needs for diversifying as well as expanding its overseas trade. No other country however well-intentioned should presume to sit in judgment over such delicate matters lest it might not only be construed as superciliousness but also appear as the subtle edge of a policy of economic surveillance.

True, more than 90% of Nepal's import and export trade has been, so far, India-oriented. This is all the more an impelling reason for the Nepalese people to desire a change.

It appears that the higher-ups in the Board of Foreign Trade and related departments of the Government

of India are sensitive about this Nepalese desire for diversification and expansion of her overseas trade and therefore interpolate political questions not called for at all. The point of view at the other end has also to be faced, viz. whether there is a possibility of furthering Nepal's national interests were she to trade increasingly with her neighbouring countries other than India. Although the present volume of Nepal's trade with Tibet is of the order of 1% to 1.5%, with Pakistan the prospect of an increase is there.

Should India give the impression that she would begrudge Nepal this possibility?

Because of the nearly perpetual bad relationship of India with Pakistan verging dangerously on estrangement and leading to abrasive measures and counter-measures, sometimes erupting into conflict as well, India's policy-makers are incapable of conceding that a State having cordial relations with Pakistan could be India's friend as well. When Pakistan's President Yahya Khan visits Nepal, or other dignitaries of that country promise increasing state-to-state collaboration in Nepal's development, eyebrows are raised on this side of the border. But it is forgotten that Pakistan, specially the eastern wing of it, offers a natural market for Nepal's merchandise. A vast range of Nepalese products have potential demand in Pakistan—timber (including lumber and pulp), skin, oilseeds, mineral ores (including bauxite, copper and iron), butter and ghee, foodgrains and jute manufactures. On the import side, Nepal does need to have a dependable supplier of primary consumer articles—sugar, salt, tea, petroleum, textile goods and medicines, besides essential house-building items, cement, industrial oil, raw jute machinery and steel. It is necessary for India to do a bit of heart-searching before the bonafides of Nepal's commercial needs and economic imperatives are questioned. There was a sharp dip in the export of India's petroleum from 17.5% of the total to 9%—in value terms from Rs 540 lakhs to Rs 246 lakhs—over

the five-year span from 1965-66 to 1969-70; in sugar from Rs 78 lakhs to Rs 2 lakhs; in metal manufactures from Rs 65 lakhs to Rs 7 lakhs; raw jute from between Rs 45 lakhs and Rs 23 lakhs to just Rs 2 lakhs; and in vegetable oils from Rs 49 lakhs to Rs 24 lakhs.

It has an implicit challenge. Nepal can possibly regard such fluctuations and uncertainties of supply as undependable. The supply of Indian betel nut, spices, mineral ores and handloom fabrics has been similarly uncertain. In respect of cement and machinery (electrical and non-electrical) and transport-equipment, the supply position has been satisfactory—from Nepal's exigencies of development. She has set out in earnest to implement her Third Plan, and she requires an assured supply of such essential raw materials for industrial development as mica and jute. In fact she needs such primary products more now than the traditional finished products from industrially developed countries. Although her industrial set-up is still in the incipient stage, it has the hall-mark of a balanced development with cement and paper, leather-goods and consumer articles, jute and textile manufactures as well as electronic equipment coming up, against the perspective of a developing infrastructure of economy.

Bonus Vouchers

It has often been held that, since Nepal's industries are not developed to the requisite extent, her insistence on a bonus voucher scheme within Nepal for the purpose of promoting exports produces an undesirable effect of trade deflection. This is not the entire truth. Re-processing of semi-manufactures is done by industrialised countries of highly developed areas. Besides, the synthetic rayon fabric which is supposed to be showing out the corresponding Indian commodity because of its cheapness, is not a re-processed article, but imported or received from foreign countries, sometimes as gift-goods. About stainless steel utensils and raw jute, said to be imported back into India after

