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## STOCK-TAKING

IT is six months since the Pakistani army cracked down on the Awami League and the people who had given it a massive mandate in the December 1970 elections. Tikka Khan's reported confidence that the opposition would be crushed within 72 hours proved wrong. But so has the confidence in many quarters that the army regime in East Bengal would collapse because of the massive problems of supply, internal resistance, world opinion and financial chaos. There is chaos, no doubt. The shadows of famine are closing in on a hapless people left by their leaders to fend for themselves. Whether this chaos, this distress, the flood havoc and the impending famine could sustain resistance on a big scale is a matter of speculation. The general amnesty, howsoever it is dismissed in India, will have some softening-up effect. So will have the activities and gestures of the civilian Governor and the larger allocation of tax proceeds to East Bengal. What should not cause much doubt, on the other hand, is the morale of the Pakistani army. That army thinks, along with the vast majority of unknowing people in West Pakistan where there has been no visible sign of revolt, that it is fighting a jihad against Indian expansionists and agents, against a Hindu conspiracy to break up Pakistan. This army will fight doggedly against much stronger forces, the more so because it has very few escape routes. So will the non-Bengali Muslims who think that their existence will be at stake if the Awami League wins. The task of a 'liberation' force is stupendous indeed, though the setting up of a moderate, leftist committee to advise the Bangladesh Government will perhaps mean greater co-ordination.

On this side of the border August was swept by rumours of an impending, open armed confrontation against Pakistan. Clandestine warfare of the sort taking place across the borders is not enough to appease the imagination of many patriots whose number is legion. There are also patriots who pretend that they do not want war, while urging all-out armed support to the Mukti Bahini after recognition of the Bangladesh Government. That this might lead to war does not bother them. If war came as a result of such a policy, we would of course be asked to give all in defence of the motherland. In this sprawling sub-continent the number of people who could urge that any such war should be turned into civil war against the murderous regime in West

Bengal is very few and is being reduced every day by ruthless means. However, West Bengal is not yet a happy base of operations. Nor are Tripura and Assam, for different reasons.

Mrs Gandhi went in for a great stunt in August in the shape of the Indo-Soviet Treaty. The knowledgeable realised that the Russians would be a restraining factor and work for another Tashkent, that they have succeeded in roping in India openly to their policy of containment of China. But the public expected immediate action, now that India was under the Russian oak tree, against Pakistan. Nothing much happened. Mrs Gandhi and the press are now busy telling people how keen she is on improving relations with China. Coming after the treaty, the whole thing is comical, though it may restore relations at ambassadorial level and confuse some of the leftists. Mrs Gandhi knows that in this age physical liquidation should be accompanied by the spread of ideological confusion; that if war breaks out after all, she would be able to tell the world that she did her best to be friendly with China. From the Ussuri to the Ganga the waters are quite fishy.

New Delhi has been saying two things in the same breath: that East Bengal is an affair between Pakistan and Bangladesh, which in diplomatic reality means—since no power has recognised Bangladesh—that it is an internal affair of Pakistan. In this context the reference in the joint Indo-Soviet communique to a political solution that would answer the interests of the entire people of Pakistan makes sense and is an overture to Yahya Khan to be reasonable, if he wants to preserve Pakistan. This may be the basis of the talks reportedly going on in Teheran. At the same time New Delhi asserts that because of the massive influx of refugees the matter has ceased to be an internal affair of Pakistan and the world community should do something about it; and unofficial hints are thrown that India may be forced into

drastic action to solve the refugee problem.

But will drastic action or war, which the Kremlin at some stage may ditto, solve the refugee problem? Most of the refugees—Hindus—will be most reluctant to go back—once bitten they will be twice shy. They know that even if the Awami League, by some miracle—military or political—assumes power in East Bengal, it would be hell of a job getting back the land and property already given over to other people. The seeds of turmoil are there, and no non-revolutionary government, after such devastation, would like to face the turmoil.

Things are likely to drag on. Not everything can be left to the Mukti Bahini, even if the screening is very strict. People of another State should not be armed to the teeth in large numbers on Indian soil. Sabotage in East Bengal and counter-sabotage here may be the order of the day. But there are danger signals. Refugee relief is breeding corruption on such a huge scale at all levels that some of the refugees are unwilling to put up with it. Clashes have taken place between refugees and police and Home Guards, in one or two camps, over irregular and meagre supplies. Some refugees have been killed and others arrested. The Mukti Bahini too might start getting restless and discontented. Thus, New Delhi and the Awami League may opt for a compromise with Islamabad.

West Bengal is a quagmire; it is sinking under the weight of poverty, natural calamities, corruption, inefficiency, breakdown of the civil order and police-military-goonda repression. We do not presume to know what is going to happen in East Bengal, what the way out is. But it is certain that so far as West Bengal is concerned the repression will intensify many times, in the name of helping Bangladesh, that sinister gangs are being mobilised by the henchmen of the socialist Prime Minister for mini-genocide. Let Bangladesh, bandhs and elections alone for a moment. Let those who care spare

a thought for the thousands who are in jail or in hiding and those who have been killed, and their bereaved families. And let us hope that in even 1971—when the liberation army was supposed to be marching in West Bengal—the survivors will do some serious rethinking—if they can avoid being liquidated. There is no short cut to victory for Maoists.

## Dias Dismisses

The West Bengal Governor's brief is out of the bag. The State has no dearth of problems crying for urgent attention, but they have all failed to attract his notice. He is pursuing instead, with a single-minded devotion, his appointed task of diminishing the CPM by using arbitrarily his limitless authority under President's rule. There can be no other explanation of the peremptory dismissal of several State Government employees. The right of a government to dismiss its employees is enshrined in our holy Constitution, though, not without an inquiry. Of what worth such inquiries are is known, but even this figleaf of justice has been dispensed with by Mr Dias by invoking a proviso which enables a governor not to hold such inquiries if the security of the State so demanded.

No State Government employee is a great one for hard work. But it is not the non-gazetted staff alone who are to blame. Those in the upper echelons are equally guilty—more perhaps because they are much better paid. If the Governor's intention really was to enforce discipline and make the employees work for their salaries' worth, he should have made no exception. Not only has he not done so, but he has wielded his axe so carefully and selectively that it has fallen on the most active leaders of the Coordination Committee of associations and federations of State Government employees. The Committee is dominated by the CPM, and its leaders may have a certain political preference, which cannot be a

crime. There are rival organisations of State Government employees that are under the influence of other political parties; their members are not known for diligence or discipline either. But the Governor has chosen to let them alone.

Obviously, the Governor is trying to take advantage of the internecine war within the left and is counting on the other organisations in his attempt to decimate the Co-ordination Committee. These organisations and the parties that are their mentors have been loud in their condemnation of the imperious action of the Governor but have refused to participate in a joint movement to thwart the dismissal. Their attitude is understandable, though. What is much intriguing is the failure of the CPM to stand by the Committee and to mount an agitation for revocation of the orders. Maybe spells in office have made the party too flabby to run a determined agitation; maybe the party is conserving all its strength for its promised campaign for early elections in the State in the hope that it will be returned to power soon and be in a position to undo the dismissals. It has become so obsessed with elections that it does not mind swallowing the blatant affront.

## Judges Differ. So What ?

Calcutta High Court has struck down several sections of the Prevention of Violent Activities Act, which the President made in 1970 in West Bengal. Under these sections, the Advisory Board created by the PVA Act could advise detention for more than three months. It is now seen that the President went out of his jurisdiction in giving power to the Advisory Board to determine the procedure and period of detention. Only Parliament can exercise this power. The State Legislature which delegated powers to the President under the President's Act last year had no business to advise the Advisory Board.

The Sessions Judge at Darjeeling ordered that Red Books and Mao literature seized from a Naxalite should be returned because he was shown no law which made possession of books on political theory an offence.

Kanu Sanyal, Jangal Santhal and Birsing Dewan were charged with conspiracy, rioting and causing grievous hurt in connection with a particular incident but were acquitted by the law court because the police did not furnish adequate evidence.

A Calcutta court discovered that instead of an accused in a political murder case, another man with the same name was produced. The father of the accused in the murder case wanted to know what had happened to his son. The judge wanted the police to clear up the mystery.

All these judiciary bridles on the executive however offer no breathing space to the unfortunate people of this State. The judiciary, acting on the letter of the law, have put obstacles before the executive. The letter can be and will be changed, technicalities will be set right and the executive will take on itself the right to act the way it chooses. The judiciary cannot change the spirit of the law. The sole reservoir of power to effect that change lies with Parliament, which goes by the name of popular sovereignty but wields it for the benefit of a few, thanks to the ignorance and lack of unity among the common people. It is a big vicious circle with a democratic shell and an oligarchical core.

Recent court findings might have thrown the police of the State out of gear. But ingenious as they are, nothing can deter them from following their own will and fancy. They were quite aware that they had no authority to arrest people whom they have arrested and no evidence to frame charges. Hence the jail killings (more are planned this month, it is rumoured) under the pretext that the prisoners broke jail; hence swooping upon people at dead of night, murdering and throwing the bodies into canals

and rivers; hence the mobilisation of the 'urban poor' to resist the 'anti-socials' under which pretext plainclothes police drag out and kill those who wanted a better deal for their countrymen. No doubt, what the CP, the Calcutta Police, thinks today, the rest of Indian Police will think tomorrow. Not that they are far behind—not in Bihar, UP and Andhra Pradesh.

## View from Delhi

### Six Months Since March 25

FROM A POLITICAL  
CORRESPONDENT

**E**ACH side is waiting for the other to provide the alibi for military confrontation over Bangladesh. If and when it comes, such a confrontation will call into question the claim that the Indo-Soviet treaty guaranteed peace in the sub-continent and provided India the infrastructure for ensuring the liberation of Bangladesh.

The treaty, which has a 20-year life, has been negotiated since early 1969 and is therefore not directly related to Bangladesh or the supposed Sino-United States thaw. It is supposed to achieve India's long-term objectives (yet to be formulated) but the timing of the treaty is indeed related to short-term objectives which arise out of Bangladesh and the Sino-United States developments. The proclaimed objectives are the reversal of the flow of refugees into India and normalisation of relations with China. If the treaty does not achieve the short-term objectives (one presumes these were never discussed with the Soviets when the treaty was negotiated), it would have no meaning vis-a-vis the long-term objectives.

The question here is whether the treaty was really timed to secure the short-term objectives or was signed in sheer panic. The Prime Minister did not take her party or Parliament

or even her Cabinet into confidence when she decided to sign the treaty.

Just before the March 25 developments, the Indian ruling classes were chuckling over General Yahya Khan's discomfiture, compared Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to Mahatma Gandhi, and were jubilant in the thought that Pakistan would disintegrate sooner or later. After March 25, they went overboard, exaggerating the imaginary military exploits of the Mukti Fauz and deluded themselves into believing that Pakistan would break up in a few weeks. The Pakistan army began its counter-offensive a little before the Bangladesh government was proclaimed in Mujibnagar. The ruling classes, under the influence of the super-powers, began wondering if an independent Bangladesh would be in their interests at all. They had waited for the refugees and were only too glad to welcome them, on the assumption that it would be a manageable number like some two million but large enough to lend itself to conversion into an international issue that would damn Pakistan. But when the refugee tide swelled and the Mukti Fauz was on the retreat under the impact of the Pakistani thrust, the ruling classes found themselves played out.

India has saddled itself with a forbidding refugee problem it could not internationalise. The threat of unilateral action if other countries failed to reverse the influx has had no effect on any major power. In essence the refugees are an Indo-Pakistani problem. In immediate and tangible terms, the Bangladesh problem is one of nine million refugees. But for the burden of the influx, Indian public opinion could not have cared less for the fate of Bangladesh and New Delhi would have liked to let the Mukti Bahini continue its desultory fight for many years. In any case, New Delhi does not seem to believe seriously that the Mukti Bahini can win the war by itself. A large section of the Awami League leadership does not believe so, either. This section was keen on Indian military intervention so that the leadership of the move-

ment does not slip out of the Awami League's hands. The longer the fight continues the lesser the chance of the League retaining its leadership.

India surrendered its initiative on Bangladesh to the super-powers from the beginning and was never ready to recognise the Mujibnagar regime unless one of the super-powers was prepared to go with it. When political opinion was pushing India in the direction of recognising Bangladesh and the refugee problem assumed serious proportions, India realised that all its calculations had gone awry.

This was the situation when Dr Henry Kissinger visited India and Pakistan early in July before his secret mission to Peking which culminated in the dramatic announcement that President Nixon will visit China before May 1972.

President Nixon's announcement on July 16 was followed by General Yahya Khan's threat of a total war if India tried to "liberate" any part of East Bengal. Referring to the threat the External Affairs Minister, Mr Swaran Singh, said on July 21 that India would not be alone either in the event of a Pakistani attack.

Reconstructing available information, it would seem the Prime Minister decided on signing the treaty immediately, sometime between July 18 and 21. Mr Swaran Singh knew about it vaguely on July 21 when he said India would not be alone either. What seemed to have clinched it was the appreciation that Pakistan would launch an attack on August 12 and the cryptic hint of Dr Henry Kissinger to our man in Washington, Mr L. K. Jha, that the United States would be neutral in the event of an Indo-Pakistan conflict. New Delhi's assessment up to this point of time was that China would not aid Pakistan in the event of a conflict with India. Our man in Peking, Mr Brajesh Mishra, had given the same appreciation but it suited the leadership to spike the report and choose to believe what Dr Kissinger is supposed to have told Mr L. K. Jha. It would be well to remember that Mrs Gandhi referred to

this when she called the Opposition leaders in Parliament in to tell them about the treaty a few minutes after it was signed on August 9.

New Delhi swallowed the U.S. bait, hook, line and sinker and decided to sign the treaty forthwith. Mr D. P. Dhar was on a holiday in Kashmir and was hurriedly summoned to New Delhi. He left for Moscow on August 3 with the latest draft of the treaty.

In February 1969, months before Mr Brezhnev spoke of his collective security plan for Asia, Moscow had mooted the treaty with Mr D. P. Dhar who had taken over as our ambassador there. The next month, the Soviet Defence Minister, Marshal Grechkov, was in New Delhi to solicit India's support to the Soviet Union in the border confrontation with China and the question of the treaty was discussed seriously. The Marshal offered India, in return for support to the Soviet Union against China and signing the treaty, all military assistance and end to all bottlenecks in the supply of equipment to Soviet-aided industrial projects in India. Again, when the Soviet Premier, Mr Kosygin, visited New Delhi later in the year, the treaty was discussed in some detail. Mr Brezhnev spoke about the collective security plan at the world communist summit in June 1969 but India was discussing the treaty already. While it looked that no country, India included, had fallen for the collective security plan, everything was alright for the Soviet leadership as far as India was concerned and a long-term Asian confrontation between India and China had been ensured before the Ussuri developments.

Obviously, India could not have signed the treaty when Mrs Gandhi's parliamentary majority had disappeared following the Congress split and her Government was surviving on crutches provided by the socialists and the communists. The Soviet leadership had the biggest stake in the March 1971 elections because if Mrs Gandhi had lost, the treaty would have been dead.

# On The Threshold

ASHOK RUDRA

From July 1971, one heard a lot about the imminence of India recognising Bangladesh and New Delhi's "political commitment" to help the Mukti Bahini and later when the Mukti Bahini liberate their homeland. Early in August, New Delhi was full of rumours that recognition was coming on August 9. The leadership was however keen on rushing through the formality of a treaty to blunt the edge of the Opposition campaign to isolate the Government on the recognition issue.

Mr D. P. Dhar's unannounced dash to Moscow, when Dr K. S. Shelvankar had barely presented his credentials, was designed to secure the signing of the treaty before August 9 so that Pakistan could be deterred from the adventure planned for August 12. Mr Dhar's brief covered three points. He was, besides finalising the treaty, to fathom the Soviet mind on (1) whether India could look for more arms; (2) whether India could expect the Soviet veto if the Bangladesh issue was raised in the U.N. by someone, and (3) whether the Soviet Union would follow India if India were to recognise Bangladesh. The Soviet response was positive on the first point and ambiguous on the second and third.

The wide gap between the treaty and the subsequent joint communique by the Indian and Soviet Foreign Ministers should leave one in no doubt about New Delhi's slide-back on Bangladesh. Far from hastening the recognition of Bangladesh, it has pushed it back by no one knows by how many months or years.

Nothing short of a permanent confrontation with China justifies a 20-year treaty. The threat of a Chinese attack was conjured up to justify the signing of the treaty and the treaty certainly cannot make for normal relations with China. It ensures the influence of one of the super-powers on this sub-continent.

EVENTS have moved fast during the first half of 1971 to make irresistible the realisation that from a revolutionary point of view the subcontinent has to be treated as one. Ceylon cannot any more be thought of as a vaguely remote and romantic spice island and East Bengal can no more be merely the object of nostalgia for a section of Bengalis. No revolutionary strategy can be thought of for India by leaving out of account the forces operating in Ceylon or the forces operating in East Bengal. That of course does not mean ignoring the very real unevenness of the development of revolutionary consciousness among the masses in different parts of the subcontinent. That does not mean acceptance of the view that revolution must wait until social conditions in the politically most backward parts of the subcontinent become ripe for revolutionary change. It only means that Ceylon and East Bengal are to be treated as among the most sensitive areas on the revolutionary map, developments where will have grave repercussions everywhere else. One can forget—as a matter of fact one ought to forget, in the interest of saving social energy—such areas as Maharashtra and Mysore and Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat where, for an unforeseeable time, the bania will dominate economically, and ideologically, the cow or Bharat Mata or Sivaji; but Ceylon and East Bengal will remain battlefields where some of the most decisive actions will be fought by the forces of revolution and imperialism.

This supreme importance of these two areas is understood fully by Indira Gandhi, which explains her prompt military intervention in Ceylon and her total preoccupation with East Bengal. It is difficult to believe that Chinese leaders also cannot appreciate the situations with the same degree of lucidity though of

course from an opposite interest; but the Chinese stands on both East Bengal and Ceylon have been extremely unhelpful to the revolutionary cause. It is now a part of the history of the cultural revolution in China that the foreign office was besieged for some time by an extremist clique. The present stands officially taken by China appear so totally wrong that one may be forgiven for venturing the hypothesis that some agents have taken over the Foreign Office to deliberately blacken the image of China as the leader of revolutionary forces all over the world and to sow confusion among the ranks of the true revolutionaries in India who happen to be devout Maoists.

On Pakistan, China's stand errs more by omission than by commission. It is not necessary to give any quotations or to squabble over words. It is entirely correct to point out India's expansionist interests\* but by stopping only at that, as if there is no other issues involved in the complex of problems around Bangladesh, the Chinese statement has led a section of the young Maoists here to make a hero of Yahya Khan. This is no Marxism or Maoism but Mesmerism—self-hypnosis, suspension of one's power of thought and judgment, reduction of one's brain to a wooden machine that judges political and social problems not in terms of class analysis, not by the touchstone of the people, but in terms of the diplomatic means of cold war politics. Lenin asked Trotsky to go and meet his German adversaries in frock if it was necessary for arranging a truce and the Soviet people had to go through the process of contracting a no-war pact with Hitler in order finally to

\*The present author has discussed different aspects of India's imperialist aspirations in his article "The Spectre Haunting Indira" in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, May 29, 1971.

crush fascism. A communist will not hesitate to have a pact with the very Devil if that were necessary for the cause of revolution. From that to conclude that the Devil was anything but the Devil betrays a total lack of Marxist understanding. It confuses matters a great deal to discuss in this connection the class character of the Awami League and Mujibur Rahman. Yahya Khan is to be understood, not in relation to what the Awami League represents or not represents but in relation to what he does to the people of East Bengal. In relation to the people, Yahya Khan has made for himself the record of being one of the worst butchers of history. The touchstone of any communist in any situation of doubt is the people and that touchstone condemns Yahya beyond redemption. In terms of class character, it is nonsense to talk of Mujibur Rahman being a greater agent of imperialism than Yahya Khan is, of the Awami League being a greater instrument of tyranny and exploitation of the masses than the military junta ruling Pakistanis. True the Awami League represents the class interests of the rich peasants and small capitalists of East Bengal (there is no big capital in East Bengal), and these classes are potentially agents of imperialism as any weak and vacillating class in any underdeveloped country would be. But what does the military junta of Yahya Khan represent but the class interests of West Pakistani feudalism and comprador big capital?

It would not be worth discussing the absurd line of argument in favour of Yahya Khan (whose sole virtue is his being an instrument by which China is trying to exploit the contradictions within the world imperialist system) but for the fact that this confusion is found to exist precisely among the ranks of those Maoists who have brought certain areas of Bihar and West Bengal nearer to revolutionary conditions than ever before in the country. In their confusion they put forward arguments never advanced by China and which

do great discredit to China. Thus, it is argued that China cannot support the legitimate demand of independence by the people of East Bengal, for that would be interfering in the internal affairs of Pakistan—as if the international communist movement ever recognised the sanctity of feudal and bourgeois State boundaries above the will of the people. (It was by this argument that the USSR withheld support to the Algerian nationalist cause—Algeria being declared 'an integral part of France by its French rulers!') Again some others argue pathetically that the cause of Bangladesh does not deserve support of the international communist movement, as it is not aimed at socialism but only national self-determination. But national self-determination by any oppressed people has always received the fullest support of the world communist movement as being the first step in the struggle for final liberation.

It is however important to emphasise that such confusion seems to exist among only a minority of the Maoist revolutionaries. The dominant current of thought in the Naxalite movement, both in East Bengal and West Bengal, as far as is known, is entirely correct. It is reported that the Marxist-Leninists of East Bengal are keeping themselves off from the Indian Army dominated Bengali freedom fighters and have been busy gathering arms and creating liberated zones. The reason for considering the revolutionary prospects in East Bengal as excellent are the following: the civil state apparatus there has totally broken down and ruthless military repression is exposing to the people the true character of the State more efficiently than any other mode of spreading Leninist education could have achieved. The Awami League leadership would indeed have kept the people in bourgeois illusions if it could come to power, but as matters stand that party is discredited. The Awami League leaders, after having aroused the masses by inflammatory speeches and gestures and exposed them to the brutal repression released by the

Pakistani army, have mostly left the people in the lurch, and most of them are now living under the Government of India's protection, thus forfeiting the right to represent the people. The people are therefore left without any political leadership. This leadership vacuum has thus to be filled by communist guerillas working among the peasantry and mobilising them with arms against any attempt at the establishment of bourgeois political power, be it that of Yahya Khan or of Mujibur Rahman. The confused military conditions favour the most rapid spread of guerilla power. Not to seize the opportunity would be a criminal mistake on the part of communist revolutionaries.

On Ceylon China's stand errs not by omission but by commission. Expression of solidarity with the liberal-revisionist coalition government even while its hands were dripping with the blood shed in the worst ever massacre carried out by the State in the whole history of modern Ceylon and giving it economic aid for surmounting the difficulties created by the attempted insurrection are so hard to comprehend that the first reaction among many Maoists and China sympathisers has been to summarily dismiss the whole thing as a fabrication of the bourgeois press.

The situation in Ceylon is to be understood not in terms of any power vacuum, but in those of a vast gap between State power and the masses of people; the illusions which in any bourgeois parliamentary regime fill up the gap are, in Ceylon, completely shattered. But even before those shattering events, there was a gap between the masses and their political representatives, including all the left parties. The existence of this fantastic gap is revealed by the fact that apparently neither the government nor any of the left parties had any inkling as to the imminence of the insurrection or its vast scale. The explanation of this alienation of the parties of Ceylon from the masses lies in the class composition of the political elite of the country as well as the classes from

which the left parties derive their major support. The elite of Ceylon belongs entirely to an affluent class that dominates the professions, derives supplementary income from inherited property and are culturally quite alien to the vast masses of the people. The left leaders of Ceylon lead a life unimaginable for any left political leader of India: as a matter of fact in their style of life they are more removed from the Ceylonese masses than perhaps the families of the Birlas and Goenkas from the rural people of their native villages. The left leaders of India are mostly derived from the ranks of the lower middle class, and in the Indian tradition of mass movements it is anathema for a popular leader to earn money or to lead a comfortable life. C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru had to give up their properties, Subhas Bose had to tear up his ICS certificate and Jyoti Basu has to declare that he never practised law and never earned a penny. In Ceylon however the left leaders lead a life comparable to that which prevails south of Park Street in Calcutta; most Ceylon intellectuals do not even talk the language of the people, Sinhalese. There has however been a very large diffusion of school education (in the Sinhalese medium) among the rural youth. It is not difficult to understand that these newly educated youths, without any prospect of employment, would feel like an alien and hostile race towards the westernised political elite of the country. As to the classes supporting the left parties, the dominant Trotskyist influence on the traditional left parties of Ceylon has meant that the urban working class has been depended upon more than the peasantry. Of course plantation workers have also been organised into trade unions, but the Trotskyist mystique about the vanguard role of the working class has remained uncorrected by the Maoist emphasis on the role of the peasantry in the economically backward countries. This is particularly disastrous for Ceylon where industries are hardly developed and as such the industrial working class

cannot but be numerically small and weak in striking power.

That the Ceylonese, insurrection enjoyed mass support is beyond all doubt. A conservative estimate of the JVP activists is around 50,000, of whom at least 20,000 were armed. The very fact that such a vast army could be raised and armed without the knowledge of the government or of the left parties proves that the party enjoyed support among the rural masses over whom the left parties had little or no control. But here a differentiation is necessary. All evidence indicates that the JVP activists were not drawn primarily from peasants; they were recruits mainly from the unemployed rural youth (a recent estimate puts their proportion at 20% only) and from other rural occupations.

Not only the left parties sharing power with Mrs. Bandaranaike and therefore having the blood of the greatest massacre of youth in Ceylon's history on their hands, but also various dissident Trotskyists opposed to the United Front Government have been tempted to pick upon this aspect of the insurrection to berate it. Could a revolutionary movement succeed, they are asking, if it bases itself primarily on these unorganised sections of the rural masses? According to this line of thinking, by the chapter and verse of revolutionary theory, the vanguard has to be the organised working class or the organised poor peasantry; hence this particular movement was doomed from the beginning and its getting crushed need not be taken as a serious setback for revolution.

There is of course no doubt that the Ceylonese insurrection suffered from defects in its leadership. The fact that it failed to draw support from the industrial working class or to really draw the peasant masses out surely was its greatest weakness. The programme of the movement had also a lot of vagueness and its ideology was not free of certain strains of reactionary elements. (e.g. Sinhalese chauvinism, anti-Indian sentiments). Its very style

of action reflects a certain immaturity. It aimed at capture of power at one vast frontal attack on the state apparatus and, but for timely Indian military intervention, it might have achieved the goal. But even if events went that way the insurrectionists would not have been able to retain power against the inevitable counter-offensive that would have been launched by the combined military forces of India and Pakistan, the USA and USSR. As things happened, the total exposure of all its forces permitted their destruction on a scale that has never been achieved by the Indian police and military vis-a-vis the Naxalites.

The Ceylonese insurrection has been crushed, at least temporarily. But the government and the left parties have all lost their moorings. They are floating on the surface of a vast, discontented and sullen population whom the police and military brutalities and excesses have alienated beyond repair from the present establishment. There could not be a better description of the state of affairs than Sirimavo's own statement in Parliament in reaction to somebody complaining about the police excess—"But where we all be but for the forces of security?" The poor woman ought to take some lesson from Indira Gandhi on the correct postures and speeches of a democratic Prime Minister after a massacre by her police of her own election supporters.

But the Ceylonese insurrection has not been killed; it cannot be killed, given the class character of the insurrectionists. And this brings us to a very important feature that is common between the temporarily defeated insurrectionists of Ceylon, and the victorious Naxalites of Eastern India.

Before taking up this common feature, let us justify our evaluation of the Naxalite movement as "victorious". Of course, no dialogue, let alone any agreement, is possible on this question unless there is a common yardstick to measure success or progress. Thus the CPI judges in terms of the number of seats gained in elections, the number of

ministerial posts held by its ministers (without having won sufficient number of seats, through deals with the bourgeoisie), the niceties of speeches made on Parliament and Assembly floors, assurances given by Indira Gandhi through channels that run through her bedroom and kitchen, the number of progressive bills passed with the support of Congress MLAs etc. The CPM also judges success by the numbers of Assembly and Parliamentary seats won etc, but it seems also to lay a great deal of store by its capacity to hold bands and mammoth demonstrations and organise strikes that lead to lockouts and starvation of the striking workers. But if progress is to be judged by the change of balance of class forces at the grass-roots level of the working man, then the CPI(ML) can justly claim to have brought about the only revolutionary changes anywhere in the country. The terror tactics of its guerilla squads, which got criticised by the other left parties as merely amounting to individual terrorism, can now be seen to have resulted, in certain parts of West Bengal, in the erosion of the power of the State and the ruling classes at the grass-roots level.

Thus the power of the rural moneylender which has not been affected through all these years of parliamentary legislation and banking reforms, have been, in some areas, swept away almost overnight. When peasants in their masses come and take away from moneylenders objects left as pawns, when the papers keeping the records of the blood-sucking moneylending are fed into bonfires, that indeed is more of a genuine revolution than any bills passed in New Delhi (not to speak of Trivandrum). Critics belonging to other left parties who have until the other day questioned the mass base of the CPI(ML) have now to rub their eyes at the sight of peasants in their dozens and sometimes in hundreds armed with guns and rifles and other traditional weapons, conducting trials of village tyrants, looting their property and distributing their land among landless peasants. This release of the revolu-

tionary violence of the masses has been made possible by the use of the terror tactics of the guerilla squads. The role of terrorism, it is now seen, was to neutralise the police, liquidate the machinery of information gathering by the police, terrorise into paralysis all local agents of state power and all local representatives of the ruling class and give courage and set example for the most oppressed sections of the masses. It is now clear that the role of the CPI and the CPI(M) has all along been to keep in check this revolutionary violence of the masses which has always been there.

We now come to the feature we suggested to be common between the Naxalite movement in India and the JVP insurrection in Ceylon. It is the vanguard role played, not by the organised working class or the peasantry, but by classless rural and urban youth. Of course, the Indian leadership does not have any confusion on this point in theory; it has always emphasised the need of the leadership to pass into the hands of the landless and poor peasantry and has always emphasised the indispensability of working-class participation but the fact remains that in the initial stages, the vanguard in action has been a certain type of youth outside production relations—students who have given up their studies, young men with no employment. The CPI(ML) has until now kept strictly out of traditional types of movements or trade union movements; which has meant that most of its supporters have been drawn from among the ranks of the unemployed youth. Such a vanguard role by the classless youth does not follow the presumptions of any Marxian text book; yet the fact remains that such a role has been played, and it explains much of the brilliant success of the movement. The difference between the Naxalite movement in India and the JVP in Ceylon resides in this—that in the former there is no confusion that the classless youth cannot continue to retain the vanguard role—it has of neces-

sity to work for the leadership being taken over by the landless peasantry. Such clear understanding was lacking in the JVP movement. All the same, if the fact of the vanguard role having been played by this particular section of the population does not find theoretical justification in any of the Marxist classics, that is no reason to reject what has been learnt from revolutionary practice. On the other hand that is reason for the theory to be adapted to the particular conditions obtaining in a particular time and place. This is one among many aspects in which the Naxalite movement may be said to have contributed to the Indianisation of Marxism.

Given the facts, it ought not to be so very difficult to understand theoretically why it has been so. The unemployed youth, whether of town or the village, is the true have-not of the Indian (and Ceylonese) society. The industrial worker organised in trade unions has, relatively, something to lose. He has a salary, a job to lose. Thanks to the economism-oriented leadership of the trade union movement, his energies are all canalised towards struggle for wage increase, not for any capture of political power. Haven't trade unions all the world over become the best bastions for the defence of capitalism, being the agencies through which marginal benefits are fed to the working class to keep it contented? Is it not this economism which has bred the impotency the CPM betrays? What a vast and powerful party it is in West Bengal, and yet how helpless and vulnerable, like a prehistoric dinosaur incapable of surviving thanks mainly to its own crushing weight. Does the difference between the CPI and the CPI(M) on the one side and the CPI(ML) on the other not consist mainly in this—that the supporters of the former have some income and some property and they benefit through various reformist measures whereas supporters of the latter have none and therefore aim at the destruction of the social system and the capture of state power?

*“It is only when India has  
acquired the ability to design,  
fabricate and erect its own  
plants without foreign  
assistance that it will have  
become a truly advanced and  
industrialised country.”*

*—Jawaharlal Nehru*

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# A Critique Of Bengal Renaissance

BENOY GHOSE

AFTER devoting more than twenty years to the collection and interpretation of historical material on the 19th century Bengal renaissance, I find many lacunae in the work done. In this short paper I shall try to point out some of these and to raise some problems we have to face in evaluating the historical character of what we call 'Bengal renaissance.'

Sociologically speaking, 'the typological importance of the renaissance is that it makes the first cultural and social breach between the Middle Ages and modern times: it is a typical early stage of modern age' (Alfred Von Martin: *Sociology of the Renaissance*, London 1945, P. 3). Modern age here means the age of capitalism. Hence the renaissance is a typical early stage of capitalism. Before looking into other aspects of the problem, we shall have to see, therefore, how far Bengal had provided this economic background of early capitalism in the 19th century, which could generate a true renaissance.

The transition from feudalism to capitalism may take two different paths which, according to Marx, are:

'The producer may become a merchant and capitalist, in opposition to agricultural natural economy and to the guild organized handicrafts of medieval town industry. This is the really revolutionary way. Or the merchant may take possession of production directly'. (*Capital*, Vol III: Bottomore and Rubel: *Karl Marx, Selected Writings in Sociology & Social Philosophy*, London, 1961, P. 130).

No such transition from feudalism to capitalism took place in Bengal by any one of the two paths mentioned by Marx. Such transition does not take place normally under the domination of foreign imperialism. The obvious reasons, well known to the students of economic history, are (i) imperialist rulers exploit the colonial

country as a market for the products of their own manufacturing industry, and thereby inhibit the growth of indigenous industry; (ii) they have interest only in procuring primary goods from their colony, and in investing their capital so as to produce them in plenty and at low cost, by exploiting local natural resources and indigenous cheap labour; (iii) they monopolise the colonial country, for their own economic interests, both as export and import market, by a kind of 'enforced bilateralism'.

These are the reasons why the capital, enterprise and science-technology which England sent to Bengal, tended to form 'enclaves', virtually insulated from the surrounding economy, but tied to the economy of the rulers' home country. The imperialist rulers built roads, ports, railways (first in Bengal), almost exclusively in the interest of increasing their export-import mobility and administrative efficiency, without any regard for internal economic logic. There was, therefore, little centrifugal spread-effect of roads, ports and railways, and they hardly induced any real social mobility. This insulation impeded the diffusion of so-called superior Western culture, including scientific knowledge, technical skill and the spirit of early capitalist enterprise, among the indigenous population of Bengal.

The spirit of enterprise arose among a segment of new compradors like Dwarkanath Tagore, Ramdulal Dey, Motilal Seal and a few others, and even among some English-educated radical Derozians like Ramgopal Ghose and Pyarichand Mitra. But they remained 'comprador' intact, and in the end left even their collaborator's role in commerce for becoming city-dwelling absentee landholders. The Permanent Settlement (1793) created this opportunity for them. Just before its enactment, Cornwallis made it clear in a

letter to the Court of Directors (March 6, 1793): 'The large capitals possessed by many of the natives, which they will have no means of employing... will be applied to the purchase of the landed property as soon as the tenure is declared to be secured' (emphasis added). Within twenty years of the passing of the Act, as has been recorded by Hunter in his four volumes of *Bengal M.S. Records* (1782-1807), the old land-aristocracy of Bengal was almost completely ruined and the rapid disintegration of estates went on in every district. The new landed aristocracy of Bengal rose on the ruins of the old.

## Transformation

Who made up this landed aristocracy? 'The greater part of the province's landholdings', says Marx, 'fell rapidly into the hands of a few city-capitalists who had spare capital and readily invested in land' (Karl Marx: *Notes on Indian History*, Moscow, P. 101). This transformation of the new class of Bengali city-capitalists or the compradors into the new class of landlords, through the wide gateway of the Permanent Settlement, is perhaps the most significant event in the social history of the 19th century Bengal. The cumulative impact of its social consequences is still being felt today in every sphere of Bengali life.

Cornwallis was already speaking of 'large capitals possessed by many of the natives' in 1793. How were these 'large capitals' accumulated? By the blessings of the newly introduced 'exchange economy' or 'money economy'. 'The very existence of exchange value is a massive economic fact' because it now becomes possible 'to seek riches, not in the absurd form of a heap of perishable goods, but in the very convenient and mobile form of money or claims to money. The possession of money soon

becomes an end in itself in an exchange economy' (Paul M. Sweezy *et al*: *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, Reprinted from *Science and Society*, N.Y. 1950-53). Hence by all means, by speculative farming since the days of the zamindary of Calcutta, by banianism, agency and other services to foreign masters, the new urban comprador class of Bengal acquired money for the sake of possessing it, from about 1700 to the 1850s, and this attitude remained dominant even after a large number of them were transformed into the new landlord class. Other than purchasing landed property, this huge capital was wasted in all kinds of conspicuous consumption, in religious endowments and charities, in temple-building (about 90% of Bengal temples having archaeological value, were built between 1700 and the 1850s), in dinners, dance-balls and fireworks in honour of British guests, in marriages, *sraddhas* and other domestic ceremonies. A considerable lot of money was also wasted in litigations of joint-properties. The growth of capitalism was thus inhibited in its early phase in Bengal.

The British rulers created three new social classes in Bengal in their own interest and as their most dependable allies—the new compradors (mainly urban), the new zamindars (semi-urban), and the new middle class (both rural and urban), including the new English-educated stratum of it (urban) who were, according to Macaulay, 'interpreters' between the rulers and the ruled. This was the most effective way by which the British rulers could completely institutionalize their political domination in our country for a considerable period of time. As is evident from the major urban base of these three new social classes, the main thrust of exploitation was directed from the cities and towns to the countryside, that is, to the peasants. Obviously the peasants became the worst sufferers in a colonial country like ours, and they were far more brutally exploited than the new working class (in Bengal it

was composed mainly of poor non-Bengali immigrants from neighbouring States), growing in the new manufacturing and plantation 'enclaves'.

Even with this sketchy economic ground of the 19th century Bengal renaissance, we may seriously doubt the historical validity of the renaissance by asking whether it really marked the 'first cultural and social breach between the Middle Ages and modern times', and whether the breach, if there was any, could justify its 'typological importance'. Our next question is no less serious than this. What was the social composition of the three new classes created by the British rulers in Bengal? Who were the compradors? Who were the new zamindars? Who made the new English-educated middle class? The answer is, they were predominantly the upper caste and upper-middle class Bengali Hindus, the Brahmins, the Kayasthas and the Vaidyas. The percentage of Bengali Muslims and of other Hindu castes, including the merchant-castes and craft-castes who should have come forward to play their historic role, was negligible. This is one of the most important sociological factors which inhibited the growth of capitalism, of modern science, and consequently of the renaissance in Bengal, and also in India, during the long period of British rule. These inhibitory factors, it should be noted, had been operating in India since the pre-British days. What is relevant to our subject is the fact that these were not removed in the 'modern' period of British rule. The process of inhibition went on unhindered, beneath the ripples of social change, progress and reforms on the surface, till the formal end of British rule in India. The criteria by which we have appraised the values of the Bengal renaissance, maybe of the Indian renaissance also, therefore, need to be probed deeper.

#### **India and China: A close parallel**

China affords a close parallel to this historical condition of India, especially to the condition which was

not conducive to the growth of a renaissance. There are many important social and cultural differences between India and China. For instance, there is no such institution like the Indian caste system in China; China was never a colony of any foreign ruler as India was of the British; religious and linguistic changes in China are not as yawning as they are in India. Despite these differences, there are striking similarities between India and China. The huge geographical landmass and the peasantry, the traditional irrigation-agriculture based economy, the hoary antiquity of civilisation and culture, of arts and crafts, of philosophy, empirical science, technology and medicine—these are some historical characteristics which bear close resemblance between India and China. This resemblance is not only unique in Asian history, but in world history as well. It is not an exaggeration to say that more than half of the history of human civilisation and culture, beginning from the origin of man (Peking Man-Sinanthropus), till two hundred years ago, covers the history of India and China (and of course, of Africa as well). But China, like India, could not also produce social conditions favourable to the growth of a renaissance.

Prof Joseph Needham, Cambridge's noted scientist and Sinologue, in course of his monumental researches on the history of science and technology in relation to social development in China, has analysed the causes of this failure of China to generate a renaissance. Besides his magnum opus *Science and Civilisation in China* (7 volumes in 11 parts), three other works have been published from London in 1969-70: *The Grand Titration, Science and Society in East and West* (1969); *Clerks and Craftsmen in China and the West* (1970). These are byproducts of the main theme of his research, collections of extremely valuable papers and lectures, well-documented and illustrated. In *The Grand Titration* Needham says:

'...whoever would explain the

failure of Chinese society to develop modern science had better begin by explaining the failure of Chinese society to develop mercantile and then industrial capitalism. Whatever the individual prepossessions of Western historians of science, all are necessitated to admit that from the fifteenth century A.D. onwards a complex of changes occurred; the renaissance cannot be thought of without the rise of modern science, and none of them can be thought of without the rise of capitalism, capitalist society and the decline and the disappearance of feudalism. . . The fact is that in the spontaneous autochthonous development of Chinese society no drastic change parallel to the renaissance and the scientific revolution in the West, occurred at all' (pp 39-40).

This is also true of Indian society. But why was there no indigenous development of capitalism in China? Needham says in *Within the Four Seas* :

'The bureaucratic-feudal system of traditional China proved to be one of the most stable forms of social order ever developed. . . it played a leading part in assuring for Chinese culture a continuity. . . above all, it meant (as in India) that there was no indigenous development of capitalism. The mandarin system was so successful that it inhibited the rise of the merchants to power in the State; it walled up their guilds in the restricted role of friendly and benefit societies; it nipped capitalist accumulation in the bud. . . ' (P. 34).

Needham himself has referred to India. We need not dilate on this. In *Clerks and Craftsmen* Needham clearly states :

'Now if the Mandarinate was supreme, if the Civil Service was always the great power, there was a bar to the development of any other group in society, so that the merchants were always kept down and unable to rise to a position of power in the State. They had guilds, it is true, but these were never as important as in Europe. Here we might be putting our finger on the main cause of the failure of Chinese civilisation to develop mo-

dern technology, because in Europe (as is universally admitted) the development of technology was closely bound up with the rise of the merchant class to power. It is perhaps a question of who is going to put up the money for scientific discovery—it is not the Emperor, it is not the feudal lords; they fear change rather than welcome it. But when you come to the merchants, they are the people who will finance research in order to develop new forms of production and trade; and such was indeed the fact in European history. Chinese society has been called 'bureaucratic feudalism', and that may go a long way to explain why the Chinese, in spite of their brilliant successes in earlier science and technology, were not able, as their colleagues in Europe were, to break through the bonds of medieval ideas, and advance to what we call modern science and technology. I think one of the great reasons is that China was fundamentally an irrigation-agricultural civilisation, as contrasted with the pastoral-navigational civilisation of Europe; with the consequent prevention of the merchants' rise to power' (P. 82).