being dubbed Nepalese, protests have been made too volubly. But the smuggling trade which is carried on mostly by Indian traders along the entire border from Gorakhpur to Raxaul and beyond, aided by corrupt officials, Indian again, cannot be in fairness ascribed to Nepal, and certainly cannot be made a ground for rejecting Nepal's right of transit for her overseas trade. Interestingly, India's import of stainless steel utensils, that had reached a value of Rs 186 lakhs in 1967-68 and Rs 403 lakhs in 1968-69, was pegged down to Rs 19 lakhs only in 1969-70, while the value of imported mill-made rayon fabrics was similarly brought down from Rs 91 lakhs' worth in 1967-68 and Rs 124 lakhs in 1968-69 to Rs 41 lakhs only in 1969-70. It shows that restrictions imposed by India did achieve the desired result from India's point of view, although it created a sort of trade-war atmosphere. All the world over one witnesses today the worst form of restrictive fiscal measures, trade practices and mutually exclusive groups of trading countries ranged against each other and raising tariff barriers.

In the recent IMF conference, the representative of the USA, the most developed country in the world, reaping the highest gross national product every year, had to cry out to European Common Market countries for allowing fair scope for competition in Europe to American goods. Unfortunately Nepal has long been complaining about the walling-out of Nepalese goods by Customs and other duties collected at the Indian border, sometimes doubly, by the State Government besides the Central. Nepal has fought shy of a common market scheme with India because of similar experiences. Even Nepal's ex-Prime Minister M.P. Koirala had to pay duties at an extraordinary rate (for transshipment over Indian territory from the port of Calcutta) for cars purchased by him. It appears that the Nepalese desire to have distinctly spelt out terms in any bilateral trade treaty stems from such experience.

Apropos Nepal's desire for diversifying and expanding her foreign trade there can hardly be any challenging voice. In fact India has not grudged her the right to transit facilities. It is the route that matters. Now a little study of the map would show that the overland route for Nepal's commerce with Pakistan via Radhikapur is not only shorter but the really feasible one, since the circuitous one via Calcutta would greatly increase transshipment costs. Moreover, the argument that Nepal could more easily reach out to the world market, especially of the South-East Asia region via the Pakistani ports of Chittagong and Feni (in Noakhali district) than through Calcutta, is cogent. There is another factor—the potentiality of Nepal's forest products—timber (lumber, wood pulp), cork, resin, skin (including the treasured leopard skin), horn and bones, bristles, herbs etc. finding an expanding market in countries, including Pakistan, is immense. India's imports from Nepal of lumber wood and cork have declined in value from Rs 151 lakhs to Rs 28 lakhs over the five-year span from 65-66 to 1969-70. Her imports in respect of oil-cakes, linseed and mustard oil, rape and raw jute also declined. In such a situation, can Nepal be blamed if she tries

to expand the volume and variety of her trade with Pakistan? The visit to Nepal of President Yahya Khan last year was the occasion for exploratory trade talks. For want of an overland trade route, air cargoes are being availed of with the services of the Pakistan International Airways, the Thai International and the Union of Burma Airways.

It is a fact that India has done her part in helping Nepal build the infrastructure of her economy. But the roads that India has built so far are circuitous and involve long detours, whereas the Chinese-built Kathmandu-Kodari-Road is direct, of greater carrying capacity and requires less of maintenance renewals. Further, in all her three plans, Nepal has progressively increased the deployment of her own internally raised resources, till the latter has reached 50% of the total outlay.

It is to the credit of this small Himalayan country that she has managed to cultivate and retain the friendship of many Powers who contend, as it were, in offering Nepal aid for developing her telecommunications system, her air ports and air services, her transport and communications system, her industries and her power resources. This all-round development which has been going on steadily for the last ten years has now raised a challenge for India, her big neighbour with a bigger goodwill. If anything, it has established the fact that the process of development in Nepal is now assured of continuity, and hence her need to step up foreign trade.

It is true that despite the diminishing volume (and value) of Indo-Nepalese trade, the benefits that are still possible of accruing to India should she strike up a comprehensive agreement, are great. Non-ferrous metals claim an import-bill of Rs 85 crores per year, and India is likely to spend up to Rs 175 crores on this account in 1975. Nepal with her immense reserves of bauxite, zinc, lead and copper could surely help. With her potentially fabulous hydro-electric power reserve, Nepal's industrial de-

velopment has a big future. If India stands on the threshold and visit, other countries will appear on the scene and then a potential friend as well as ally will have been lost since political and economic questions are inextricably interlinked.