Not a single word in this statement or in others quoted, needs to be changed if 'China' and 'Chinese society' are replaced by the words 'India' and 'Indian society'. Rather, this can be further fortified in the case of Indian society, with this rider: if the *non-hereditary* Mandarinate, because of its power and prestige, could successfully inhibit the rise of merchants to power, and consequently the growth of indigenous capitalism, modern science and the renaissance in China, the *hereditary* Brahminical elite, armoured with colour-and-caste bound hierarchical order, did it far more successfully in India. This inflexible *Jati-varna* system made the Indian social order far more stable and impregnable than that of China. During the long period of British rule, this social order could not be effectively breached, because the preservation of this traditional social order and stability served im-

perialist interests. The imperialist rulers, therefore, strengthened its economic base by deliberately restricting the growth of capitalism, modern science and technology, and by assuring its institutional continuity. The Brahminical domination of the elite was partially broken during the British period, at least in the Westernised stratum, but Macaulay's 'filtration' theory made the new educational system so 'selective' that the new educated elite grew within the limits of upper caste and class. In this particular field of education also, imperialist policy failed to make any effective breach in the traditional order, and scratched only the social epidermis.

The merchants occupied the 'lowest' rung of the social ladder in China, as is evident from this traditional order of the four 'estates' ('We need not call them classes'—Needham) of Chinese society: *Shih* (the Scholargentry), *Nung* (the farmers), *Kung* (the artisans) and *Shang* (the merchants). The traditional order of the four 'estates' of Indian society, based on *Chaturvarnya*, is this: the *Brahmins* (the scholars), the *Kshatriyas* (the rulers and warriors), the *Vaishyas* (the merchants) and the *Sudras* (the farmers and others). This variation in emphasis on the traditional social position of the different 'estates' in Chinese and Indian society, has produced different trends of development in each society. For instance, the farmers were anciently high up in Chinese society, and they were second in status, ranking immediately after the scholars. In India, it was just the opposite. Communism in China, one must understand, derived a great deal of moral stature and strength from the very fact that it had lived and grown in the villages with the peasants (Needham: *Within The Four Seas*, pp 46-47). Communism in India could not gain that moral stature for the simple reason that it had lived and grown in the cities and towns, with the urban middle strata, and partly with the urban proletariat. Thus Indian communism has willy-

nilly helped in the preservation of the traditional order of 'estates' of Indian society, which is feudal, by neglecting the peasants who ranked lowest and suffered most, and by elevating the elite and other classes who were high up in Indian society.

So far as the merchants are concerned, they ranked lowest (fourth) in China, and third, which is sufficiently low, in India. The difference is not much. The despising of the merchant was a very old characteristic in Indian social thought, as it was in Chinese thought. I do not pretend to have sufficient knowledge of the social position of the traditional mercantile community in different regions of India, north, west and south, but even a casual scanning of the historical records of ancient Hindu, Buddhist and Medieval India indicates that their social position was low, and was kept low by the Brahmins and Kshatriyas. They were never allowed to acquire anything like the position of power in the State and influence in society which they gained during the renaissance in Europe. The huge capital which they accumulated from extensive external and internal trade was transformed into idle hoarding, and not capitalist accumulation. The ancient and medieval literatures of Bengal (for instance, the *Mangalkavyas*) abound with romantic tales of massive wealth and enterprising commercial activities of the *Sadagar* (the merchant) community, and also of their traditional hostility to Brahminism.

The merchants were numerous in Bengal in ancient and medieval times, and they are still numerous today. What is most interesting is that during the long period of British rule (about two hundred years), a section of these Bengali *baniks* (merchants) who migrated from the districts to the city of Calcutta, settled in different business localities, chiefly to carry on their *hereditary trade*, for the sole purpose of making and amassing money, as their forefathers had done. A negligible minority of these 'baniks' went over to other trades than what was traditionally sanctioned by their caste-

custom. For instance, the *Suvarna-baniks* did not usually leave their gold and *mahajani* (money lending) trade for other commodities, and the *Tambulibaniks*, the *Gandhabaniks*, the *Sankhabaniks*, the *Tantubaniks* and others, more or less stuck to their caste-trade. And none of these Bengali merchants of different castes turned to manufacturing industry by investing the capital accumulated during the British period. They could do it to some extent even under the limitations imposed by the British rulers, but they did not do it. What is more surprising is the fact that these merchants of different castes are still clinging to their caste-bound hereditary trade in Bengal, even in the new social milieu of the post-British period.

When I was doing a historical-cultural survey of the western region of Bengal in the 1950s, and again in the latter half of the 1960s, I found most of the villages, with concentration of banik-castes, looked prosperous, that is like mini-towns with big brick-buildings, shops and bazaars. Most of the baniks of these villages are also substantially rich, and a few are millionaires. They are carrying on quite comfortably their caste-trade, as the rate of profit-making from these trades has considerably increased in the present golden age of inflation and black market. They have the least desire to venture into any industry and they have hardly any inclination to do any other trade which they are not accustomed to. These Bengali baniks are just like our traditional craftsmen, and *their caste-trade is a kind of hereditary caste-craft*. In rural Bengal (western) the rich Bengali baniks have become *jotedars* also. The spirit of any enterprise, not to speak of capitalist enterprise, is entirely lacking in them. They have least occupational and educational mobility. Usually the Bengali baniks, living in the villages, are socially conservative and economically parsimonious. They maintain a rigid traditional consumption-pattern and standard of living, from which even the present young generation hardly dares to deviate. The causes that have led

the Bengali banik-castes to this stable social position, and cast them into such rigid moulds are certainly worth investigating. Sociologists and social anthropologists may find it a very fruitful field of investigation.

There is no doubt that this long enduring socio-economic stability of the traditional merchant-castes of Bengal was largely responsible for the inhibition of the indigenous development of capitalism, and consequently of modern science and the renaissance in Bengal. Throughout the ages, a low emphasis had been placed on merchants in our country, as in China, but China had no caste system as we had, and still have. In Bengal, the additional factor of intra-caste immobility of trade among the merchant-castes, as among the traditional craft-castes, has further strengthened these inhibitory causes. During the imperialist rule, as the traditional feudal-bureaucratic structure was reoriented and revitalised on the bases of exchange economy and the innocuous Permanent Settlement and intermediate tenures, along with a consistent policy of restraint on the indigenous growth of capitalism, the inhibitory causes could not be removed or weakened. While the new compradors of Bengal turned into zamindars, and the new educated elite turned into 'native' collaborators and agents of British administration, echoing the 'liberalism' of the British bourgeoisie, the traditional merchants, with their massive capital, preferred to carry on their caste-trade, with hereditary skill, in the money-making spree of the new exchange economy. There was no remote possibility of the merchants' ever rising to power in the State, or of acquiring any elevated rank in the social hierarchy, by becoming a successful capitalist entrepreneur. For this reason, there was never an effective social and cultural breach between the Middle Ages and modern times in 19th century Bengal, which alone could lend the renaissance 'typological' importance. What we call 'Bengal renaissance', therefore, turned out to be nothing but a historical hoax, by the end of the 19th century.

# The Revolution Continues

JOAN ROBINSON

THE Cultural Revolution is something new in history. For the first time, a second wave of popular uprising, mounted against the New Class that inherits power from a successful revolution, has carried socialism back (for one more generation) onto the line of its original ideals.

In 1964 Mao Tse-tung was on a pedestal ('like the ancestor at a funeral, who is revered but not obeyed') while the organisation men were strengthening their lines of command (except in the army) building up a normal hierarchy of power and privilege in the administration and in industry, fostering notions of small-scale private profit in agriculture; quietly waiting for the day when Liu Shao-chi, in proper constitutional form, would step into Mao's shoes and run the country according to his own ideas. After some rumblings in the purely cultural field, from which the movement took its name, Mao stepped down from his pedestal and called, first to the students and then to the people at large to 'Bombard the headquarters'. For nearly three years, from the summer of 1966, there were open conflicts and contentions, rising and falling here and there over the whole country, until the Ninth Party Congress, in April 1969, proclaimed the success of the movement and called for continuous evolution of the new style in every detail of organisation, work and daily life.

The whole affair raises many questions. First, why was it necessary, how far had corruption or bureaucratisation gone? What was the mechanism by which Mao was able to appeal to the people behind the back of the Party and the administration? How was it possible afterwards to restore the prestige of the Party and how could it happen that its members, 'all but a tiny handful' have been restored to positions of trust and leadership? How can a planned economy function with so much spon-

taneity? What damage was done during the years of conflict and how is production going on now?

Of all that has been said and written about the Cultural Revolution, the most enlightening is a little book by Jan Myrdal. In 1962 he made a detailed study of one remote village, sketched the characters, and reported the stories and described the lives of its inhabitants.\* In 1969 he went back, met his old acquaintances, and learned how the Cultural Revolution had affected their lives † Seeing one tiny example under a magnifying glass is more convincing than any number of generalisations.

Jan Myrdal found a noticeable improvement in the standard of life in his village; this had taken place mainly during the years that the Cultural Revolution was going on. First of all there had been a lot of building. Liu Ling is in northern Shensi, in the loess country where houses are caves cut into the soft cliffs. The Brigade construction team has been building stone-lined caves. The work is planned collectively and individual families select what they want to have done and pay from their accumulated savings. Production has increased. Grain output has doubled since he was there last, production of vegetables and fruit has gone up, and now most households every year raise two piglets (bred by the Brigade), one to eat and one to sell. Most household goods in the cooperative shop are selling at lower prices; owning a bicycle and a radio is no longer remarkable.

The system of social security has been greatly strengthened. Jan Myrdal reported that at the time of his first visit the Party in the village had

\*Report from a Chinese Village Heinemann (1965) Penguin (1967).

†China: The Revolution Continued by Jan Myrdal and Gun Kessle translated by Paul Britten Austin Chatto £2.25.

rejected the idea of free distribution of grain, which had been mooted during the Great Leap in 1958, and did not let the people hear about it. There was a social security fund out of which hard cases were helped. Now a basic income of grain is given to everyone, so that there is no need for a 'means test'. They have their own self-taught doctor for simple complaints and there is a medical insurance scheme which will pay for medicines and hospital treatment in case of need. The mid-wife has had a course of training and she is educating her neighbours in hygiene: 'Latrines are a political question.' Most of the women now understand family planning.

Electricity had already come to the village in 1962. Its use has been much extended. Now grinding is done centrally, releasing many woman-hours for productive work. In the Communes generally there has been a great increase in industrial investment—small-scale fertiliser factories, metal work and so forth. At Liu Ling they are still relying upon human and animal dung (this is where the pigs come in) and their only industry is a noodle factory. They do not yet own a tractor—they depend upon hiring from the country tractor station.

The district is still poor and backward by the general standards of the country and the village within its district is a little better than average. This sample certainly supports the view that the Cultural Revolution had a favourable effect as far as agricultural production is concerned, that desperate poverty has been overcome, and that, so long as work continues in the same spirit, the standard of life will continually creep up from year to year.

The main argument, at the village level, between the 'two lines' concerned the problem of individual economic incentives. It was not a conflict between moral and material welfare. Material welfare had all along been a prime object of collectivisation. When the cooperatives were first formed, the poor peasants

and landless men were attracted primarily by security against the annihilating disasters so frequent in the old days, and secondly by the increase in production that rationalisation of labour made possible. The rich peasants were pulled in because there was no longer anyone to be hired as a labourer. The average standard of life was markedly raised for the poorest. It was raised from rock bottom. (When Jan Myrdal was in Liu Ling in 1962, it was a proud boast that everyone in the village had a suit of winter clothes.) Now, with technical improvements and the supply of consumer goods to be bought, even the ex-rich peasants are materially better off, though perhaps some have lingering regrets for their old superiority over their neighbours.

The dispute was not about material welfare but about individual incentives. During the bad years that followed the Great Leap of 1958 there was a retreat from the premature stress upon collectivism (though Liu Ling, in particular, did not suffer very much either way) and a kind of N.E.P. helped to draw out every possible crumb of production. This experience appears to have put Mao in a weak position and the school of thought, that socialism was inefficient and that the individual household economy had to be fostered, continued to prevail after recovery began. The 'black line of Liu Shao-chi' showed itself in such details as turning the system of work-points into a kind of piece-rate wages, an increase in the size of private plots and the waste of time in carrying small parcels of household produce to sell in town.

#### Private Plots

Now, in Liu Ling, the size of private plots has been reduced and a discussion is going on about abolishing them altogether. The work-point system has been greatly simplified (reducing the need for book-keeping and eliminating disputes and ill-will about job-evaluation); only the number of days that each man and woman works is recorded; at the annual settlement, each member of the

Brigade, after a general discussion, is allotted a number at which work-points per day are reckoned. These multipliers run from six to nine, depending on an estimation, not only of the individual's strength and diligence but also on general attitudes and helpfulness. The wise old man in charge of the piggery gets nine points although he is now too weak to carry the pails. When the total has been agreed, the distributable income of the Brigade—grain over and above the free allowance and cash from sales—determines the value of a work point; each member receives his agreed share minus any advances that he has taken over the past year. General opinion in the village is that this system is more effective than the old one. Self-respect and reputation are a sufficient 'incentive' to work well. But Chinese common sense does not allow more weight to be put on pure public spirit than it will carry. Many transactions within the community require individual payments; there is a fee for grinding, for instance, set at less than a woman can earn in the time released from grinding by hand; pig manure is bought from households for work points; the fattened pig that is sold is money income to the family, and so forth.

Has this mixture of economic and moral rewards overcome the famous individualism of the Chinese peasantry? Will the 'black wind' never blow again? Mao has remarked that one Cultural Revolution will not change human nature; another will probably be necessary in fifteen or twenty years. For the time being, it seems that the collective system offers solid advantages which grow greater from year to year as rationalisation and technical improvements proceed. The desperate acquisitiveness of the old peasant was to secure the future of his family in a threatening world; the young generation growing up in the Communes takes security for granted and looks forward to progress within socialism. The most striking evidence of popular support for the system, and of the

confidence that the leadership has in popular support, is that the local militia which has been trained in every village keep their arms at home.

Already in 1962, Jan Myrdal observed that 'the old illiterate peasants who had taken part in the revolution from the very beginning were now being replaced by people whose real merits were that they knew how to read and keep accounts'. The 'new men' were subject to a subtle kind of corruption. They felt superior to their ignorant neighbours and thought themselves justified in organising the work of others without doing any work themselves. 'They sat in their offices and were becoming bureaucrats.' The old landlord, always humble and smiling, was insinuating himself back into influence. Work-points were being weighted to give an advantage to the cadres and their friends. Backsliding from the ideals of the Revolution had not gone very far, but some of the old peasants had begun to feel that things were not as they should be. An illiterate elder did not feel able to raise his voice. But when the Red Guards came, with the book of Quotations, bringing news of the criticism of Liu Shao-chi, an alliance grew up between two groups—the literate and politically active youngsters who compared the words of Mao with what was really going on in the village, and the old poor peasants and early Communists. The villagers speak well of the Red Guards. 'They paid their way.' (They were issued with coupons with which their hosts could draw supplies from the county stores.) They set going discussions and encouraged everyone to present their criticisms.

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For FRONTIER contact

S. P. CHATTERJEE

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The cadres had to criticise themselves. Administration was simplified and economic policy changed. But in the end the leader who had been most sharply attacked was accepted again, and was elected Chairman when the Revolutionary Committee was formed in September 1968. The people realised that they needed his services; they were confident that his attitude was changed and that in future he would not be allowed to slip into a wrong line.

#### Strange Phenomenon

Of all the strange phenomena of the Cultural Revolution, this is perhaps the strangest to western minds. It is hard to imagine in an English village, let alone a board room or a university faculty, people settling down to work together after such sharp disputes and such searching examination of each other's character and conduct. Yet, by all accounts, this process has been quite general, following the directive of the Sixteen Points (which gave the scenario for the Cultural Revolution) that the cadres who have made mistakes must be redeemed and that even those who seem incorrigible must be given a chance to change.

In Jan Myrdal's little sample, it seems, the process has worked out and left no bitterness behind (though the old landlord still has to be watched). Now the slogans of the Cultural Revolution, 'to serve the people', 'to combat egoism and eschew privilege', are being given a meaning in terms of everyday life.

To check the growth of the New Class requires a drastic reform of the educational system. Even at the village level, privilege creeps in with success at school. The teacher describes how his attitude was changed:

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SEPTEMBER 25, 1971

"Throughout the year 1966-1967 cultural-revolutionary criticism was going on here at Liu Ling school. The revolutionary teachers and their pupils criticised the mistaken educational policy, policy in which school marks were crucial. We had been encouraging our pupils to study in order to get on in society. We were educating climbers and folk who wanted to become famous. That was all wrong.

"And in this work of mine I'd damaged many pupils by placing excessive demands on their lessons, excessive demands for intellectual work. I'd been leading one group of pupils to separate themselves from practical experience and real work, and depressing another group into regarding themselves as inferior... As a teacher I enjoy a sort of authority now different from that which I had before the cultural revolution. For now we are working towards other goals. We aren't chasing high marks or driving ourselves to trying to educate so-called 'educated people'. Now we learn from each other".

The reform of education in the cities led to a massive direction of 'young intellectuals', that is school-leavers, into the country. This has been presented as an atrocity, both in the western and the Soviet press. Here we have an example of how it works out. At first 'they had difficulties', they were ignorant, 'they had to learn everything from the ground up', they were squeamish, they were homesick. The brigade is paid for their keep during the first year, when they are not likely to be much use. 'But they are beginning to come on well and at our next annual meeting we're going to propose that they are awarded work-points and become ordinary members.' 'The youngsters from town are good. They're learning how to work now, and understand why we must follow the socialist way and not the capitalist. They are also very respectful toward us old peasants.' They have been sent to be re-educated and to learn from the poor peasants, but they also contribute. Literacy is useful, after all,

and they bring news of a wider world. The village is gay now. 'They are always striking up some song.' The young women from Peking, particularly, have been a great help to the women's movement in the village. They are not shy and they take equality for granted. Now the village women take part in managing the business of the Brigade. Husbands have to take turns minding the babies so that their wives can attend meetings.

In the last scene of the book, the villagers gather in the school courtyard, under a light-bulb that the electrician has fixed up, to welcome back their emissary who has been in Peking for the twentieth anniversary of the Liberation, and hear her report. While they sweat through the yearly round of heavy work, these people are conscious of taking part in a great political experiment. They are being given not only something to eat, but something to live for.

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# Imperial Redivision In Pacific Asia

DICK KROOTH

\*"Japan walks softly, and lacks a stick". (Anonymous critic, mid 1960s.)

UP to this moment at least, the great Japanese capitalists have been forced to bide their time and cooperate with the U.S. military network in Pacific Asia. While Japan counts second in the world of capitalist economic power, it remains a political and military midget. Indeed, throughout Pacific Asia today it is the only super power without nuclear bases of its own. Facing it are an assortment of military bastions controlled by the Soviet Union and Communist China, which have caused an escalation of fear within the ranks of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party—the political arm of monopoly capital. With capitalist Japan officially fearing communism, the Liberal Democrats have persuaded the vast majority of the Japanese people to give them a free hand to "contain" this system and to take shelter against it under the U.S. nuclear umbrella.

To ensure their survival in a growing sea of socialist nations, particularly after the Kissinger visit to Peking, the monopoly and conglomerate Nippon business groups (called Zaibatsu) eventually want independent nuclear muscle. But their realistic approach to world politics tells them that this military objective cannot yet be produced by the material conditions which fetter Japan's political economy. On the one hand the economic system cannot yet produce a military establishment comparable to the U.S. network, and on the other the Japanese people are still opposed to military ventures abroad. Meanwhile, to change the future balance, the Zaibatsu parade overwhelming political power within the Japanese bicameral legislature called the Diet, as well as in the assorted State agencies, attempting to forge the kind of military force required to replace the

U.S. in the Ryukyus (Okinawa) and, later, throughout greater Pacific Asia.

Their long-range military plan can be gauged from the proposed "defence" programme for 1972-77, which calls for \$14,000 million in expenditures and will make the Nippon forces between 5 and 10 times their World War II strength. (See Chart I :)

Chart I  
The Cost of Militarism, Estimates  
(In millions Yen)

Military Plan	Amount
1961-66	1,300,000
1966-72	2,700,000
1972-77	6,210,000

Still this *force de frappe* is clearly insufficient to displace the overwhelming U.S. military fortress in Asia, which spends perhaps 2½ to 3 times that much in a single year!

Without a sufficient military force, Japan has felt pressed to extend the U.S. "security" pact covering Okinawa for another full decade. As the Japanese Ambassador to the U.S., Takezo Shimoda, has stated, "It would not be a responsible way of negotiating the return of Okinawa to seek the same (non-nuclear) status for U.S. military installations as those on the (Japanese) mainland." For the moment, then, Japanese policy permits U.S. nuclear bases to remain of the local sentiment." Both Yara and the Pentagon maintains its stranglehold.

But even the Pentagon has its problems. The Ryukyu islanders were pressing for the return of this real estate to their own control. They vehemently opposed the substitution of a Japanese Self Defence Force for the American military machine, but in this struggle they were faced with two of the most powerful imperial powers that have ever attempted to redivide Asia. On the other hand, the Japanese imperialists (represented by Premier Sato and his Zaibatsu

backers) urged the return of Okinawa to Japan by saying "It is only natural for Japan to defend the islands" in accordance with Japan's natural right of "self defence." But, on the other hand, the United States planned to return this island to Japan *only* on condition that the U.S. be allowed to maintain and control a nuclear arsenal there.

Nevertheless, even the plans for this conditional 1972 reversion to Japanese control were interrupted when an angry crowd of 5,000 people stoned U.S. military personnel and burned U.S.-owned cars and base facilities in the biggest anti-American riot in more than 25 years of military occupation. In response, Okinawa's High Commissioner, Lieutenant General James Lampart had these words of military-colonial wisdom to offer: the incident, he said, would "adversely affect the schedules for Okinawan reversion to Japan and the removal of (the 150 tons of) gas weapons from Okinawa." (Lampart's remarks corroborate earlier reports to the U.S. Congress that the 1972 reversion date is "not a commitment but a target").

In any case, Okinawa Chief Executive of State, Chobyō Yara, indignantly concluded, Lampart's statement was nothing short of the "expression of a high-handed colonial administrator in complete disregard in Okinawa, and the long arm of the and the mayor of Naha, capital of Okinawa, are dedicated to the outright and unconditional reversion of the island to Japanese authority, as well as the complete denuclearisation and dismantling of the bases. By siding with the lesser of two imperial powers—Japan over the United States—they hope to throw off the yoke of the more mighty. There is precedent in their favour (witness the American Revolution when people like Benjamin Franklin and the rich Irish-American merchant, Oli-

ver Pollock, allied with Spain to throw off British imperial shackles). But in following it, they disregard the large number of islanders who demand complete independence from both the U.S. and Japan. Unlike the national liberation struggle of the North American colonies—where all imperial powers were finally defeated—the Ryukyu islanders will be bound by a new master if the Yara plan succeeds.

Meanwhile, the Nippon-American axis is being tightened. Prime Minister Sato and U.S. President Nixon together have declared that the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty encompasses areas bearing on the "security" of both Taiwan and South Korea—a statement which irrevocably commits Japan to "regional defence" in compliance with Nixon's so-called Guam Doctrine for the gradual withdrawal of U.S. troops from Asia.

Behind all the military pomp and talk of self-defence, behind the demand for an extended "defence" perimeter covering South Korea and Taiwan, lies another struggle—the great battle for Asian markets and investment spheres of influence. This struggle is strikingly like that which took place between the two world wars, when Japan plumped for an empire described as the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

Needless to say, there was no element of "co-prosperity" for the other Asian peoples involved. Rather, throughout East and Pacific Asia, the Japanese Zaibatsu sought to acquire cheap raw materials to service their factories, inexpensive foodstuffs to feed their subsistence-wage workers, an investment haven for their idle capital, and a massive market-place for their manufactured goods.

#### Military Imperialism

When marketplace tactics failed to award the desired hegemony, the Zaibatsu launched a military imperialism, latched on to one faction of the army (the "Imperial Way Faction," it was called), and opened a number of military fronts in Asia, deceptively naming them "incidents." These

military advances brought Japan into a head-on clash with the Dutch, the North Americans, the British and the French, all of whom were bent on carving out and maintaining their own Asian empires. In the ensuing carnage, the great powers stepped over the body of China, Indochina, Indonesia, and a host of other Asian and Pacific outposts.

The present struggle in Pacific Asia is a re-play of many past events. Japan again has transformed itself into an industrial power, and since 1968 it has become the second ranking economy in the capitalist world. Its Zaibatsu again controls the political economy of Japan. The five great Zaibatsu hold almost 40 per cent of all deposits in the nation through a chain of banks (Chart II) that link the wage savings of the working class to the capital supply of the conglomerate industrial and commercial concerns which these Zaibatsu also control.

Chart II  
Ordinary Banks and Their National Branches

Year	Banks	Branch Offices	Branches Per Bank
1901	1,867	n.a.	n.a.
1926	1,417	5,297	3.7
1940	286	3,658	12.8
1950	68	4,484	65.9
1965	86	6,103	70.9

n.a.—not available.

Fewer and fewer banks control more and more branches, which are used to siphon all savings in the nation in order to centralize these sums for financing extended manufacturing (Chart III) and capital exports. Industrial concerns are becoming increasingly dependent upon this finance capital (i.e. capital owned by the banks and used by industry) flowing from city banks, which operate as the nuclei of the Zaibatsu groups. By providing conditional bank loans, the Zaibatsu groups draw more and more manufacturing concerns into their helotry.

Chart III

Japanese Industrial Enterprises :  
Percentage share of External Capital to Total Capital Used

Year	Percentage
1934	42
1940	45
1955	60
1960	60
1965	70-80
1969	83

Japanese manufactured goods are once more spilling over her shores, increasingly going to the U.S. and Europe ; but this flow is likely to switch to Asia once the trade war between the leading capitalist powers intensifies. (Chart IV). An intense struggle for the whole of Asian commerce is growing.

Chart IV

Export Markets By Areas  
(In percentages)

	1934-36	1950	1960	1969
North America	16	24	30	37
Asia	64	46	37	34
Europe	8	12	12	14
Others	12	18	21	15
	100	100	100	100

(a) First seven months.

Meanwhile, increasing quantities of crucial raw materials are required to feed the industrial machines. (Chart V) To get these resources, Japan is looking to non-communist Pacific Asia and especially to Australia.

Chart V  
Composition of Japan's Imports (In percentages)

	1929	1937	1951	1960	1969
Raw materials & fuel	55	53	68	66	70
Foodstuffs	12	7	22	9	10
	67	60	90	75	80
	—	—	—	—	—

(a) First 7 months.

So far she has signed long-term contracts for iron supplies and other minerals running for as long as a decade and half. And as the Japanese industrial base expands, likewise will her growing hunger for raw materials.

Chart VI. Japan's Growing Hunger for Raw Materials Imports (Thousands of tons)

	Fiscal 1967	Fiscal 1975 (Est.)
(Thousands of Tons)		
Copper	483	742
Lead	86	128
Zinc	182	387
Nickel	53	110
(Millions of tons)		
Iron Ore	55	200
Coking Coal	24	100
(Millions of Cubic Meters)		
Petroleum	121	261
Lumber & Pulp	33	60

To get these materials, capital is exported for overseas investment. Nearly 43 per cent of all direct Japanese overseas investments between 1951 and 1967 were made for the purpose of securing raw materials. The required capital is being cast out of the Japanese political economy on the heels of the declining rate of profitable investment. Idle capital is welling up at an increasing pace (Chart VII) and is being spirited overseas where super-profits can be

Chart VII. Private Idle Capital

Year	Billions of Yen
1967	7,092
1969	16,272
1975 Est.	90,000

taken from low-paid wage workers. One commentator says "the rapidly growing Japanese economy is producing surpluses for overseas investment—and the rest of Asia is hungry for funds."

Not surprisingly, the zaibatsu-controlled Liberal Democratic Party now

demands a "new order" in Asia. This "new order" is identical to the old Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, minus Communist China, as well as North Korea and North Vietnam. But in Japan's long-range imperial calculations for rolling back socialism and re-establishing the capitalist sphere of influence, even these people's republics are not left out.

**Furious Struggle**

Japan is now trouncing the United States and Britain in the growing non-Communist Pacific marketplace. (Chart VIII) The fury of this struggle is indicated by the fact that one-fifth to one-sixth of all U.S. exports go to this area, while nearly one-third of the Japanese outflow is similarly destined. Not only are Japanese goods cheaper than competitive wares, but the Nippon\* brand of sales promotion is unequalled by all comers. Furthermore, Japan has begun an export-promotion programme called "aid," which is second only to the U.S. variety in Asia; if American expenditure in Vietnam were excluded, Japanese "aid" would be nearly equal.

(Chart VIII. Estimated Growth of Non-Communist Pacific Asian Marketplace (In US \$'s billions)

Year	Size of Market by Sales Potential
1970	107
1980	241
1990	547
2000	1210

Looking to the future, the Japanese

\*My use of the word "Nippon" to refer to Japan, the Japanese monopolists and imperialists is justified by the right-wing expansionists in that nation. They describe Japan and themselves with this term—which denotes not only Japan, but also its great importance and size in the world. By employing this word, I intend no slander against the Japanese common people.

Zaibatsu has also promoted "aid" to build an infrastructure to accommodate their private investments in the Pacific Asian sphere of influence. By 1969-70, some 67 per cent of all this "aid" went to North East, South East and South Asia. And between 1964 and 1975 total "aid" is expected to increase 10 times over. (Chart IX) Gradually, private investments in Pacific Asia will compare with this scale of "aid"—but this will

Chart IX. Total Government & private Aid, 1964-1975

Year	(\$'s millions)
1964	360.7
1966	669.0
1968	1049.3
1975 projected	3000.0 to 4000.0

happen only after roads have been built, railways erected, ports constructed, mines opened, laws to secure investments passed, etc. At the close of the 60s, then, Japan's overseas investments were largely placed in the Americas. (Chart X) Yet Japanese

Chart X. Japanese Overseas Investment by Area (in percentages)

	1951-67	1969-70
North America	29	26.8
East and South Asia	19	22.5
Other :	52	50.7
Central & South America	27	n.a.
Middle & Near East	17	n.a.
Europe	4	n.a.
Africa	1	n.a.
Oceania	3	n.a.
	100	100.0

investments in East and South-East Asia should not be written off as un-investments are quite substantial. (Chart XI) Japan is becoming Number One investment banker in the new Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

Chart XI. Japanese Investment in East and Southeast Asia, Close '60s (In \$'s millions)

Indonesia	124
Taiwan	63
Thailand	34
Malaysia	20
South Korea	14
Philippines	13
Hongkong	12
Singapore	12

United States investors and exporters are now taking stock of the new Japanese empire. They are putting the universities in gear to study Japan, her culture and political economy. They are hiring all variety of Japan experts to teach them how to outsmart the Nippon monopolists. The results of these studies are now being published; Herman Kahn's book, *The Emerging Japanese Superstate*, is one among many extolling Japan's capital export in order to purchase cheap Asian labour. "From this point of view," Kahn pontificates, "The Japanese have a hinterland in non-Communist Pacific Asia of possibly 200 or 300 million people, many of whom they will simply incorporate, by one device or another, into their economic superstate even while not moving them geographically. In effect, rather than importing the labour into Japan (or raising it indigenously), the Japanese will export the work to the enormous, talented labor force available in their Pacific hinterland. This adds 100 million or so people to the potential Japanese labour force—people who can be used with varying degrees of economy and

convenience but who almost certainly will be available to the Japanese economy through the 70's and perhaps longer. If the Japanese can exploit this labour pool as well as it seems likely they can, they will have no serious labor shortages in the next decade or two." (p. 96). Rather than pay higher wage costs in the tight labor-market at home (the reserve army of labor has dried up since 1965), these Zaibatsu will super-exploit a welter of cheap workers throughout non-socialist Pacific Asia.

#### Political Significance

A massive war is in progress in Pacific Asia. On all economic fronts—in the market place, in the export of "aid" and investment capital, as well as in the taking of minerals and raw materials—Japan is moving ahead of her competitors. In the military field alone, she still fawns on the United States; and it will be some time till she can break this tie. Meanwhile, she is in the process of acquiring nuclear weaponry in addition to establishing an independent ground force to fight guerilla revolutionaries elsewhere in Asia.

Indeed, soundings are now being made by the American and Japanese generals to extend both puppet legions and the Nippon Self Defence Force in order to replace US ground troops in South-East Asia. On the U.S. side, there is good reason to encourage Japanese military expansion: Just now the burden of "One, Two, Three Vietnams" has brought the war home to U.S. soil. American military expansion has reached the point where the cost to the people of further operations courts massive discontent, which could ultimately lead to revolution at home. To lessen these charges, to stem the radicalization of the American people, the United States authorities plan to build massive puppet armies throughout South-East Asia.

Steps have already been taken to implement this plan. By the close of 1970, U.S. Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Marshall Green, explained to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs that

U.S. capital could be substituted for American lives—"these funds are essential if we are to continue to pursue the objective of reducing our forces in Asia without creating unacceptable strategic risks," he said. So far planned U.S. net withdrawals by the end of fiscal year 1971 include 20,000 U.S. forces from South Korea, almost 16,000 from Thailand, 6,000 from the Philippines, and some 265,000 from South Vietnam. By pursuing the Nixon Doctrine, Secretary of Defence Melvin Laird envisages a huge "savings" from the withdrawal from these areas—running about \$450 million over 5 years in the case of South Korea alone! "This," Laird assures, "is not only good economy but, even more important, a long stride in the direction of a key goal of the Nixon doctrine—that of reducing the U.S. presence overseas."

Into the military boots U.S. soldiers once wore, Nixon and his generals hope to place a phalanx of puppet warriors. To replace 20,000 GIs in South Korea will cost the American taxpayers \$1,000 million in launching indigenous replacements. And, should the Nixon Doctrine be carried to its ultimate conclusion, Japanese troops will converge on South Korea, on South Vietnam, on Thailand, Laos, and a host of other nations in Pacific Asia. U.S. imperialism in Asia cannot fulfill itself without laying the groundwork for its own destruction—first by arming puppet troops that will ultimately turn their guns against the U.S., and then by calling into the fray the primary imperial enemy to America's Asian emporium—Japan.

*(This article was written long before the recent dollar crisis.)*

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# Foreign Capital And Economic Development In India : A Schematic View

AMIYA KUMAR BAGCHI

IN this paper I shall try to describe certain modes of dominance by foreign capital to which India has been subjected. For this purpose, I have ranged over more than two centuries of Indian economic history—often in a very hurried fashion. Such a hurried view has obvious limitations; but it brings home to us the fact that the relations between Britain vary tremendously as far as the modus operandi of colonial exploitation is concerned. Only the fact of economic domination of India by Britain remains constant from 1757 to at least 1914. In the literature on capitalist imperialism the effects of imperial domination have been neglected compared with the *motives* of imperial expansion. It is the intention of this paper partly to remedy this defect. In the last part of the paper I shall submit that although political dominance of India by Britain ceased in 1947, India remained firmly within the sphere of influence of the advanced capitalist countries, and that this relation of dependence of Indian capitalism on advanced capitalist countries and, for certain limited purposes, on the countries of the Soviet bloc imposes limitations on the economic development of India. However, this statement should not be taken to mean that this external constraint is the only hindrance to Indian economic growth: on the contrary, the distribution of incomes and economic power, and more broadly relations of production make this dependence on more advanced countries inevitable, given that avoidance of absolute stasis is desirable even from the point of view of the ruling classes in India.

(This paper covers, but for the last part, the same period as R. P. Dutt's

*India Today*. (1)\*\* However, it stresses certain aspects of the colonial relationship which Dutt either overlooked or underplayed. First, domination of India by Britain is considered not simply as an aspect of the development and expansion of British capitalism but as a crucial feature of the domination of the whole world economy by the advanced capitalist countries of Western Europe and North America. As the position of Britain among the advanced capitalist nations changed—from that of a challenger against Dutch supremacy to that of the undoubted leader of Western European capitalism and then to that of a country which has lost her pre-eminence to the USA and several other advanced capitalist countries—so did the function that India performed as the servitor economy for the advanced capitalist countries. Secondly, in contrast to Dutt, I do not want to imply that the gain to Britain from the exploitation of India was equivalent in any meaningful sense to the loss to India. In fact, the system of plunder of India practised by Britain almost certainly involved a "deadweight loss": much of the destruction of livelihood of ordinary Indians was totally pointless from the point of view of the gain accruing to the destroyers. I would not want to maintain, with Dutt, that "The spoilation of India was the hidden source of accumulation which played an all-important role in helping to make possible the Industrial Revolution in England."<sup>2</sup> While the exploitation of India provided Bri-

\*\* Footnotes are given separately at the end of the paper.

\* This paper was finished in the middle of 1970; hence there are no references to later developments.

tain with an important source for accumulation of capital, other sources such as the slave trade, trade with North America, the displacement of artisan and small peasants during the industrial and agricultural revolutions—were probably much more important; in any case, the *causes* of the Industrial Revolution are to be found in the evolution of British—and more generally, European—society, rather than in the exploitation of colonies as such.

Finally, in contrast to Dutt, I emphasize the *distortion* of the earlier economic structure rather than its destruction, caused by British rule. In emphasizing the destructive role of capitalist imperialism, Marxist writing has tended to overestimate the progressive role of alien capitalist penetration. A naive faith in the progressive role of capitalism is shared by essentially conservative thinkers like Schumpeter (cf. his characterisation of the function of capitalism as "creative destruction").<sup>3</sup> I believe that British imperialism created in India a structure of society which made its evolution into a modern capitalist economy well-nigh impossible. The frustration of social evolution was not due simply or even primarily to the brutal exploitation of ordinary people: it was due much more to the non-competitive structures fashioned by British rule, and the pre-capitalist formations shored up by the peculiar action of capitalist imperialism on the Indian economy. All these qualifications notwithstanding, it will be obvious from the sequel that the very posing of the problems raised in this paper has been made possible by the challenge to modern social science thrown out by Marx and his followers.

Britain succeeded Holland as the leading capitalist country of the world

round the middle of the seventeenth century: the financial centre of Western Europe moved from Amsterdam to London, and much of the trade of the Western world came to be carried in British rather than in Dutch bottoms.<sup>4</sup> Britain then went on to become the first industrialising country of the world; from 1815 to 1914 she was the military, political and economic leader of Western Europe and thus of the whole world.

India came under British political domination at the time Britain began to forge ahead of other countries in manufacturing and trades and throughout the history of the "new" British empire and of British economic leadership of the world India had a "special relationship" with Britain: In L. H. Jenks' words, "It is India which has made the empire."<sup>5</sup>

#### Forms of Plunder

The functions that India served in the British imperial scheme were intimately related to—in fact, were the direct or indirect cause of—the changes that India underwent during the period of British rule. The first, and at the same time the most enduring, function was to provide a part of the surplus in the form of products or raw materials to be used in Britain for consumption or production, or bullion, finished products or raw materials to be traded for the products of other countries to be appropriated by Britain. During the major part of the rule by the East India Company the mode of appropriation of this surplus was plunder in one form or another.<sup>6</sup> The plunder took the form of (a) exaction of tributes either in bullion or treasure or in the form of commodities; (b) purchase of products at lower than world market and Indian free market prices; (c) use of the resources of conquered territories for further conquest in India. Some exploitation through 'legitimate' trade and development of commercial products such as indigo, opium and sugar also took place. But the raising of these products by European planters very often involved extra-market co-

ercion. In any case, during this phase the mechanism of exploitation remained primitive and the quantitative importance of exploitation through development or through 'free trade' was small compared with the later phases. The most striking results of such primitive exploitation are well known—famines, extensive depopulation and reversion to more primitive modes of existence, including the destruction of urban centres.<sup>7</sup>

The second important function which India performed was to provide markets for British manufactures. The finding of a market for Britain's most important staple in the nineteenth century, namely, cotton piecegoods, was accomplished in several stages. At first the British home market was barred against Indian cotton goods by means of prohibitive tariffs and regulatory measures typified by the sumptuary laws.<sup>8</sup> But Britain continued to serve as the major entrepot for Indian cotton goods for Western Europe and for the Western hemisphere. In the meanwhile the conquest of India by

the East India Company led gradually to a fall in the marketed output of Indian piecegoods because of (a) the discriminatory prices paid by the East India Company to Indian weavers, (b) the virtual cessation of the custom of Indian rulers, and (c) internal tariff duties imposed against Indian goods. It should be noticed that Indian-woven cotton cloth remained competitive with British machine-made cloth well into the first two or three decades of the nineteenth century and that Indian handloom production had received a major setback through purely political and administrative measures adopted by the British Government even before powerlooms had ousted handlooms in Britain (during the decade of the 1830s).<sup>9</sup>

These policies of State patronage were used by the British rulers to expand the market for British goods in India, as they had been used earlier (in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) to bring Britain to the forefront of West European capitalism.<sup>10</sup> 'Laissez faire' succeeded

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mercantilism as the ruling doctrine in Britain only when she had achieved unchallenged predominance in the economic field. Even then this doctrine remained strictly selective in its application to India or to other colonies, as is shown by even a cursory examination of the policies actually pursued by the British Government in India in the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> The use of State power by capitalist classes is the rule rather than the exception, and it was by denying that use to the Indian capitalists that Britain retained her economic hegemony in India for such a long time, as we shall presently see.

Before we move on to the next phase of the colonial story, we should notice that strictly speaking, the East India Company had not used any drastically new measures to thwart the handloom industry. Weavers were often paid lower-than-market rates by powerful patrons even in pre-British times: internal customs duties were levied throughout India in the seventeenth century. What the British rulers and traders did was to use such discriminatory practices with deadly efficiency which was unknown in pre-British India, and for goals which would have appeared extremely strange to Mughal or Maratha ruling groups.

The second point we should notice was that Britain was learning from India at the same time as she was slowly strangling the foreign trade in Indian piecegoods. The British trade in woollens had become practically stagnant by the middle of the eighteenth century, and in any case, it would be futile to try to sell woollen textiles to the colonies of West Indies or to West African suppliers of slaves. Hence the expanding trade in cotton goods which was built up in conscious competition with the external trade in Indian piecegoods, following many of the technical devices adopted by Indian weavers and dyers, came in to fill major gaps in the British trading network. But the pupil very soon surpassed the master: the motives or the organisation for the technical innovations and their fruition in fast-

expanding foreign trade were largely outside the purview of Indian society as it was then organised.

I believe that this problem of how a superior economic and social system interacts with a less advanced one should be studied far more intensively in future. For the tendency has too often been to postulate a unilateral influence emanating from a superior system to the inferior one, and then to simplify the mode of that interaction even further by assuming that all the complexities of the less advanced system are somehow removed and the less advanced system simply becomes a less-developed image of the superior system. One of the most poignant lessons of colonialism is that the weaknesses of colonial societies can be ruthlessly exploited and preserved by the imperial country for its own advantage, and that colonial societies cannot become mirror images of the metropolitan societies so long as the colonial relationship persists.

## II

The second phase of colonial relations between India and Britain lasted from, roughly, 1830 to 1914. For our discussion, we shall single out three main features characterising this period. The first is the exploitation of India through public works; the second is the maintenance of a formal policy of free trade in India; and the third is the use of Indian export surpluses for the financing of transfers of capital and men from the European countries to the new colonies of the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa.