China's Shadow

Perhaps the long-distance shadow of China has affected the formulation of India's Nepal policy, free from inhibition. The comments and commentaries made from time to time by Peking Radio and China's national news service media apropos Indo-Nepalese relations have jilted India. In international relations such sensitivity is least likely to succeed in building a power-image for India. It is a little too late in the day to cast out a set role for Nepal in the comity of nations. No mature leadership of any country would put up with a mentor, much less with a hectoring one. India did implement a foreign policy of her own, despite veiled threats and unseen pressures in the fifties of the Bandung Conference and Pancha Sheel principles. The main plank of Nepal's international policy is now quite close to that stream. India cannot therefore blame Nepal queering the pitch of India's foreign policy. In fact, Nepal has been acting all these years as a nexus for India to build new chains of international friendship. Instead, her ruling circles have continued to regard Nepal more as an intriguing buffer State whose usefulness is problematic.

This attitude must change. The spirit of the times as well as requirements of State policy demand of India an entirely new stand and a new outlook.

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Old Hat

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

CHAITALI is old hat, a dream world tale in which Biswajit again emerges as a modern Knight-errant. This time his loot is Tanuja, a piquant, hill-beauty who quite sheepishly submits to Biswajit's Higgins-like admonitions, and affections. So far so good, it's solid material for an ordinary romantic musical. But this is not to be; tangles begin to appear. A Nabab Sahib looms on the screen with a load of wigs and immersed in Bengali culture reciting Vaishnava poems and Tagore pieces at regular intervals. His relationship with Tanuja remains quite ambiguous, but often there is a lurking suspicion that behind the mask of paternal smiles, he is just a lecherous feudal aristocrat. At the other end, there is a villain, a chicken-hearted one at that, who kidnaps the heroine, but before anything could happen to her, she bolts out from the prison to the hero's rescue. Nabab Sahib dies in an encounter with the villain, but not before we have had the full blast of a funeral oration and some Tagore too. Biswajit, true to the image of a conventional film-hero, is a paragon of morality and while he loves, heaves and pants in vintage Bombay style, Tanuja braves the blizzard and landslide to meet her lover. This fantasy world has no place for real flesh and blood people, nor does it care for the logic of everyday reality. So this long-winding film goes on and on, cheerfully throwing to the four winds, all the canons of reason, logic and cinematic construction.

Letters

Two Deaths

Although one cannot understand Mr S. Roy's political identity in plain terms the tasks he has performed in his letter (March 20) in the name of lamenting the deaths of Comrade Sushital Roy Chowdhury and Comrade Ashu Majumder bears the exclu-

sive purpose of condemning the CPI (ML) and demoralising its ranks. While doing this, he questions the basic theoretical postulates of the CPI (ML) programme and distorts the facts associated with the Party's action programmes.

Notwithstanding the crude purpose—a purpose which in fact is carefully rourished by the establishment and its Right and Left agents—I could sympathise with his declared feelings for the two heroic individuals—Sushital Roy Chowdhury and Ashu—provided his appraisal of the CPI (ML) activities had been factual, and not based on stupid vulgarisation. In a way Mr Roy echoed the particular police officer who led the operation against Ashu on the morning of March 10 and with whom I had to talk in getting back Ashu's body.

I have no intention here to dispute Mr Roy's thesis on the CPI (ML), nor do I feel that a revolutionary party like the CPI (ML) can do no wrong in matters of tactics, but what I like to emphasize is that it is only the CPI (ML) which is successful in rallying the finest sons of Bengal under its banner and this party alone can claim to have dedicated revolutionaries in its ranks. This fact can be challenged only by the clever bootlickers of the Right or Left establishment of our country and/or the S. Roys.

Mr Roy sought to prove that the majority of revolutionaries under the CPI (ML) are nothing but brave young fools led by the dictates of Charu Majumder. As a matter of fact Mr Roy goes to the length of depending on Intelligence Branch reports of the Indira Government to contend that Comrade Sushital Roy Chowdhury's difference with the party leadership led to heart attack and his death.