Karl Marx wrote in 1853: "There have been in Asia, generally, from immemorial times, but three departments of Government: that of Finance, or the plunder of the interior; that of War, or the plunder of the exterior; and, finally, the department of Public Works... Now, the British in East India accepted from their predecessors the department of finance and of war, but they have neglected entirely that of public works."<sup>12</sup> The East India Company

had started to remedy this defect by repairing old canals and digging new ones before 1853; but public works began in earnest with the building of railways with government guarantees after Dalhousie had submitted the case for railway construction for military purposes. The story of railway development in India is well known. There is a certain ambivalence in the economic historians' assessment of the British record in India in this respect. It is admitted that many railways were unprofitable for a very long time and that almost until the very end of the nineteenth century the Government of India incurred a net financial loss on account of state railways. It is also admitted that because of the government policy of pampering British investors in Indian railways, there was an unduly large outflow of dividends and guaranteed interest payments.

But perhaps all this financial loss including loss of foreign exchange was overcompensated by social gain? After all, Indian external trade did expand at a rapid rate; and there did take place an increase in the output of many commercial crops. Against these gains, we should set the definite deterioration in the distribution of income among Indians and as between Indians and Europeans; we should also set the tendency towards an increase in the economic distance between the favoured ports and the interior regions; we should set the incalculable damage done to natural drainage systems and the creation of malarious swamps leading to extensive depopulation and enervation of vast masses of people; we should also set the wastage of the capital resources which could have been used to develop alternative means of transport such as good roads or navigable canals which would be more immediately useful to a larger number of Indians. Above all, the capital resources could have been used to develop industry. As it was, the development of railways in India was not called forth by any prior economic growth in the country. It did not lead to the generation of new in-

comes from unemployed resources as a large part of the total expenditure was remitted abroad.<sup>13</sup> Finally, in most industrialising countries, probably the most notable impact of railway development lay in the development of capital goods industries and technological innovation in engineering: locomotive factories in England have, for example, been called "universities of mechanical engineering."<sup>14</sup> All these dynamic external effects of railway development were thwarted by British policy.<sup>15</sup>

### Effect of Canals

By contrast with the development of railways, the development of irrigation works has met with almost unqualified approval from Indian nationalists and British officials alike. However, while the effect of canals in expanding the exportable surplus of foodgrains and commercial crops has been noticed, their effect in making the poorer strata of society ever more destitute and even more dependent on moneylenders, landlords and the government has been overlooked. The forthcoming book by Elizabeth Whitcombe will here fill a large gap by providing a detailed analysis of the impact of irrigation works on North West Provinces and Oudh between 1860 and 1900.<sup>16</sup> The introduction of canals and of payment for irrigation facilities in money and the continual enhancement of rents (assessed in money) in expectation of higher average yields, led to a shift of emphasis on the 'better' foodgrains such as paddy and wheat and commercial crops such as sugarcane, indigo or cotton and away from the millets which were the staple diet of the poorer sections of the people. In many areas the construction of canals without adequate drainage facilities led to extensive waterlogging and salinity, ultimately converting millions of acres of land into arid desert. The cultivator had no protection against such external diseconomies of canals. Even where waterlogging was not a menace the easy availability of canal water in good years destroyed the careful husbandry of the small cul-

tivator using very often seasonally constructed Kutch wells. In the years when there was an unexpected failure of rains and the canals could not supply water for the kharif crops there was total disaster—particularly in respect of staple foodgrains, since the best land was usually pre-empted for cultivation of indigo or sugarcane. The introduction of canals combined with the intrusion of external demand made extensive cultivation by large landowners profitable, and correspondingly their exploitation of the landless strata or the small peasants more intense.

If there had been a large-scale development of industry, increase in agricultural production would have supported such development, and Indian cultivators would not have been so vulnerable to business cycles in advanced capitalist countries. The small cultivators or landless labourers could have been absorbed in industry, and with continued economic growth, could have escaped the tyranny of rural slums. But such a development would have been contrary to the basic interests of the ruling classes of Britain, and the maintenance of formal free trade or, rather "one-way free trade" in R. P. Dutt's phrase, provided the best guarantee against such a development.

The century from 1815 to 1914 has been characterised as the era of Pax Britannica and the era of the gold standard. In spite of large-scale failure of the Latin American countries to honour the loans granted to them by private British investors at the time of liberation, in spite of the Crimean War, and the wars at the close of the nineteenth century to parcel out the Ottoman Empire and to partition Africa, there was remarkable stability in the international payments mechanism. This stability was maintained to a very large extent by "Britain's ability to maintain a deficit on her visible trade with one half of the world which she balanced by a surplus with the other half."<sup>17</sup> Britain's capability to generate surpluses was matched by her willingness to lend vast sums of capital to

the new colonies, including the USA, which for a long time had a balance of payments deficit with Britain. For this process to go on smoothly, however, it was necessary that the countries linked to Britain through trade and investment should usually maintain an equilibrium in their balance of payments. In particular, Britain's deficits with other countries should be balanced by the surplus of some Empire country (or countries) with the latter. This function was performed by India's export surplus with other countries, which was in turn matched by her deficit with Britain. In the first part of the century, it was Indian opium sales to China which enabled Britain to square her accounts with the Heavenly Kingdom; later on, Britain's cloth sales to China increased and Indian opium sales became more important for balancing the budget of the Government of India than for balancing the imperial accounts. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, however, Indian exports to the USA, to South American countries and to Europe became crucial for financing British deficits with the USA and Europe.<sup>18</sup>

These trade relations were consonant with the international investment pattern that had grown up in the nineteenth century, primarily centred on Britain: Britain built up foreign assets worth about £4,000 million by 1914,<sup>19</sup> and most of this investment was concentrated in the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa: India and non-white colonial countries generally received small fractions of this capital.<sup>20</sup> In fact, apart from the investment in railways and in other public utilities of India, there had been very little net transfer of capital from Britain to India. Most of the net transfers of capital were made to countries to which white settlers migrated in substantial numbers. Thus the mechanism of international trade and investment in the nineteenth century was a powerful apparatus for mopping up the surpluses of today's underdeveloped countries—particularly, India and China—to transport, feed and

equip the white settlers of the new colonies.<sup>21</sup>

But why did British capital migrate to the new colonies and not to India? The answer lies in two phrases—racial affinity and prospects of industrialisation. In the first place, India was already a densely populated country, and there was scant prospect of imposing a colony of white settlers permanently on the Indian population. In the second place, the USA, and all the white colonies within the British Empire adopted all the measures of State patronage for the growth of industries—including a heavy dose of protection against British goods—which were denied to Indian industry in the name of free trade.<sup>22</sup>

The formal policy of free trade in India served to keep this external payments mechanism in trim. This policy helped to find markets for British manufactures: India became the largest market for Britain's exports of cotton goods which were in their turn the single most important item of British exports until almost the end of the nineteenth century. This was especially important because tariff barriers were coming up against the import of British manufactures into all the European and colonial countries ruled by white settlers. In the second place, Britain had to keep alive a formal policy of free trade in order to prevent retaliation against exports of Indian goods in the hard currency areas; since, as we have noted above, Indian export surpluses with such areas were vital for the smooth functioning of the imperial payments mechanism and of the gold standard. British administrators in India were fully aware of the importance of India in the imperial trading network. Thus D. T. Chadwick, ICS (later Sir David Chadwick), wrote in 1917: "...whilst India's purchases are mostly made inside the Empire, her sales are mostly outside the Empire. The importance, therefore, of foreign markets to India's trade is clear, and consequently the importance of these foreign markets

to England's sales to India, because imports are paid for by exports."<sup>23</sup>

#### Discrimination

Such a policy of formal free trade and laissez faire did not prevent systematic discrimination in official policy in favour of British goods; nor did formal recognition of the equality of Indian subjects prevent the systematic practice of racial discrimination against Indians in respect of appointment to official positions or entry into profitable fields of enterprise—particularly in foreign trade, organised banking and industry. These discriminatory policies coupled with the lack of industrialisation thwarted the growth of entrepreneurial strata among the Indians—particularly in eastern, northern and southern India—during the latter part of the nineteenth century.

It is against the background of this 'special treatment' for India, when most of the West European countries and many of the new colonies were achieving industrialisation that the controversy of the 'drain' acquires added significance.<sup>24</sup> There were disagreements between Indian nationalists such as Dadabhai Naoroji and Romesh Dutt and British economists such as Sir Theodore Morison and J. M. Keynes about the actual size of the drain.

By charging the loans made to the Indian Government at the market rate of interest, and by capitalising the assets owned by British citizens in India at the "normal" rate of interest and calculating their annual yields in perpetuity, the latter could show that the size of the 'drain' was overestimated by the Indian nationalists. The British economists, however, conveniently ignored the fact that the profits were made and assets were built up by British residents in India largely by deliberately excluding Indians from fields of foreign trade, organised banking, and manufacturing industries such as jute goods and engineering. In most of these fields, the needed skills could be relatively easily acquired, and technical innovations were not rapid so that the problem

of keeping up with international competition was not overwhelming. Under such conditions, the positions of privilege were maintained by British businessmen through the use of political means buttressed by an essentially racialist ideology.

Hence it is legitimate to assume that but for such political barriers, Indians would have entered these fields easily and eliminated most of the profits made by the Europeans. In order to assess the loss to the Indian economy, we have therefore to estimate the (cumulative) difference, over time, between the actual output enjoyed by Indian citizens and the output they could have earned if India were allowed to pursue the same industrialising policies as Canada and Australia were pursuing, and if the discrimination against Indians in government, business and foreign trade could be ended. It is obvious that such a difference would be far larger than the sum (over the same period) of the 'drain' estimated by the usual methods.

During the period 1870-1914, among the modern industries in the ownership of which the Indians had any important share, only the cotton mill industry grew, though rather slowly. Most of the growth occurred in the output of exportable agricultural commodities. In the absence of domestic industrialisation, Indian producers of agricultural goods became extremely vulnerable to international business cycles: the so-called Great Depression from 1872 to 1898 affected the real incomes of Indian producers very badly. With time, as the rate of growth of Indian national output remained low, the gap between potential output and actual output also grew.<sup>25</sup>

#### Dependence on Land

The fact that India failed to industrialise at the end of the nineteenth century had certain extremely important effects on the structure of the economy and society. I shall deal with what I consider to be the most damaging and most enduring effect of this failure. With the growth of po-

pulation, stagnation in industrial production and the closure of the higher offices and more profitable occupations to Indians of upper classes, both the rich and the poor were made increasingly dependent on a single source of income—land. With the partial introduction of a market in land and the removal of many of the protective devices built in the traditional systems against the total separation of a cultivator from a permanent claim on the income of the land he tilled, a large number of people in rural areas found themselves unemployed for a large portion of the year. When private property in land had not been given a procedure over all other social relations, the cultivator was guaranteed a minimum income either in absolute terms or as a fraction of total produce, in spite of underemployment or seasonal unemployment. (The *jajmani* system was one of many arrangements for such sharing of output).

With the introduction of money as the major medium of exchange and the doctrine of saleability of all commodities including labour, however, this situation changed. Formally, there was pure competition among labourers and landlords; the landlords could get as many labourers as they wanted at the going wage. But in actual fact, there was persistent disequilibrium in the labour market since a substantial fraction of the labourers (including people owning very small plots of land) could not find employment over the year at the going wage. In this situation, obviously formal pure competition cannot persist: when a labourer finds that he cannot get a reasonable assurance of a job for most of the year at the market wage, he will opt out of the free market, and bind himself to a landlord who will assure him the minimum customary income (which may be lower than the "subsistence wage") over the year, or sometimes over his lifetime. Thus the ideally free market with pure competition degenerates into myriads of bargains between landlords and labourers or between moneylenders

and indigent debtors, with the landlords and moneylenders holding the whipping hand.

The British rulers, of course, derived some benefits from this situation: with the formal abolition of slavery, indentured labourers for Mauritius, Fiji or Natal, or labourers for the tea plantations of Assam could be procured at wages which were lower than the going wage in the relatively prosperous agricultural areas of India, precisely because such labourers had been deprived of the security—however insubstantial in face of natural hazards or barbaric political systems—provided by the traditional social organization.

But the more permanent effect of this change—extensive underemployment among labourers and monopsonistic control of labour by rural landlords and moneylenders—is still with us today. The fact of the absence of real pure competition in rural labour markets has escaped many of our economists, so that production functions are being fitted and momentous policy conclusions drawn on the assumption that labourers are indeed free in rural India.<sup>26</sup> Competition among capitalists breeds the urge to improve production methods. The absence of competition in turn helps to keep a "slack" in the system and capitalists can live like rentiers off the fat of the land. On the other side, since production methods do not change, except very slowly, it remains profitable to retain systems like crop-sharing and the employment of labourers as virtual serfs. Many European planters of Bihar found it profitable to turn into zemindars, when natural indigo failed in competition with artificial dyes. Again, Parry's of Madras, the Managing Agents of the largest sugar mills in south India, found that it was more profitable to rent out land to peasants than to cultivate it themselves, using modern methods and large doses of fertilizers.<sup>27</sup>

With the ousting of the upper classes from positions of profit and official power, there was extensive unemployment and underemployment

among these people also: the consequences are evident in absentee landlordism, the tremendous stress on security, the proliferation of public offices paying salaries, and the widespread practice of 'nepotism' in business and administration. I am not implying that upper middle classes or professional classes in other countries have been free from such practices: (See, for examples W. J. Reader's work on the 'trade unionism' of the professional classes in England.) But there is evidence that many of the older institutions—such as the Hindu joint family system—acquired a formal and legal rigidity under British rule which they did not have before. In most cases such rigidification was a defensive response: in some cases, as in the case of Chettiars, this was a measure to take advantage of the peculiar opportunities afforded under British rule.<sup>28</sup>

The second important effect of thwarted industrialisation was the wastage of the investible surplus that was actually generated in the economy. Indian princes, landlords and traders bought gold and jewellery often because there were no fields of industry in which their savings could be profitably invested. Of course gold and jewellery served other purposes as well, such as maintenance of status when real power had evaporated, conformity to traditional patterns of behaviour and so on. But we should not attribute conspicuous consumption or the hoarding of bullion only to rigidity in behaviour patterns, particularly since we know that many wealthy Indian princes did invest heavily in industry when the opportunity for profitable investment in such a field presented itself.

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In a situation in which nature was unpredictable and the government, the moneylender and the landlord were going to exact their dues at predictable intervals, Indian peasants rightly bought bullion as the best hedge against uncertainty. Again, one can find supplementary motives for purchases of bullion, but the economic motive should be given its due importance. That Indians did buy gold primarily as security against bad times was partly shown during the depression of the 1960s, when gold flowed out of India in vast quantities.

#### Pre-capitalist Institutions

In the above analysis, I have not directly dealt with the influence of earlier, pre-British social organizations on later developments, nor have I discussed the deliberate administrative or political devices adopted by the British to keep pre-capitalist institutions alive. On the first score, I would merely plead ignorance. If the fact of creation of underemployment of formally free labour through colonial rule is granted, the deviation from the norm of pure competition in

the labour market must follow. But the forms such deviations would take would depend both on the pre-existing organization and the precise legal provisions made by the colonial power.<sup>29</sup> On the second score, I would plead that the deliberate political and administrative decisions in preserving the pre-capitalist social structures have been overemphasised. It is often implied that but for strenuous effort at shoring up pre-capitalist structures in India they would have collapsed, and that the fact of colonial rule is no more relevant for a theory of stability of such structures than that the British had a misguided attitude of paternalism. Thus Barrington Moore in a widely-discussed book<sup>30</sup> points out that India became a "landlords' paradise" under British rule, but fails to bring in the influence of the economic aspects of colonial rule in preserving such a state of affairs: the implication is that the British had not simply been ruthless enough in destroying such structures. My contention is that, on the contrary, it is precisely because of the thwarting of in-

dustrialization in nineteenth-century India through colonial rule that absentee landlordism and all the tortuous features of the tyranny of the moneylender, trader and landlord flourished there.

It should be pointed out—because the same phenomenon has continued to this day—that within the imperial framework, India was exploited not only "in the long haul," through the thwarting of industrialization, but also through the more short-term mechanism of business cycles originating in advanced capitalist countries. When the latter (particularly British) suffered a crisis, the terms of international lending would be tightened, and the holding of stocks of primary commodities—mainly the produce of colonial countries—would become difficult. In general, for this reason alone, if for no other, in a recession, the prices of raw materials would fall more than the prices of industrial products which formed the major part of the exports of Britain. Hence the underdeveloped countries including India would suffer more than the industrialised countries through the in-

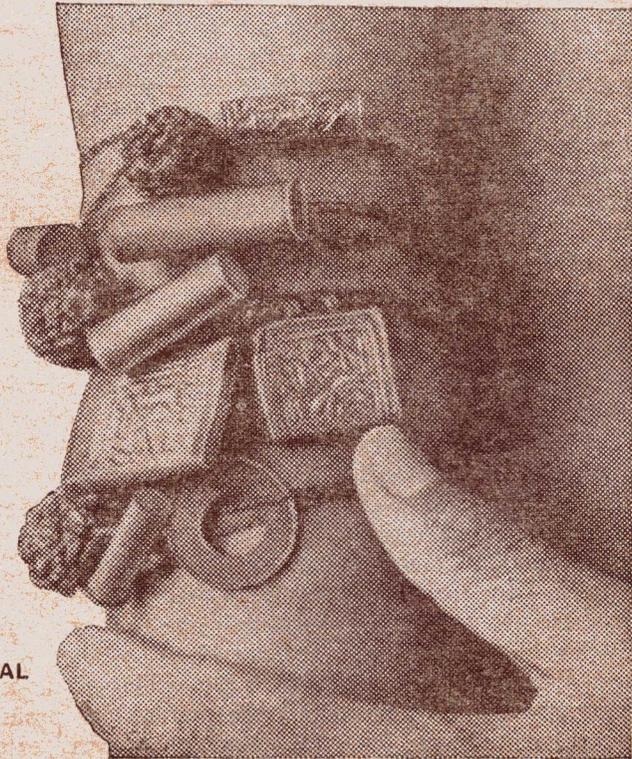
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stability of terms of trade of primary products<sup>31</sup> Not only did such a mechanism operate over the usual eight or nine year cycles; it also operated over longer periods—such as the period of the Great Depression (roughly 1871-98). This period was also characterised by the virtual demonetisation of silver bullion and coins—the main medium of exchange in India before the closing of the mints to the coinage of silver money. There is not a sufficiently detailed and rigorous analysis of the movements of India's terms of trade during this period. But all the indications point to the inference that the so-called Great Depression helped the industrialised countries to acquire food and raw materials at lower prices and thus to increase the rate of trans-

fer of real resources from the colonies to themselves, primarily at the cost of the non-white colonies of the Western countries.

The legal and administrative system which the British tried to introduce—making land as well as other assets fully saleable commodities under the principle of equity—was twisted by the twin stresses of the pre-existing forms of use of power in society and the constriction of rural (and urban) society because of economic stagnation. In a more dynamic and more independent society, the laws would have been changed to suit the basic economic conditions; under the actual Indian conditions, the British legal heritage remained to further impede the process of change until the present day<sup>32</sup>.

### III

The third phase of India's relation with the advanced capitalist (and latterly, socialist) countries opened with the First World War. In this phase India's links with the erstwhile overlord of the capitalist world, viz., the U.K., were somewhat loosened, and she entered into a situation of multi-lateral dependence on the groups of advanced capitalist countries taken together. However, during the period 1914-1945, the pace of these changes in her relationships was slow because of three reasons: first, much of the interwar period was a period of recession and instability for the capitalist world, so that the USA, the new overlord, retreated into an isolationist position, first politically and then economically as well. Secondly, as far as India and eastern and southern Asia were concerned, Britain was involved in a direct struggle for markets with Japan: hence, Britain seemed to be struggling not against the USA, but against the "Asian power", Japan. Hence the more important battle between the USA and the U.K. was often obscured. Thirdly, during the depression of the thirties, the depression in the British economy seemed to offer an opportunity

to the Indian capitalists to acquire British-owned assets and gain economic independence. Therefore, in many respects the interwar period is best treated as a period of transition between the older types of relationships of unilateral dependence of India on Britain, and the newer type of dependence of India on the advanced capitalist countries as a group, led by the USA.

Even before the First World War, the USA had already emerged as the leading manufacturing nation. After the War, she also became the leading creditor nation. Britain lost a large fraction of her foreign investments as a result of the war, but she hung on to all her political dependencies and managed to increase the size of her political empire. By means of a confidence trick in which the other capitalist countries acquiesced, her currency still remained the major international currency of exchange, although the dollar had come to be almost equally acceptable. This trick was played out during the crisis of September 1931, when Britain was forced to go off the gold standard, and all the capitalist countries became involved in a series of devalua-

tions and tried to use all the restrictions against imports of other countries that have been ever thought of, to the detriment of one another.<sup>33</sup> The foreign investments of the USA practically ceased after the onset of the depression of the thirties; as a result, in 1938 the accumulated foreign investments of the U.K. still exceeded those of the USA.<sup>34</sup>

### Interwar Period

During the interwar period, the capitalist world was further shaken by the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution and the exit of Soviet Russia from a network of capitalist-imperial domination. As a result of these international developments and as a result of internal political developments in India, her position vis-a-vis Britain improved. India gained fiscal autonomy after the First World War, and a policy of "discriminating protection" was adopted from 1924 onwards. Protective tariffs were used—although haltingly—to shelter some existing Indian industries against foreign competition. Tariff protection was not accompanied by other measures of State assistance on a significant scale; however, the "doldrums" of the 1920's were succeeded in 1929 by the worst depression the capitalist world has as yet gone through. As a result, India's exports suffered badly and her terms of trade seriously deteriorated: in the 1930's agricultural prices declined to a far greater extent than industrial prices. Hence in spite of tariff protection for some Indian manufactures, the rate of industrial growth in India could not be high. But by the end of the 1930's, India did achieve a fair degree of self-sufficiency in the manufacture of simple consumer goods and some producer goods, such as cotton cloths, sugar, matches, paper, cement and steel.<sup>35</sup> Since the rate of growth of private and public demand was fairly low, India rarely suffered any balance of payments difficulties during the interwar period.

One of the consequences of the difficulties of the capitalist world during the interwar period was that In-

dia's value to British declined considerably: India could no longer supply the export surpluses to balance the imperial accounts with the rest of the world. India's place in this respect was taken by Malaya, whose tin and rubber now regularly helped Britain to square her accounts with countries outside the sterling area.<sup>36</sup> The finances of the Government of India were also frequently embarrassed during the 1920's: thus public investment—which before the First World War, generated demand for such products of British firms as railway locomotives, constructional materials and steel—rarely reached the prewar levels. In the early 1930's a large part of the British holdings of Indian Government and railway securities was repatriated, thus aggravating India's deficit on capital accounts but also reducing the expected future earnings of British investors from India.<sup>37</sup>

As far as British ownership of capital in existing private manufacturing, banking and trading enterprises was concerned, there was probably little actual transfer of such ownership to Indians before the onset of the Second World War. But Indians came to invest on a much larger scale than the British in new enterprises and industries. As a result, their share in the industrial capital of the country increased. Indian capitalists also found the British Government more responsive to their demands. (This responsiveness was directly stimulated by the growth of the freedom movement and by the need of the British to find allies among the wealthier classes in India). But the freedom of manoeuvre that the Indian capitalists gained during this period proved to be transitory. Large international companies or cartels had begun to dominate world capitalism already, and India could not escape from their grip, particularly in fields in which advanced, and rapidly changing, technology had come to rule. When India adopted protectionist policies, foreign companies found it profitable to set up branches and subsidiaries to defend their existing markets and to

exploit the markets for domestic manufactures that were fostered behind the wall of protection. The Imperial Chemical Industries set up manufacturing capacity in India at the end of the thirties, and companies like General Motors set up assembly plants for cars. On the other side, Indian firms entering new fields of industry such as manufacture of textile machinery or the manufacture of railway locomotives or their parts sought the collaboration of foreign firms for plant design and process know-how, and the use of licences and patents. Thus the stage of "dependent capitalism" was inaugurated in India during roughly the period from 1937 to 1946. From being a colony kept only for extracting raw materials or selling primitive types of manufactured commodities, India graduated to become one of the outer satellites in the capitalist planetary system, with the United States as the central star.

#### "Industrial Revolution"

It is often claimed that the world is going through a "second Industrial Revolution", and that new-comers are able to ride on the crest of a new wave of technical dynamism in the capitalist world. In reality, only the well-established capitalist nations, or small enclaves such as Hongkong or Taiwan which act either as the supply-depots for the American military establishment or as intermediaries in East-West trade, have been able to participate in this technical dynamism. Together with most of the capitalist countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, India continues to be in a position of unilateral economic subservience to the advanced capitalist countries. The racist ideology which underpinned and rationalised this subservience before the Second World War continues to perform its functions in excluding all the non-white nations except the Japanese (accorded an "honorary Aryan" status by Hitler, and an "honorary white" status by modern South Africa) from the white man's club of advanced capitalism.

The independence of India in 1947 did not mark a basic change in her relations with the advanced capitalist countries. It can be argued that the Indian National Congress led by Nehru *could have* taken a decisive step towards socialism in 1947; but this step was not after all taken. Indian capitalists emerged from the Second World War as a class with a far larger control over the existing means of production in the country. But they emerged also with a far lesser inhibition against collaboration with foreign firms; the entry of foreign capital was welcomed by them. Their class interests overcame their patriotic misgivings about domination by foreign capitalists, and no major conflict between the bigger Indian capitalists and foreign capitalists from advanced capitalist countries has surfaced up till now.<sup>38</sup>

After a few years of dithering the Government of India adopted a policy of encouraging private enterprise with all the means at its command. The main content of "planning" in India was increased Government expenditure and manipulation of an apparatus of control built up since the days of the Second World War for guaranteeing domestic markets for Indian manufacturers (and Indian branches of subsidiaries of foreign firms). The Government started its own manufacturing activities only in fields which were considered too risky by private enterprise, or which demanded larger volumes of capital than the private capitalists could mobilise. Private entrepreneurs—however much they might grumble or protest against "creeping socialism"—interpreted the Government's actions correctly, and invested massively (by comparison with past standards), if not always in socially beneficial activities.

If these increased doses of private investment and government expenditure had been accompanied by a shaking of the foundations of precapitalist structures surviving in India, it is possible that India would have escaped the public humiliation of having to

borrow to feed her millions and to carry on her rather unambitious development effort. But in the absence of a drastic increase in saving, efficiency of operation, or physical effort, India soon ran into serious balance of payments difficulties. The accumulated foreign exchange reserves were practically exhausted by 1957, and since then India has depended on loans from advanced capitalist and Soviet-bloc countries for meeting her persistent deficits in foreign trade accounts; many public declarations of intent notwithstanding, these deficits have tended to increase rather than diminish over time.<sup>39</sup>

The result of these deficits has been a steady erosion of India's bargaining strength vis-a-vis the debtor countries and international financial agencies, which has been reflected in unfavourable terms of lending, and in direct or indirect pressure on India's economic policy exerted by the creditor countries, and the international agencies. Over time, the proportion of grants to the total public foreign "aid" has declined, and the proportion of India's export earnings pre-empted for debt repayment and ser-

vice obligations has increased. Furthermore, the utility of foreign loans to India has been diminished by various arrangements for tying aid to specific projects, to donor countries and to technical or managerial assistance from donor countries. India's economic policy has been periodically vetted by various IMF and World Bank missions, and by other Wise Men from the West. Under pressure from the U.S. government and U.S. controlled international agencies, the Government of India has relaxed many of the controls on foreign investment. In June 1966, a reluctant Government of India was more or less forced to devalue the rupee by American and World Bank "persuasion".<sup>40</sup> Such pressures or "persuasive" arguments have been often welcome to top Indian capitalists who have profited by the leaders' insistence on letting private enterprise have fuller play.

#### Soviet Bloc Aid

Soviet bloc assistance has played a countervailing role and strengthened India's bargaining position vis-a-vis the advanced capitalist countries. The

Soviet Union and her allies have provided assistance for the development of key sectors such as heavy engineering, or machinery construction, for which Western assistance was not either available at all or available only on extremely unfavourable terms. The financial terms of Soviet assistance have been much better than the terms of Western did, from India's point of view. The Soviet Union has also been willing to provide generous training facilities to Indians. Finally, through bilateral trade arrangements and through willingness to accept payment in rupees, East European countries have considerably lightened India's foreign exchange cost of repayment of foreign loans.

But Soviet assistance has been only a fraction—usually not more than a fifth—of the total foreign assistance extended to India. It has also not been available, and it is not likely to be available, in one of the crucial areas where India's performance has been poor, that is, in the field of food supply. Finally, in many fields of industry, the techniques available from the Soviet bloc countries are obsolete

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compared with the techniques that can be imported from advanced capitalist countries : if India is to develop sophisticated manufactures for the purpose of export, she cannot rely solely on Soviet bloc countries for the import of advanced technology.

India's increased dependence on foreign assistance for the supply of essential consumer and capital goods is connected intimately with her failure in the field of domestic economic policy. While during the Second Five Year Plan period, there was an apparent redirection in the public investment strategy of the Government of India towards the development of heavy industries, this was not matched by any effective measures to increase the rate of savings of the economy. Nor did the Government succeed in controlling total private consumer expenditure or its allocation between major types of consumer goods. Total demand in the economy and its division between major sectors were more dependent on private actions than on public intentions. The Government succeeded neither in rousing the enthusiasm of ordinary people for growth and development nor in persuading the capitalists to save substantially larger fractions of their increased income. Ordinary people remained illiterate, technologically backward and without much of a motivation for a drive towards the betterment of their economic performance.<sup>41</sup>

One of the major reasons for India's dependence on foreign aid has been her inability to raise agricultural production at such a rate that she becomes more or less self-sufficient in the production of agricultural commodities, including foodgrains. The sluggishness of Indian agricultural growth has not been due simply to the lack of new inputs or information, or due to the lack of proper incentives to farmers, although these did play an important part in the late 1950s, and still continue to play a part—though a less important one. One basic difficulty has been that Indian farmers have not been acting within a purely competitive environ-

ment. The richer farmers, many of whom belong to old zamindar families or, prosperous professional or business families, have been able to act as monopsonists within the village, and have been cushioned against the consequences of economic changes by this "monopolistic slack." The poorer farmers have been deprived of the resources which they might have drawn on in a more competitive environment, and the landless labourers have been practically without any defence against the exploitation by the more substantial landowners. Furthermore, the feeble moves towards co-operation or communal effort have been thwarted by the power and greed of the richer groups, so that

Industrywise distribution of companies with Technical collaboration by date of incorporation

	Machinery and Machine tools :		Chemicals and allied products :	
	1948-55	1956-64	1948-55	1956-64
(1) Subsidiaries of foreign companies	1	14	5	11
(2) Companies with minority foreign capital participation	3	37	12	31
(3) Companies which have only technical collaboration arrangements with foreign companies	9	23	4	15

the abundant source of energy in underemployed rural labour has not been tapped. In this environment, the rapid enrichment of some of the more wealthy landowners through government subsidies and through the use of new varieties of seeds and technology to the utter neglect of their social or ecological consequences, has caused widespread rural unrest, and has arrested the spread of the admittedly patchy "green revolution."<sup>42</sup>

Suppose, however, that in spite of all these obstacles, the "Green Revolution" does lift Indian agriculture from stagnation, that a higher rate of saving and a higher degree of efficiency enable India to export more<sup>43</sup> and import less (in comparison with her national income) : will India cease to be an outer satellite in the system of dependent capitalism? In order to answer this question we look

at the role of large international corporations in India and at the evolving relations between India and other underdeveloped countries of Africa and Asia.

Looking at the growing sectors of Indian manufacturing, we find that the participation of foreign firms in such sectors has grown rather than diminished over time. This is particularly true of machinery and machine tools, drugs, fertilizers and petrochemical industries.

A survey of foreign collaboration agreements carried out by the Reserve Bank of India,<sup>44</sup> yielded the following information :

During the course of the same survey the following data were col-

lected regarding the payments of dividends, royalties etc. to foreign companies only by all companies (including public sector corporations but excluding departmental undertakings and excluding branches of foreign companies) with foreign collaboration agreements :<sup>45</sup>

Total dividends, royalties and other technical collaboration remittances (Rs crores)

1956-57	13.8
1957-58	13.5
1958-59	14.0
1959-60	19.3
1960-61	24.3
1961-62	34.0
1962-63	38.2
1963-64	36.2
1964-65	44.9
1965-66	44.7
1966-67	62.6

It should be noticed that although 1966-67 was a year of recession for Indian industry as a whole, the payments to foreign companies on account of dividends, etc. increased by a substantial margin in that year. This is not just because of the usual jitteriness of foreign firms during acute recessions and balance of payments difficulties. Foreign firms have tended to be uniformly more profitable than Indian joint-stock companies in recent periods, and have improved their performance, particularly in industries like drugs and chemicals, during the recessionary period of 1966-68.<sup>46</sup>

India has received a modestly swelling stream of private foreign capital from abroad in recent years, as is shown by the following figures.<sup>47</sup>

Long-term Foreign Business Investments from abroad into the Indian Private Sector (Rs crores)

	Gross Inflow	Net Inflow
1963-64	108.9	81.2
1964-65	141.2	104.4
1965-66	118.9	73.8
1966-67	232.1	160.7

(The net inflow is almost certainly exaggerated by the overvaluation of foreign capital and undervaluation of the remittances from India.)

The price of this foreign investment has not only been a high rate of profit (13-14 per cent on an average) realised by branches or subsidiaries of foreign firms but also a steady relaxation of controls over repatriation of capital, terms of foreign participation in Indian ventures, effective relaxation of controls over dividend rates and other types of payments, imposition of restrictions by foreign firms over exports from India, and so on. (Not only private, but also state-owned, enterprises have accepted such restrictions). Sometimes, although there is a declared government policy against allowing foreign firms or big business houses in India to act in certain ways, actual decisions are taken in flat contradiction of such declared policies. This is best illustrated in the case of the

decision of the government to license a fertilizer plant to be put up in Goa by the Birlas. In this case the government has not only acted against the declared policy of not allowing the large industrial houses to further increase their controls over key industrial fields, but it has also allowed foreigners (the U.S. Steel, International Finance Corporation and other foreign banks) to acquire 65 per cent of the equity holding of the company;<sup>48</sup> this last decision is against the declared policy of the government of not allowing foreign capital to acquire the majority of the shares in joint ventures.

#### Restrictive Clauses

Further, the government has had to sanction foreign collaboration agreements with restrictive clauses between private Indian companies and their foreign patrons. It has itself accepted restrictive clauses in the collaboration agreements between public sector enterprises and their foreign collaborators. Thus in the survey of foreign collaboration agreements carried out by the Reserve Bank of India, it was found that out of 70 foreign collaboration agreements entered into by government companies, 38 had restrictive clauses, and of these again, 35 were restrictions related to exports.<sup>49</sup> The government is now engaged in seeking foreign collaborators in a large number of public sector enterprises, particularly in the petrochemicals field.

If India remains primarily a private enterprise economy, with or without a substantial public sector, then her gains or losses from international economic relations will be mainly dependent on the performance of her industrial corporations vis-a-vis foreign international corporations. If Indian industrial corporations are to do well in the world trade in manufactures, they should be able to generate a high rate of technical progress either through research carried out in India or through an efficient exploitation of techniques developed in other countries. India's present social structure and its associated

characteristics—a low rate of literacy, a hierarchical system of transmission of information, low degree of social mobility—are inimical to the generation of new techniques.

In order that Indian entrepreneurs might instead import new techniques from abroad (by buying up or leasing patents or getting licences for the use of know-how) and exploit them courageously, the economy must grow quickly, the entrepreneurs should look towards foreign markets whenever home demand tends to falter and try to keep the supply lines for these markets clear even in the face of mounting home demand for exportables, and should save and invest at high rates so that they are not held back by frequent shortages of capacity.<sup>50</sup> All these good traits are conspicuously missing from the performance of the Indian economy since independence. Thus, there is every reason to believe that Indian firms will remain as dependent as ever on foreign firms for their technology, and for the development of their capital stock and their markets, particularly in the field of sophisticated manufactures. This dependence will, of course, be all the more abject if India also suffers from recurring balance of payments deficits.

The lines of escape from this labyrinth which suggest themselves all prove to be of little use. First is the route of escape through the fraternal help of Soviet-bloc countries. This help cannot in the long run put the Indian economy on a self-reliant path, because it cannot correct the growth-arresting behaviour of the Indian society: neither literacy, nor diffusion of knowledge, nor the performance of bureaucracy, nor the rate of saving and investment can be altered by Soviet bloc assistance, unless the Soviet authorities start out to engineer a social revolution in India. This last alternative is ruled out both by the unwillingness of the Soviet government to engage in such a dangerous game, and by the improbability of its success were they fool-hardy enough to try it. There is another weighty reason why Soviet assistance cannot

rescue Indian capitalism from dominance by international finance (supported by international managerial and technocratic) capital. The Soviet bloc countries themselves have failed to evolve a set of socialist rules of international trade, and they find the restrictions imposed by bilateral trade agreements and other bureaucratic arrangements increasingly irksome.<sup>51</sup> In consonance with the dominance of managerial cadres in the guidance of these economies, their foreign economic relations are converging more and more to the pattern set by Western capitalist nations. The Soviet Union provides the leadership in this process of "rationalisation" of their international economic relations, by bypassing bilateral arrangements in favour of various arbitrage operations, and by setting up international corporations (including banking and trading corporations), by herself or in co-operation with companies based in other advanced or backward capitalist countries.\* She has now started to use all the instruments usually wielded by international corporations based in advanced capitalist countries to further her own economic interests in competition with the latter and to the detriment of the economic independence of the backward capitalist countries she helps.<sup>52</sup> In this situation, the relation of Indian private firms (or public sector enterprises) with international corporations or departmental agencies based in Soviet-bloc countries will approximate more and more to the pattern of relations between firms of less developed and more developed capitalist countries.

### Second Line of Defence

The second line of defence of Indian firms against domination by international corporations based in advanced capitalist countries that might be suggested is for Indian firms to operate in countries which are even

\*There have already been allegations that bilateral trade agreements have been used by Soviet bloc countries to re-sell Indian products abroad, thus deposing Indian export prices.

less developed industrially than India, or which are too small to develop manufacturing facilities of every kind. This could be accompanied by an expansion of India's exports to these less advanced countries. In the recent past, India's exports to the less developed countries of Africa and Asia have expanded faster than her exports to other countries. She has also entered into agreements with countries like Iran and Mauritius for joint ventures in those countries. The Birlas are stated to have put up plants in several countries of Africa and Asia.<sup>53</sup>

But these developments have been very limited and they do not promise to be either far-reaching or long-lasting. In the first place, these less developed countries are eager to develop facilities of manufacture in precisely the fields in which India at present enjoys an advantage. In order to be able to continue as foreign investors in these ventures, at least two conditions must be satisfied: India should be able to supply technology and managerial skill which is not noticeably inferior to what is available from more advanced countries. Secondly, India must have the capital to export in right quantities. India does at the moment enjoy an export surplus with several of these less advanced or smaller countries. This would have been an advantage if the two conditions mentioned above had been satisfied. But as things are developing, India's balance of payments deficit with more advanced countries is far larger than her balance of payments surplus with the less developed countries; hence she cannot afford to convert her export surpluses with these less developed (or smaller) countries into foreign investments. Even if she were prepared to do so, the technology she would be able to provide would be unlikely to meet the requirements of her trade partners in all fields.

India's ability to pursue such schemes of foreign investment in Asian and African countries is further constricted by her weak bargaining strength in relation to her creditors,

and by the re-emergence of Japan as a dominant economic (and political) power in Asia. The World Bank has already frowned publicly on Indian joint ventures abroad,<sup>54</sup> and other foreign creditors are likely to be even less benign about India's foreign investment projects whenever they encroach on their preserves. Even if the American and West European powers were inclined to encourage India's sub-imperial ambitions in Asia as a measure of defence of the "free world" in the East, Japan has emerged effectively to crush all such ambitions. Japan's gross national product is now only second to that of the USA among the advanced capitalist countries; her national income is expanding at the fantastic rate of more than 10 per cent per year, and her foreign trade is expanding even faster. She has become either the largest or the second largest source of imports or destination of exports for Burma, Iran, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Taiwan, South Vietnam, South Korea and Australia.<sup>55</sup> Japan enjoys an export surplus with many of these countries but she is prepared to help her debtors with massive increases of foreign "aid" through the Asian Development Bank, through private investment in those countries, and through bilateral government agreements, and she is also now prepared to shoulder "political responsibility"<sup>(56)</sup> to match her economic power. The Asian Development Bank is specifically designed as a vehicle for the realisation of Japan's aims of dominating the field of aid to the smaller Asian countries.<sup>(57)</sup> Although India is the second largest contributor to the funds of this Bank, she has not been able to take a leading part in its affairs. Japan has already displaced India as one of the five countries with a right to nominate an executive director of the IMF, and India will now have to put her candidate to the electoral test like the other ordinary members of the IMF.

If India's performance in the economic field continues to be as disappointing as it was in the 1960's,

her ability to exploit smaller or less developed countries will be even further impaired. Countries like Malaysia, Thailand, Iran or Taiwan, with faster rates of growth than India and with higher initial incomes per capita, will demand more and more sophisticated consumer goods (and produced goods) and will turn to countries like the USA, Japan, Germany or Italy which are able to lead the capitalist world in the development of new commodities and techniques. Thus India will lose further instead of doing better in these countries, if the present trends continue.

V

India can escape her fate of helotry to the advanced capitalist countries by effecting a thorough-going socialist revolution and shooting out of the capitalist orbit. Otherwise, the economic dominance of advanced capitalist countries, spearheaded by large international corporations, over

India's economic life is likely to grow rather than decline. Large (and small) Indian business houses will be compelled to collaborate with these international corporations for access to advanced technology, modern management and growing markets. These international corporations are "international" only as regards their field of operation; most of the giant international corporations are controlled firmly by their home boards, and the degree of centralisation of management has increased rather than diminished in recent years.<sup>(58)</sup>

Paradoxically enough, a limited degree of success of the Indian economy in freeing itself from the burden of official foreign debt is likely to lead to a greater degree of thralldom of modern Indian industry to international business houses. As the pressure on balance of payments eases, there will be increasing pressure on the Government both from domestic and foreign business houses to

lift the controls on the inflow or outflow of funds into or from India, and the attractiveness of India as a field for investment by foreign firms will also increase. In the "natural" course of things, the international business corporations will acquire a larger and larger share of Indian industry, because of their superior technology, superior management methods and above all, because of immense financial superiority. The alternative to that development, within the present socio-political system, is an economy saddled with bureaucratic controls at every stage; the only thing that can be said in favour of such an economy is perhaps that it will not be as efficient in oppressing the people as the American ideal of a progressive, free enterprise economy could be.

<sup>1</sup> Bombay, 1949.

<sup>2</sup> R. P. Dutt, op. cit., p. 108.

<sup>3</sup> J. A. Schumpeter: *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (London, 1966), Chapter VII.

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<sup>4</sup> Sec. C. H. Wilson: "The Economic Decline of the Netherlands" in E. M. Cadus-Wilson (ed): *Essays in Economic History*. I (London, 1963), pp. 254-269; and *Idem: England's Apprenticeship, 1603-1763* (London, 1965).

<sup>5</sup> L. H. Jenks: *The Migration of British Capital to 1875* (first published in 1927; reprinted, London, 1963), p. 206.

<sup>6</sup> Maurice Dobb in Chapter Five of his *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* (London, 1963) discusses the mercantilist policies that were pursued by capitalist countries during the period of primitive accumulation.