What is most detestable in Mr Roy's letter is his use of the common petty bourgeois hypocrisy of shedding tears over Naxals by picturing them as pathetic victims of political and police atrocities. He separates Naxals from their beliefs; their "fiery zeal, fantastic courage and capacity to organise" are interpreted as some

thing prior to or independent of the line of action pursued by their party. Such an outlook obscures the difference between a fanatic Jana Sanghite youth dying for the sacred cow or Rama Rajya and a CPI (ML) cadre dying in course of implementing the Party's line of action.

As a matter of fact, Mr Roy uses his lamentation over the two heroic deaths as a cover for hurling insults on those heroes. In his summary trial of the CPI (ML) line, he actually puts their belief to trial and concludes that but for their political tomfoolery, they were nice and brave!

As the elder brother of Ashu, I knew him a bit personally. It is a blatant lie that his obedience to the Party was blind. Blind obedience to anything was very much alien to his character. His devotion to the Party's cause was the product of critical judgment—this I know for certain, because I tried to provoke him in this matter and I was surprised to discover the analytical height and political maturity he reached in the matter of his party's programme and line of action. He was an active worker of the CPM on the peasant front and his disillusionment with the CPM came through his field experiences. He had ideological discussions with Ashim Chatterjee (Kaka) for months together while he was an activist of the CPM, and still was not convinced of the line advocated by the Coordination Committee of the Naxals. Before he left the CPM, he wrote to me once, "we shall have to build up a genuine communist party which India lacks as yet. We know this is a tough job demanding many of our lives, because we shall confront the most dangerous enemy in the CPM and Congress—both shall cooperate with each other to crush us by any means... If I die, I know that mother shall be very much upset. But I have decided to pursue a difficult path." This he wrote from underground as early as 1968. He left the CPM much later and joined not the CPI (ML) but the new Coordination Committee constituted by the remaining members of the original Coordination Committee. In the

middle of 1969, he joined the CPI (ML) after much critical evaluation of its line. This narration of his political life is necessary because Mr Roy sought to paint Ashu as a Naxal of blind obedience.

Ashu's prediction came true. It is widely believed in the locality that the CPM tried twice to murder Ashu and it is only the information supplied by some members of that party that led to his arrest and murder by the police on March 10.

Still, I appreciate the CPM in one respect—vis-a-vis Naxals. It does not make any secret of its counter-revolutionary practices. But other parties like the CPI or the Congress (R) shed crocodile tears for Naxals and privately rejoice in their annihilation either by trigger-happy CPM fanatics or police.

Ashu's death to me is tremendous, because in his death I have lost my most valuable brother. The loss to his party in the area cannot possibly be made up within a short time.

But Ashu's death to Mr Roy is a cudgel to beat Charu Majumder or the CPI (ML) down to paralytic demoralisation. With all his pronounced sympathy for the two heroes, Mr Roy works on behalf of the counter-revolutionaries of a particular hue.

ARUN MAJUMDER
Santiniketon

Ashutosh Majumdar was known to me. We met at Jadavpur University. Within a few days I was impressed beyond words by his qualities of leadership courage and honesty.

If we are to account for the loss of his life, two causes distinctly appear—first the exploitation of his guts and tenacity of purpose by a party which wants to liberate India but gives priority to slitting of throats and second, the irresponsible action of law and order forces.

Ashu Majumdar was shot after his capture. Instead of sending him to hospital he was detained in the thana and only when there was no possibility at all of his survival he was sent for medical treatment.

P. SENGUPTA
Calcutta

Vote And Revolution

The article 'The Vote and Revolution' (March 6) by Arun Kumar Roy, CPI (M) MLA from Bihar, is at once both significant and confusing. Significant because it comes from the pen of a CPI (M) leader and I am sure he will have drawn much enmity upon himself from Promode Das Gupta for such remarks as "During the second UF government many Jotedars turned Marxists and butchered refugees in North Bengal". "One of the reasons why the land-grab movement in India failed is that most of the middle landowners are communist leaders". "The speed and vigour with which Naxalism has spread in India and the stir and impact it has produced speak unmistakably of its vitality and vitality is always associated with truth."

With these points I would add, to make my agreement complete, another point that the reason why the working class movement is not fulfilling its historic role is that most of the trade union leaders are middle-class clerks with no grounding in Marxist classics. But the article as a whole produces confusion.