<sup>7</sup> There are difference of opinion among economic historians about the importance of India as a source of capital for Britain during the period of the Industrial Revolution. But there is general agreement that profits of foreign "trade" with India and with other British colonies were one of the most significant sources of capital and that expanding trade in tropical produce was one of the major dynamic forces propelling economic growth. See in this connection P. Deane and W. A. Cole: *British Economic Growth 1688-1959* (Second Edition, Cambridge, 1967), Table 22 P. Deane: *The First Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge, 1965) Chapter 4; and E. Hobsbawm: *Industry and Empire* (London, 1968). It appears from Table 22 in Deane and

Cole, op. cit., that throughout the period from 1772-73 to 1797-98, Britain had a huge import surplus with East India: this is what one would expect when exploitation took the form of unrequited imports.

<sup>8</sup> See P. J. Thomas: *Mercantilism and East India Trade* (London, 1926; reprinted, London, 1968), Chapters III and V-VIII and R. C. Dutt: *The Economic History of India under Early British Rule* (London, 1906), Chapter XIV.

<sup>9</sup> See in this connection, J. G. Bcrpujari: *The British Impact on the Indian Cotton Textile Industry 1757-1865* (Ph.D. Thesis submitted to the University of Cambridge, 1969).

<sup>10</sup> Charles Wilson: *England's Apprenticeship*, p. X

<sup>11</sup> Sabyasachi Bhattacharya: "Laissez Faire in India", *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, II (i), January 1965.

<sup>12</sup> K. Marx: "The British Rule in India", written in June 10, 1853 printed in the *New York Daily Tribune of June 25, 1853*, reprinted in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: *On Colonialism* (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, ed.), p. 33.

<sup>13</sup> "More than one-third of the capital invested in Indian railways down to the early eighties was spent in England for railway iron and the cost of its importation to the East. The importation of coal from England and the building and operation of railways with staffs which were English from foremen up and who had to be paid according to English standards, diminished further the benefits which could accrue to Indians from railways." Jenks: *The Migration of British Capital to 1875*, pp. 227-28.

<sup>14</sup> S. B. Saul: "The Engineering Industry" in D. H. Aldcroft (ed.): *The Development of British Industry and Foreign Competition, 1875-1914* (London, 1968).

<sup>15</sup> Jenks summarises: 'Again the remittance of capital, for railways in India did not take the form of consumers goods. It did not follow upon or manifested rise in the standard of living. And it did not call to life in India a vigorous industry to provide structural

materials." Jenks, op. cit., p. 227.

<sup>16</sup> E. M. Whitcombe: *Agrarian Conditions in North West Provinces and Oudh, 1860-1900* (Ph.D., thesis, London University, 1968.)

<sup>17</sup> Charles Wilson: "Economic Conditions" in the *New Cambridge Modern History*, XI *Material Progress and World-Wide Problems: 1870-1888*, edited by F. H. Hinsley (Cambridge, 1967), p. 55.

<sup>18</sup> S. B. Saul: *Studies in British Overseas Trade* (Liverpool University Press, 1960), Chapters III and IV.

<sup>19</sup> A. H. Imlah: *Economic Elements in the Pax Britannica* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1958).

<sup>20</sup> See Brinley Thomas: "The Historical Record of Capital Movements to 1913" and Matthew Simon: "The Pattern of New British Portfolio Investment 1865-1914" in J. H. Adler (ed). *Capital Movements and Economic Development* (London, 1967), pp. 3-32, and 33-60 respectively.

<sup>21</sup> See in this connection, C. K. Hobson: *The Export of Capital* (London, 1914); pp. XIV-XV and Brinley Thomas: "Migration and International Investment" in B. Thomas (ed): *Economics of International Migration* (London, 1958), pp. 3-16.

<sup>22</sup> See for example H. G. J. Aitken: *The State and Economic Growth*. (New York, 1959).

<sup>23</sup> D. T. Chadwick: "The Trade of India with Russia, France and Italy," *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, LXVI, No. 3 397, December 28, 1917, p. 97.

<sup>24</sup> For a summary of the controversy, see Bipan Chandra: *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India* (New Delhi, 1966), Chapter XIII, "The Drain", pp. 636-708. For Keynes' view see his review of Morrison's *Economic Transition in India* (London, 1911) in *Economic Journal*, September 1911, pp. 426-31.

<sup>25</sup> From the summary account given by Bipan Chandra it appears that Indian nationalists stressed the drain of investible capital through remittances of British citizens from India and official remittances for Home Charges, and talked about the compulsory sale of Indian exports so as to lead to fluctu-

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tuations in terms of trade, but they did not question the whole framework of British economic policy leading to the thwarting of indigenous entrepreneurship, the spread of knowledge and technical inventions of all kinds.

<sup>26</sup> For an exception, see Daniel Thorner: "Employee-labour Relations in Indian Agriculture" in Daniel and Alice Thorner: *Land and Labour in India* (Bombay, 1962).

<sup>27</sup> See Indian Tariff Board: *Oral Evidence on the Sugar Industry*, Vol. IV (Delhi, 1938), p. 126.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. the description of how important Chettiar families changed over from a system of individual ownership to one of joint-family ownership of property in Shoji I to: "A Note on the 'Business Combine' in India." *The Developing Economies* (Tokyo), IV (3), 1966.

<sup>29</sup> Dr. Elizabeth Whitcombe in the thesis cited earlier has discussed many forms of such deviations both in the market for labour and in the market for land in the context of Uttar Pradesh in the nineteenth century.

<sup>30</sup> Barrington Moore, Jr.: *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (London, 1967).

<sup>31</sup> See R. Triffin: "The Myth and Realities of the Scalled Gold Standard", in R. N. Cooper (editor): *International Finance* (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1969), pp. 38-61.

<sup>32</sup> See E. M. Whitcombe, *op. cit.*, Chapters IV, V and VI for a thorough discussion of how the British legal system introduced its own distortions into the prevailing social conditions. Dr. Whitcombe stresses that the unimpeded working of the law of equity often came into conflict with the political desideratum of preserving the land-owning classes from the consequences of their own extravagance, mismanagement of estates, and the working of the new laws relating to indebtedness. Very often the estates were sold up under the laws of debt and then restored to the previous owners through the working of Courts of Wards and other protective devices set up by the British Administrators. For an extremely illuminating

comparison of the interaction of legal and economic factors in Britain and Ireland (whose position in many respects resembled India's) see E. Havelly: *England in 1815* (London, 1960), pp. 205-55.

<sup>33</sup> See League of Nations (Ragnar Nurkse and W. A. Brown, Jr.): *International Currency Experience* (1944); and R. Triffin: "The Thrust of History in International Monetary Reform", *Foreign Affairs*, 47(3), April 1969, pp. 477-92.

<sup>34</sup> See Willian Woodruff: *The Impact of Western Man* (London, 1966), Chapter IV and Tables IV/1 to IV/4.

<sup>35</sup> On the growth of private investment in India, see my forthcoming book, *A Study of Private Investment in India and Pakistan 1900-1939* (to be published by the Cambridge University Press), Chapter 3.

<sup>36</sup> See A. E. Khan: *Great Britain in the World Economy*, New York (1946), Chapters XI—XV.

<sup>37</sup> On foreign, mainly British, investments in India during the interwar period, see A. K. Banerjee: *India's Balance of Payments* (Bombay, 1963), Chapters 5 and 6.

<sup>38</sup> See Michael Kidron: *Foreign Investments in India* (London 1965), Chapters I and IV.

<sup>39</sup> I have examined the problems connected with inflows of foreign capital into India in greater detail in my paper, "Aid Models and Inflows of Foreign Aid," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Annual Number 1970 (Vol. V, Nos 3,4 and 5), pp. 223-34.

<sup>40</sup> Kuldip Nayar, who was at the time Information Officer of the Prime Minister of India, documents this open secret in *Between the Lines* (Allied Publishers, Bombay and Calcutta, 1969), Chapter III. While Indian officials have alleged that there was an implicit promise that American aid would flow again if the rupee were devalued, American officials have denied this. Understandably, Indian politicians have not been keen to air their grievances in public.

<sup>41</sup> The basic reasons for the failure of the Mahalanobis strategy in India have been analysed in my paper, "Longterm Constraints on India's In-

dustrial Growth 1951-68," presented at the International Economic Association Conference on Economic Development in South Asia held at Kandy (Ceylon from June 1 to June 12, 1969).

<sup>42</sup> For discussion of the factors operating against the spread of the "Green Revolution" and its likely effects in terms of social and political disparities between rich and poor farmers, see *Report of the Agricultural Prices Commission on Price Policy for Kharif Cereals for the 1968-69 Season* (New Delhi, September 1968), pp. 3-5; Clifton R. Wharton, Jr.: "The Green Revolution: Cornucopia or Pandora's Box?" *Foreign Affairs*, 47(3), April 1969, pp. 464-76; and W. Ladejinsky: "Green Revolution in Bihar, the Kosi Area: A Field Trip," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Review of Agriculture, September, 1969, pp. A-147-A-162.

<sup>43</sup> As a result mainly of the industrial recession and partly of the export promotion measures taken after devaluation Indian exports rose by 13.5 per cent in 1968-69 over 1967-68 (the export earnings in 1967-68 in terms of foreign exchange were only marginally higher than the annual average recorded during the Third Five Year Plan period). However, in 1969-70 the rate of growth of exports was very small, falling to 1.5 per cent per annum or less. See Government of India: *Economic Survey 1969-70* (Delhi, 1970), pp. 46-51; *Economic Times*, March 18 and March 20, 1970.

<sup>44</sup> *Foreign Collaboration in Indian Industry: Survey Report* (Reserve Bank of India, Bombay, 1968).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>46</sup> "Finance of Branches of Foreign Companies and Foreign Controlled Rupee Companies, 1963-64," *Reserve Bank of India Bulletin*, July 1966, pp. 732-46; "Finances of Branches of Foreign Companies and Foreign-Controlled Rupee Companies: 1965-66", *Reserve Bank of India Bulletin*, June 1968, pp. 737-53.

<sup>47</sup> India's International Investment Position in 1965-66 and 1966-67", *Reserve Bank of India Bulletin*, August

1969 (pp. 1121-61), Table 3 (p. 1131).

<sup>48</sup>See *The Statesman* (Calcutta), January 2, 1970

<sup>49</sup>*Foreign Collaboration in Indian Industry*, p. 97.

<sup>50</sup>Some of the factors governing the rates of growth of modern industrial economies and their export markets are brought out in N. Kaldor: *Causes of the slow Rate of Economic Growth of the United Kingdom* (An Inaugural Lecture) (Cambridge University Press, 1966); and R. Vernon: "International Investment and International Trade in the Product Cycle."

*Quarterly Journal of Economics*, LXXX (2), May 1966, pp. 190-207.

<sup>51</sup>Yugoslavia was the first East European country to walk out of rupee trade arrangements with India, insisting on payments in hard currency in future. *Economic Times*, March 7, 1970.

<sup>52</sup>See Marshall I. Goldman: "The East Reaches for Markets." *Foreign Affairs*, 47 (4), July 1969, pp. 721-34.

<sup>53</sup>*Economic Times*, February 20, 1970.

<sup>54</sup>*Economic Times*, June 26 and 27, 1969.

<sup>55</sup>See U. N. *Economic Survey of Asia and the Far East 1968* (Bangkok 1969), "Asian Economic Statistics," Table 20.

<sup>56</sup>See Kiichi Aichi (Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs): "Japan's Legacy and Destiny of change, *Foreign Affairs*, 48 (1), October, 1969, pp. 21-38. See also *Economic Times* April 17, 1969 ("Japan offers to double aid to ECAFE countries") and March 29, 1970 ("Japan's bid to become top aid-giver").

<sup>57</sup>See the articles by T. Edwin on the Asian Development Bank in the *Economic Times*, April 18 and April 20, 1969.

<sup>58</sup>See Raymond Vernon: "Economic Sovereignty at Bay," *Foreign Affairs* 47(1), October 1969, pp. 110-12.

(This paper was read at the Seminar on Historical Models in the study of Tradition and Change held at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study Simla, in October, 1969.

# Lenin And His Biographer

M. S. PRABHAKAR

**T**HE book\* is slight; it reads easily, and one can read it at a stretch. The style too is easy and natural, so deceptively effortless that one has to remind oneself consciously that the 'book' is only a very small part of a projected biography of Lenin, that the deceptive ease of the style and the natural mastery over the subject are the result of a whole lifetime's devotion to the study of Lenin's personality, career, writings, in fact, the result of a whole lifetime devoted to the study of the Russian Revolution. Deutscher, of course, can afford to carry his learning lightly, unlike many others who have to constantly provide evidence of their learning.

One is also deeply saddened as one reads this vivid portrait of Lenin's childhood, for one realises that the completed work would have been a fitting finale to Deutscher's own career as a historian of the Russian Revolution. Deutscher has ironically recalled elsewhere that during Khrushchev's trip to the USA, the good Americans made the profoundly shocking discovery that the Russians could be 'human'. "Just like us!" some of them are reported to have exclaimed, as the First Secretary of the CPSU went about prodding pigs and cows and Iowa farmers in the belly. Lenin, of course, has always been considered the most evil among all those evil men who continuously plotted mischief; so I can't imagine that this gentle, civilized writing would impress the good Americans of the essential humanity of Lenin, as the antics of Khrushchev could. But let me not cavil at the good Americans in their joyful discovery that 'the Russians too are human'. Why, even the Chinese seem human now,

and who knows, in course of time, they might come to think of Indians and Pakistanis too as human.

But to return to Deutscher, and to *Lenin's Childhood*. The work, which Tamara Deutscher describes as "just one fragment, one unfinished chapter" of the work her husband had passionately desired to complete, despite its fragmentary nature, can still be studied for the portrait it presents of Lenin as a child and an adolescent, of his brother Alexander, of his parents, and of the different social backgrounds from which Lenin's parents came. Lenin's paternal grandfather had a plausible Tartar of Kalmuk racial origin; he acquired a Russian identity and membership of the Greek Orthodox Church possibly late in his life. Socially, Nikoloi Ulyanov clearly seems to have emerged only late in his life from his position as one of the large mass of anonymous and submerged Russian peasantry. Even when Deutscher speculates on some aspects of the origin of the Ulyanovs, there is always a more than convincing ground for such speculation. The interesting fact that emerges out of Deutscher's sketch of the families of Lenin's parents is that Lenin's father married above him, and as he raised a family, practically became a member of his wife's family, and allowed his plebian paternal connections to lapse. But Ilya Nikolaevich was no 'climber'; on the contrary, he represented some of the best elements of 19th century liberal tradition in Russia. Deutscher notes that the parents of Lenin were derived from two of the most resilient Russian classes; the peasantry and the intelligentsia.

The most interesting part of this fragment is the portrait of Alexander Ulyanov, and the contrast the grave, thoughtful Sasha provides to the irrepressible and the bumptious personality that the future revolu-

## \*Lenin's Childhood

By Isaac Deutscher

Oxford University Press, London, 1970. Price £1.25.

SEPTEMBER 25, 1971

tionary revealed as an adolescent. The relationship between the two brothers was not demonstrably close; they could even be described as having been slightly distant during the summer of 1886, when Sasha was undergoing rapid intellectual transformation, even while simultaneously allowing himself to be more and more involved in a course of action which was to culminate in the abortive attempt on the Tsar's life in 1887. But as Deutscher presents it, Alexander exercised profound influence on the growth of Volodya's own revolutionary consciousness; the personal integrity and commitment of his brother no doubt deeply moved Vladimir; but the very naivete of the conspirators, and their almost predestined failure must also have taught a lesson to the future revolutionary, on the kind of actions that one should avoid. Alexander's heroic, if futile attempt to cure Russia of her ills by assassinating the Tsar could only be taken as a salutary example, an instance of rage gone astray. The younger brother sat for his matriculation examinations in the days during and following Alexander's trial; he wrote his mathematical papers on the day Alexander was hanged, finishing them well within the time allowed to answer the questions. It was certainly not indifference or callousness to his brother's fate that made him go through his examinations even as his brother was being hanged. It rather showed as clearly as possible the character and temper of the future revolutionary. A most profound kind of emotional attachment to Alexander was accompanied by an equally strong ability to control those emotions. The Ulyanovs, while being a very close family, evidently were not demonstrative in their affections. But not all the self-control could hide the fact that the younger brother was moved beyond measure by the example of Alexander's life and death: all the bumptiousness, the aggressive showmanship of Volodya were gone. His life acquired a new direction, his reading and thought be-

came consciously revolutionary. As Deutscher puts it, "only under the shock of Alexander's fate did the world of Volodya's childhood and adolescence collapse." The boy of sixteen violently and personally came into contact with reality. Vladimir's days of innocence were very few; his development as a revolutionary started early, very early, and almost certainly under the impact of the sudden and violent end of Alexander.

#### Deutscher As Historian

One is deeply saddened as one reads this little volume, for the magnificent subject had a magnificent historian and biographer, perhaps the only one who could have done full justice to his subject. Deutscher 'lived' with Lenin all through his life; even when he was writing about Stalin and Trotsky, in those passages of these works where he wrote on Lenin, one feels that he was writing freely, under no strain. Writing about Stalin or Trotsky, he had to be continuously on guard against possible subjective prejudices, which he honestly and repeatedly confessed to. Despite the reasons he had to cherish strong antipathy to Stalin, the Deutscher portrait is perhaps the most objective study of Stalin's life and achievement that has yet appeared. With his portrait of Trotsky, he achieved an even more difficult task: to be able to present the failings, miscalculations and limitations of one whom he felt sympathetic to. At a minor level, the same is true of another figure; that of Khrushchev who is the subject of a few occasional essays, an antipathy to whom Deutscher never hides, even as he presents a fair and objective assessment of his personality and achievement.

Of the two major completed biographical portraits, that of Stalin is certainly the more impressive achievement. It was almost as if the historian was steeling against himself in attempting an objective assessment. One can only speculate on the masterpiece that it would certainly have been, had Deutscher been able to complete his Lenin. For, writing

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about Lenin, there would have been no need for him to continuously subject himself to a lot of silent heart-searching; there would have been no need to bend over backwards to be fair; nor would have been any need to guard himself against uncritical adulatory outbursts, (as he had to, when he wrote on Trotsky, against allowing the elements of Trotsky's personal and political tragedy to influence an objective assessment of his achievements as well as failures.) Self-consciousness, either way, would not have been operating when he was writing Lenin's biography. Lenin's was a personality which a Marxist historian like Deutscher could (almost) unreservedly admire; but at the same time, the very character of the hero made it impossible to indulge in meaningless adulatory prose, so that the necessary correct balance, so essential in historical writing, was implied in the very personality and the achievement of the protagonist. With Trotsky and Stalin, the historian had to struggle to achieve this balance; but with Lenin, the uninhibited personal admiration for the hero would have necessarily been 'corrected' by the complexity of his achievement, so that any composite portrait of Lenin, dialectically speaking, *had* to be balanced. Writing about Lenin, one could neither be blindly adulatory (as any partisan biographer of Trotsky can be, and often is), nor be blindly denunciatory (as any hostile biographer of Stalin can be, and often is). The subject and the biographer suited each other so well; and it has been a tremendous loss to historical writing and Marxist analysis that Deutscher did not live to complete a task, which he so passionately wanted to complete, and which perhaps only he could have done full justice to.

#### No Kremlinologist

When one reads Deutscher, one is always conscious of the historian himself, even when he is writing about immensely more important figures and events. It is not that he intrudes a personal note; on the contrary, un-

like many 'kremlinologists' (among which tribe he never allowed himself to be included), he is intensely reticent about himself, and his personal involvement in quite an eventful period of European history of our times. The East European intellectual tradition, transplanted in the liberal respectability of middle-class England, might have easily turned crankish, individualist, Slavophile and Russophobe (like Conrad); it might even have easily allowed itself to be swamped by a kind of empty Englishness, with highly stylized continental mannerisms always good enough for a laugh. Deutscher was able to successfully fuse in himself the best elements of both the East European and the English intellectual traditions. More important, he was able to maintain his commitment to Marxism as an intellectual and social discipline, and still survive and even mildly prosper amidst respectable, staid English surroundings. Perhaps, as a mere intellectual, (forced to be 'mere', by political circumstances) he had no choice. But all honour is due to Deutscher that he did not seek to exploit his situation by turning into a 'kremlinologist'. Having far more valid reasons to turn against the Soviet Union under Stalin than many other later-day anti-Stalinists, he nonetheless retained his capacity for objectivity and balance even while writing on specific political questions wherein his personal involvement was undoubtedly deep. In this connection, one is yet to come across a more convincing rejection of professional anti-communist writing than what is presented in his essay on the young men who complained that their god had failed them. The most remarkable aspect of that brief essay, of course is that it was written by one who had far more legitimate grounds to lodge a similar complaint, but who had also truly assimilated his Marxism, enough to realize that one does not whine at individual distortions of a historical process, one who realizes that a revolution cannot be invalidated on grounds of personal

frustration. The 'kremlinologist' is indeed a strange breed, manifesting himself in a variety of ways. At the elementary level, he could be a personal victim of Stalinism and become an anti-Stalinist. At progressively higher levels would be the one who is anti-Soviet Union, (or any other individual specific socialist country of his choice), the anti-communist and one who is plain and simple fascist. All these categories abound among 'kremlinologists', and Deutscher could certainly have had a highly lucrative profession, even without his intellectual equipment. Perhaps, the very intellectual equipment of Deutscher not merely made it possible to see his own situation objectively, but also ruled out any possibility of making good by being a 'kremlinologist'.

Deutscher was a scholar, in every sense of the term. But he was not a sterile scholar, working ad hoc, in a vacuum; his scholarship itself was derived from his commitment to Marxism, and was continuously modified by it. Everything he wrote, even the most occasional of his essays, shows signs of this derivation and modification. Deutscher was no historical determinist in the vulgar sense of the term; but he did recognize the inevitability and triumph of Stalin, which he analysed as being both despite, and because of Stalin. It was not mere love of paradox, but a profound understanding of the dialectics of Stalin's life and achievement that made Deutscher see Stalin as both avoidable and inevitable.