Vote and revolution are not opposed to each other. Rather adult franchise is an argument for revolution. In his preface to Marx's *The Civil War in France* Engels writes that universal franchise, is "an index of the maturity of the working class. It cannot and never will be anything more in the modern state". On this and other statements of a similar nature by Engels, Lenin comments in *State and Revolution* 'Engels repeats here in a particularly emphatic form the fundamental idea which runs like a red thread throughout all of Marx's work namely, that the democratic republic is the nearest approach to the dictatorship of the proletariat. For such a republic without in the least setting aside the domination of capital, and therefore the oppression of the masses and the class struggle—invariably leads to such an extension, development, unmasking and sharpening of that struggle that, as soon as the possibility arises of satisfying

the fundamental interests of the oppressed masses, this possibility is realised inevitably and solely in the dictatorship of the proletariat, in the guidance of the masses by the proletariat".

Then, it might be asked, why does the socialist revolution not take place in the democratic republics of Western Europe and why did it take place in autocratic Russia and semi-feudal semi-colonial China? Most people including half-baked communists would look for the answer in democracy in the former and the lack of it in the latter. True enough, the longer the stream is dammed up the more powerfully will it break through when the moment comes. But the principal answer will be found in that the imperialist Europe could avoid the revolutionary crisis bursting asunder by bribing a section of workers from its plunder from Asia, Africa and Latin America, while backward Russia and China could not afford to do it.

The proletariat utilises democracy and the vote to hold the bourgeois to their word, to educate the minds of the masses for revolution, especially the backward strata of the population, to systematically expose those smug "Marxists" who talk of "exploring limited opportunities to give modest relief", for under capitalist relations of production the so-called progressive measures only proletarianise the masses still more. The reason why the communists go in for elections has been explained but it is clear that forming a government in a capitalist state is not one of them. In his famous letter to Turati, dated 26 January 1894, Engels warned socialists against participation in the government because that would completely paralyse the revolutionary action of the working class they were supposed to represent. While advocating united front with the radicals and the republicans he said in the same letter "that from the very moment of victory our paths will separate; that from the same day onwards we shall form a new opposition to the new government, not a reactionary but a progressive opposition, an opposition of

the extreme left which will press on to new conquests beyond the ground already won". This is why Lenin in his famous book, *Left Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder* often quoted by the revisionists, old and new, while asking the German communists to participate in elections told them that "they should not at all strive to 'get seats' in parliament". The Indian 'Marxists' tediously chew the cud over that portion of the book which is acceptable to the bourgeoisie.

One might still argue that if they get more seats as they have won in West Bengal can they help it, should they renounce them? The answer is they get or are allowed to get them because they adopt a petty-bourgeois standpoint and forsake the proletarian standpoint and class struggle and revolution. They try to show petty reform as partial realisation of socialism and succeed bluffing people for a while. Second, even this petty-bourgeois-dominated parliament is not tolerated for long. Because behind the bulk of the petty bourgeoisie stand other classes and groups which come out more energetically and take the loudly proclaimed assurances more seriously than the leadership likes.

Since World War II communists in various countries have participated in elections and governments but nowhere could they achieve dictatorship of the proletariat or socialism. Normally the communists may participate in elections but they must not join in any government. They can join the government in a State not yet socialist under special conditions. What are they? In the history of the CPSU(B) (Arun Roy does not properly grasp it) Stalin writes that the Social Democratic Party (in 1905) should have joined a provisional revolutionary government as the result of a successful uprising in order to carry the revolution to its conclusion. Dimitrov in his famous thesis 'United Front and the working class' asked the communists to support anti-fascist united front governments but told them that they themselves should remain outside. The com-

munists are permitted to join a government, according to him, only on the morrow of revolution in order to distribute arms and subvert the bureaucratic state-machinery from within.

What did the CPM governments do? They found themselves compelled to strengthen, along with the repressive measures, the resources and centralisation of governmental power. All it did was to perfect the machine instead of smashing it up. This is the meaning of the increase in the police budget. To smash the bureaucratic state apparatus is a preliminary condition for every real people's revolution—wrote Marx to Kugelmann. Without this no real relief for the people is possible. They cannot just take over the 'the ready-made state machinery.'

The boycott was one of the firmest traditions of the most eventful and heroic periods of the Russian revolution but Lenin warned that to regard the boycott slogan as being generally applicable to every bad and very bad representative institution would be an absolute mistake. The slogan is a specific slogan of a specific period and not an immutable tactic. What is the fundamental condition for proclaiming a boycott? Lenin wrote that the meaning of the agitation for a boycott was mainly to combat constitutional illusions. The condition for the success of the boycott was a "wide, genuine rapid and powerful vise of the revolution."

One thing is certain. The CPM line is an out and out mockery of Marxism.

SUDARSHAN CHATTERJEE
Calcutta

Two articles—Mr Arun Kumar Roy's *Vote And Revolution* and Mr Moni Guha's *The CPM Election Manifesto* (March 6), deserve praise for their lucidity and simplicity bereft of jargons and phrasemongering. Indeed such writings are rare nowadays.

Mr Roy wants a new constitution now, forbidding "private property." Abolition of exploitative private property can come only after crossing the threshold of socialism, not before. That

is why such a clause is still absent in the constitutions of the People's Democracies. In all of them small and lower middle private proprietors still enjoy some freedom though restricted.

One of the cardinal factors of revolution is that of winning over the peasantry (whole) and petty bourgeoisie as allies—they being the decisive reserve force of the proletariat. These allies including the poorest peasants are small proprietors (except the agricultural labourers i.e. semi-proletarians). Our next strategic aim is a national democratic revolution which will have to be accomplished with the whole of the peasantry as an ally. They being owners of land and the middle and petty bourgeois industrialists too being proprietors, the proposed article of the future constitution cannot but alienate them. People's Democracy—the next phase—too should not completely abolish private property but restrict it more or less like the NEP period in Russia. Even after completion of this phase private property will exist but the constitution will prohibit its use for exploiting the labour of others.

The new constitution should declare nationalisation and distribution of land to the tillers as well as all necessary assistance and encouragement to the tillers to form co-operatives.

(2) Confiscation of foreign finance capital, the property of the comprador, monopoly and big bourgeoisie.

(3) Restricted ceilings for middle and small proprietors to earn profit.

(4) Legislation and execution of maximum punishment to anti-social elements like blackmarketeers, hoarder, smugglers etc.

(5) Genuine price control.

(6) Minimum wages in conformity with market prices.

As for Mr Guha's article, it would have been even more useful, if it had clearly pointed out the correct attitude (positive) the communists should take vis-a-vis elections. He has dealt with the opportunist (negative) aspect only.

T. C.
Calcutta

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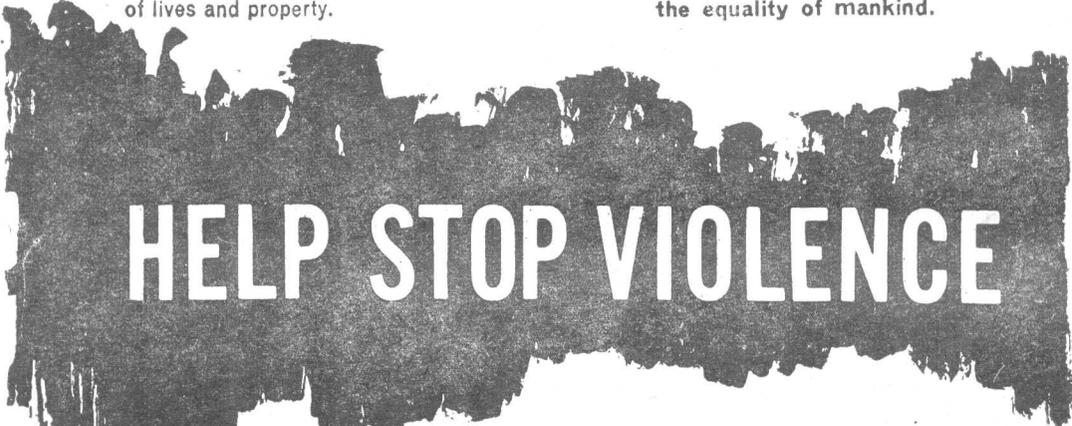
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