And finally, there is a very important, almost non-political aspect to Deutscher's work. I say 'almost non-political', because, it is only seemingly non-political. I refer to his style. Most of the liberals are conditioned to accept that a Marxist can never write well, because he [the Marxist] invariably employs too much of jargon. One cannot imagine a portrait more 'dialectical' than Deutscher's Stalin; and yet, there is not a word of jargon in the whole book. The reason of course, is that with Deutscher, Marxism had become an

integrated part of his thought process, unlike many of us who feel compelled to provide constant evidence of Marxist commitment and understanding. A certain kind of

restrained passion, a quality which he most admired in Lenin, and which he no doubt cultivated as part of his own personality, animates almost every word that Isaac Deutscher wrote.

## Fringies In The Land Of Chenrezi

NIRODE ROY

**T**HIBET", wrote Ippolito Desideri, an Italian priest who visited Lhasa in 1716, "consists of three distinct Kingdoms. The first is Lesser Thibet or Baltistan, bordering to the south on Cascimir and on the East (North) with the kingdom of Kaskar (Kashghar). . . Second or Great Thibet, also called Lhata-Yul, takes two months to traverse from West to East. . . Third Thibet is called simply Thibet by Europeans and by Persians, but Hindustan-Mongolians call it Butan which means 'the country of the Idols'. Geographers have given it various names on their maps such as Kingdoms of the Grand Lama, or Lhasa, Usang and Barantola".

Desideri belonged to that group of early Jesuit explorers who cheerfully undertook extremely perilous journeys through the mountains and deserts of Central Asia in pursuit of a legend of early Christian civilization in the Kingdom of Cathay. The Mongol invasion provided Europe with a land link to Cathay, and this link through the forbidding steppes of Central Asia provided passage of caravans of silk to the looms of mediaeval Europe.

With the expulsion of Mongols from China by the Ming warriors the silk trade virtually came to a stop by 1368. The capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 denied the Venetian and Genoese traders access to Black Sea ports which, so far, served as staging depots for the overland route to Cathay. The rising mercantile capital, therefore, had to look towards the sea, to the Atlantic, and its hunger for gold, spices and species brought the ships of Portuguese, Dutch and English traders to

the ports of Surat, Calicut and Macao.

Cathay—China—continued to remain mysterious, if not totally forbidden. The early Jesuit contacts with the Mughal Court brought the land beyond the Himalayas nearer to Europe than ever before. The irritating thought that lurked in the Jesuit explorers' minds was whether the land beyond that formidable range of mountains was the outer edge of China or a separate region with its own religion, culture and identity. The irresistible urge to know this land, the missionaries' zeal to redeem the souls of Asiatic heathens from eternal damnation, and the traders' violent search for gold opened up a period of more than two centuries of imperialist intrigues, chicanery and blackmail in the land of Tibet.

### Early Jesuit Explorers

John Grueber, a German Jesuit, and Albert d'Orville, his Belgian companion, were the first occidentals to give a reliable and meaningful report on Lhasa. Grueber travelled overland through Asia minor, Armenia and Persia to the Persian Gulf island of Hormuz from where he took a ship to Surat. At Surat, he boarded an English ship bound for the Portuguese colony of Macao, and arrived at the port on the China coast in 1658. But his return voyage by sea was no longer possible as the control of the sea had passed on to the inimical Dutch. Grueber and d'Orville, therefore, armed with surveying instruments and Imperial passports set out from Peking on 13th April 1661, and took the ancient caravan route to Tibet by way of

Sinning-Fu. Arriving at Sinning-Fu after a two-month journey. Grueber found the great wall where, "merchants from India were forced to pass beneath three rows of guns which pointed accusingly from a fort, guarding the gate of empire". On 8 October 1661, three months after leaving Sinning-Fu, Grueber and d'Orville arrived at Lhasa, Kingdom of Barantola as it was then called by the Tartars.

Desideri's account of Tibet is exhaustive and much more penetrating than Grueber's. Leaving Delhi on 23 September 1714, Desideri and Emanuel Freyre, a Portuguese Jesuit, arrived at the 'city of Cascimir' (Srinagar) on 30th November, and stayed there for nearly six months. Desideri's account of Kashmir, not widely mentioned by John MacGregor (\*), is penetrating and tells of the traditional wool trade across the frontier in Ladakh. "In May, June, July and August", writes Desideri, "thousands and thousands of men go from Cascimir to Lhe (Leh), otherwise called Lhata, the capital of Second Tibet, and carry back infinite number of loads of wool. . . ." This wool trade in the last century became a source of friction and rivalry between the British and Gulab Singh on the one hand and the latter and China on the other.

Desideri lived in Lhasa for six years, and witnessed the expansion of the Chinese Empire southwards to the Himalayas. Most of his time was spent on studying Lamaism and Tibetan life. He came to find that the Tibetans believed "that the beginning of human civilization came when their God Chenrezi—an equivalent of the Hindu God Avalokitesvara—provided the ogress (Dras-rin-mo, Tibet's Eve) and her mate (Hilumanju, King of monkeys—her Adam) with seeds of wheat, rice and barley and bade them to cultivate the soil."

The invasion of Tibet by the Dzungar Mongols from Sinkiang compel-

(\*) *Tibet: A Chronicle of Exploration*, John MacGregor, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970. Price £4 net.

led the Emperor of China to take cognisance of the positive threat to his frontier. He despatched a large army of picked soldiers who after a number of battles drove away the Dzungars in 1720. The Chinese sovereignty over Tibet was eventually established and the Manchus introduced the system of *Amban* or political resident in Tibet backed by a permanent garrison of Chinese forces to protect the interests of the Emperor of China. It was the *Amban* who since then controlled the political destiny of Tibet.

#### Company Envoys

By the time Hastings took over the administration of Bengal, the opening of commercial and diplomatic relations with Tibet had become one of the expressed policies of the Company. It was Hastings who first made any serious attempt to give effect to this policy. He sent a young Scot named George Bogle, who in three years of Company service had risen to prominence and notice to Tashilhumpo, the seat of Tashi Lama. His objective, unfortunately not very well focussed by MacGregor, was fourfold. First, to open meaningful and equal communication of trade by a treaty of 'amity and trade with Tibet'. Secondly, a study of Tibetan markets and resources. Thirdly, to investigate the relationship between Tibet and China with a view to influencing the latter through the former for improvement of trade and diplomacy with China, and finally to study the morals, manners and politics of Tibet for the satisfaction of Hastings' "personal curiosity".

Bogle's mission was a success, though initially intercepted by a messenger from Tashi Lama with an appeal to abandon the trip as "his country was subject to the Emperor, whose will it was that no 'Moghul, Hindustani, Patan or Fringy' be admitted to his realm". At Tashilhumpo, he found that the Company stood much more to gain from its friendship with Tashi Lama than the mere Indo-Tibetan trade. To him, Tibet was the other door to China which

might provide a way to circumvent the restrictions imposed upon the British trade at Canton. The incarnate Lamas wielded considerable influence and power over the court of the Chinese Emperor, and in fact Tashi Lama promised Bogle that he would write to "an influential Lama in Peking in praise of the British and held out the hope that it might eventually be possible for an envoy of the Company to make his way through Tibet to the Chinese capital".

That the English encountered difficulties in financing the purchase of China tea at Canton by exporting British manufactured goods—a fact which necessitated either export of bullion which was against the theory of mercantilist trade, or increase in the flow of specie into Company's territory by means of increased Indian trade with China through Tibet does not receive the mention in the book it deserves. Till the first half of the nineteenth century it was the drive for specie, a ready market for opium in China and sizable market for products of Lancashire, Birmingham and Manchester that drove the officials of the Company to probe beyond the Himalayas. Tibet appeared to be a springboard for making further inroads into the heart of China. In Western Tibet, it was the drive for wool for the looms of Lancashire, and the possible threat of Russian expansion towards the Himalayas that led British explorers like William Moorecraft to warn the Government of India that it was time to decide, to quote Prof Alastair Lamb, "whether the inhabitants of Central Asia and Tibet shall be clothed with broad cloth of Russia or England—whether they shall be provided with domestic utensils of copper, iron, or of pewter, with implements of iron and steel, with hardware of every description, from St. Petersburg or Birmingham".

Turner followed Bogle in 1783 but could not proceed beyond Tashilhumpo. Thomas Manning, a scholar from Cambridge who never received a degree for his strong repugnance to 'oaths and tests', managed

to find his way to Lhasa by presenting the Chinese General at Phari Dzong two bottles of cherry brandy and a wine glass. "The General", Manning wrote in his journal, "promised to write immediately to Lhasa Mandarin (*Amban*) for permission for me to proceed". His trip to Lhasa was more to satisfy his wonderlust than anything else, and after him it was Francis Younghusband who stormed the gates of Lhasa to make the Tibetans, Chinese and also the Russians feel the might of the British Empire.

While the Government of India was fretting and fuming for not having any access to Tibet, the home Government was not quite sure as to which side of the bread was buttered: the mainland China or its backdoor through Tibet? By 1876, when the Chefoo Convention was signed between Britain and China which indicated a possibility of sending one British Mission to Lhasa, England was politically well established in mainland China where markets for the British manufactured goods, much more than the Indo-Tibetan trade, were opening up. But the Government of India could hardly resist the pressure of the local planters, and was up to exploit the vast Tibetan tea market which was hitherto a monopoly of Szechuan tea traded by the Chinese working in close financial collaboration with the high ranking Lamas of Lhasa. This urge to expand trade and get China out of the Tibetan tea market prompted the Bengal Government to vigorously follow up the Chefoo Convention and to initiate the visit of Sarat Chandra Das and Colman Macaulay to Peking in October 1885.

But neither the Chefoo Convention nor Macaulay's personal follow-up at Peking was of any consequence towards opening out Lhasa to the Fringies. It appeared that the Tibetan Lamaist hierarchy, much more than China, was resistant to British entry into Tibet. To the British, however, the Russian expansion in Central Asia was becoming more real than the prospect of Tibetan trade.

Russian presence in the Pamirs provoked intensive exploration and survey of the Himalayan region on the part of the British. Up grew the school for native explorers—a euphemism for local espionage agents—which trained native students in the art of clandestine surveying and collecting information of any value. MacGregor's chapter on the Pundits—the native agents—and their techniques makes extremely interesting reading and throws much light on the determination and alacrity with which the British went about with the job.

#### Anglo-Russian Rivalry

If the British had their Bogle, Moorecraft and Montgomerie, the Russians had their Prjevalskis and Dorjiev. But it was Curzon's Imperial(ist) frame of mind and his irresistible passion for holding the banner of Empire high that gave rise to his 'Forward Policy'. "It would be futile to assert", wrote Curzon, "that an exact Science of Frontiers has been or is ever likely to be evolved: for no one law can possibly apply to all nations or peoples. The evolution of Frontiers is perhaps an art rather than a science, so plastic and malleable are its forms and manifestations. But the general tendency is forward, not backward...." But when it was found that occupation of the northern part of the Himalayas to forestall the Russian advance was neither politically tenable nor logistically maintainable, the idea of a buffer state was seriously thought of. Curzon's policy towards Tibet was designed to ensure that she would throw her lot with the British and not with the Russians. With this object in view he pursued his policy of pressure and of persuasion with regard to Tibet.

Having failed in his policy of persuasion and alarmed at Dorjiev's goings-on in Lhasa the Viceroy chose the policy of pressure. Dorjiev, a Buriat Mongol by birth and in the pay of the Czar whom O'Connor, the British Resident in Sikkim, described as "a stout, cherry-looking monk of

the stereotyped description, about fortyfive years of age, a voluble speaker, and evidently a man of intellect and character", almost convinced Lhasa that Chinese and British influence could best be counteracted by Russian power. To Lhasa Russia's image was more acceptable, her traders were Asians, contained many Buddhists, and the "Russian Mongols entered the Tibetan priesthood, living exemplary lives in Tibetan monasteries". While the Government of India argued that it would be improbable that Russia would ever invade India from Tibet, a few Russian agents in Lhasa could easily upset the tranquillity of the British feudatory states along the Himalayan border. "It would", argued the Commander-in-Chief, "certainly unsettle Nepal, and would, in all probability, interfere with our Gurkha recruiting, which would of itself be a real misfortune".

Curzon therefore decided to act, and act violently. China at the beginning of this century stood weak, outraged by a number of imperialist powers, having little strength to defend her sovereignty over Tibet. An army of about 8,000 men, fully arm-

ed, under Francis Younghusband was sent to Lhasa to re-establish British prestige and, to quote the then British Secretary of State, "to make it clear to Russia that we will not surrender (our) predominance in Tibet to her" In the judgment of the HMG, "the mere fact of a British force marching to Lhasa and slaughtering a great number of Tibetans on the way ought even with a treaty to establish our claims and show our power".

Lhasa fell and a most humiliating treaty was imposed upon her. That China existed was never taken into account, as far as this treaty was concerned. MacGregor gives a fairly accurate description of Younghusband's campaign but fails to highlight the extortion and blackmail that went in the wake of imperialist expansion. It ends with a note of regret that while Younghusband's mission momentarily opened the door to Tibet a crack, it remained "for Communist China with its new roads and air routes to bring Tibet into touch with the brutal realities of the modern world".

Alas! the giant could no longer be induced to sleep.

## Films And Official Codes

MRINAL SEN

IT was in 1959. The Board of Film Censors, having viewed a Bengali film called *Headmaster*, objected to a shot showing a wall with some political writing on it. The Board was generous enough to ignore the anti-government slogans but found the three-lettered slogan-chanting party "CPI" to be highly inflammable. The producer was immediately called and asked to cut it out. The thick-lettered "CPI" was at the bottom of the frame.

Cutting out "CPI" from a complete shot? The producer, who also happened to be the director of the film, very patiently explained to the Board that it was just hot technically possi-

ble. The alternative, therefore, was to remove the entire shot. The producer-director explained the shot and the Board admitted that the action taking place in front of the wall was very important. But the Board was sorry. In spite of everything, it did not budge an inch.

The producer argued, threatened and then finally appealed. There was no softening in the official attitude. In utter frustration and disgust the producer-director walked into the editing room and did the necessary correction. He took up frames, so many of them, one after another, and through a magnifying glass spotted the condemned region

showing "CPI" and very carefully and, for technical reasons, very tenderly, erased it all.

Why such a major operation to remove one single "CPI" appearing on the screen? Why such an assault on so many frames?

In a motive theatre a spectator is exposed to 24 still frames every second. Between the exit of each frame and the entrance of the next there is absolute darkness. If a shot stays for two seconds, the number of frames appearing on the screen will be 48, always spaced out by instant darkness. If it stays longer, say, for three seconds, the number will be 72. And now, considering the nature of the action captured in our problem-shot, let us presume this to have stayed for at least five seconds. In such a case the shot would contain 120 frames. One hundred and twenty frames or more depending on the length of the shot! What exactly the producer did, therefore, was to examine each one of these 120 frames or more, chase 120 "CPIs" or more from the frames and very tenderly liquidate them all—120 of them or more. Not an easy job, really! Such was the

penalty the producer paid for what the all-powerful Censor Board had considered prejudicial to the interest of the country.

In 1971, more than a decade after the *Headmaster* episode, things have changed. In my case, I have seen "Communist Party" having escaped unhurt. The political manifestations in my film with peasants and tribals carrying arms, drums and flutes, all news-reel coverages, have also gone unchallenged. And once I could accidentally capture a students' massive mobilisation being mercilessly repulsed by the police. This too got the approval of the Censor Board. All this is very encouraging. It clearly indicates that censorship today is not the same as it used to be in 1959.

In 1967, if one cares to look back, Sukhdev made an hour-long documentary called *India, 1967*. A little earlier, our dear friend the late Chari made a film called *Face To Face*. These two were followed by a third film by Pratap Sharma giving a harrowing account of the Bihar drought and making scathing comments on sociological issues. Many points were made in these films, sometimes sharply and at times obliquely, saying that the conditions offered by the government are not perfect. There was sarcasm in their submission of facts, there was anger and also cynicism. The Censor Board did not object to all these. The films were passed for general screening without any cut whatsoever.

#### Inside Stories

There were, of course, inside stories relating to the censorship and the subsequent general screening of Sukhdev's film and of Chari's and of Pratap Sharma's. Objections were reported to have been raised from responsible quarters before and after the films were passed. Morarji Desai, for one, was reported not to have contested the objectivity of the situations depicted in *India 1967* but found the entire film to be hopelessly purposeless and unpatriotic. S. K. Patil, it is rumoured, also agreed with Morarji and made efforts to see that the

film remained canned. These and many more discontents, mild and severe, did surface at that time but no substantial damage could be done to the films.

But only three years before Sukhdev made this brilliant film, the producer of the news-reel section of Films Division under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting was suddenly summoned to Delhi and charge-sheeted for using a couple of shots or more depicting a bandh organised by the Delhi Committee of the Communist Party of India. According to the policy-makers at Delhi, this was an atrocious act: doing a coverage of a communist bandh and in the process capturing a red flag and circulating the film through government agencies. The producer was warned and asked to mind his "job" and absolutely nothing else.

If one ransacks the archives one is likely to unearth varied stories of such stupid control by the authorities in the past and also of reforms in small measures, as seen during the last few years.

This, then, is one side of the picture as far as censorship of films is concerned. On the other side we have the long report of the Khosla Committee having made many recommendations including restricted liberalisation of hugs and kisses and strippings. But it is strange and not without any significance that in his report Mr Khosla has not touched political issues. To be candid, it is one thing to capture a few writings on the walls—moderate and extreme—and make a few oblique comments on the ways of the government, but it is another to treat your ideas *politically*. It is one thing to present an accurate catalogue of events in Subhas Chandra Bose's life, but it is another to make a *political* film on him. To make a political film and to treat your ideas politically you need reforms in censorship in very large measure. And that is totally absent in Khosla Committee's report.

These are crucial times. With the split inside the ruling party and inside

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the largest opposition, with various other groups of varied shades making a lot of noise and, outside the parliamentary bounds, with the CPI(ML) and the splinter groups making themselves acutely felt, life in our country seems highly charged today. We are involved, all of us, this way or the other. And, maybe, in this upheaval we shift positions much too often. Maybe, in the midst of countless contradictions we arrive at conclusions only to correct them. But we are charged, we are tense, we are agitated. And living in the midst of such explosive times we need to react. React bitterly if we so like. To react, therefore, we need freedom. And here, as a film-maker, I feel very strongly in favour of political liberalisation, a MUST among measures which Mr Khosla, for reasons known to him, did not take up in his report.

Besides, the codes of censorship have so far remained frightfully interpretative. One individual interprets a certain code in a certain manner depending on his own intellectual make-up; the other does it in a different manner. As a consequence, the objections raised and recommendations made by the different individuals on the Censor Board while examining a particular film are more often than not just individual likes and dislikes. In the case of socially indifferent films, particularly "non-political" films such practices are not likely to do any major damage. But with different kind of films reflecting the spirit of our times the existing codes, whatever they are, need to be sharply defined. Otherwise, any doubt, any room for individual interpretation may, in all probability, lead to utter confusion and big mischief.

cal talen in the *darbars* (*chambers*) of the new moneybags of the commercial capital. Possessing the services of a musician of Upper India, like possessing a couple of elephants, had become in Bengal a sign of aristocracy by the end of the 18th century.

The break-up of the court of Lucknow after the uprising of 1857 and the deportation of its ex-ruler, Wazed Ali Shah to Metiaburz, a suburb of Calcutta, added a new element to the musical awareness of the elite of Calcutta. The Metiaburz court included many talented musicians of whom the Shah himself was the foremost. He was a great singer and composer of *Thumri*, and an ace *Katthak* dancer. Yet it is curious that these two forms of music did not catch the imagination of the Calcuttans, and the Bengalis for that matter, until the first quarter of the 20th century for which credit is due more to the octogenarian maestro Khalifa Badal Khan of the Kirana school than to the *Thumri* singers of the Metiaburz court. Of course the newly introduced phonograph record business did a great deal to broadcast and popularise classical music in this period.

## Classical Music And Modern Society

H. CHAKRABORTY

WITH the death of Akbar in 1605 the political cohesion of India relapsed into disintegration during the internecine strifes of Jahangir's reign. European capital had already begun to infiltrate the Indian market when by the *firman* of emperor Shah Alam II of 1765 the revenue agency of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was transferred to the East India Company. The central political authority of India had received a violent shake-up at the hands of Nadir Shah during the reign of Muhammad Sha Rangile whose court was graced by such musical celebrities as Gulab Khan and Nyamat Khan alias Shah Sadarang, both 6th generation of the great *Mia* in the son's and the daughter's line respectively.

The great Delhi carnage of 1739 served as an eye-opener to the slumbering maestros and virtuosos of the declining imperial court. Bahadur Khan, the grandson of Gulab Khan, left Delhi and went to the court of the Malla king of Vishnupur towards

the end of the 18th century. Many more musicians of the imperial capital followed suit and sought refuge in the courts of the big feudal lords of Udaipur, Rewa, Banda, Patiala, Rampur Baroda, Indore, Bethia, Varanasi etc., thus giving birth to the various schools of music popularly known as *gharana*. Gwalior, Agra and Lucknow predominate this process.

The presence of Bahadur Khan in Vishnupur gave impetus to musical activities through the discipleship of Gadadhar Chakraborty who was instrumental in recasting the musicology of Vishnupur after the system of the *Senyas* of Delhi and Agra. Many more doyens of North Indian instrumental and vocal music migrated to the east and sought refuge under the newly-risen *Banias* and landlords of Calcutta such as Raja Nabokrishna, the Tagores of Pathuriaghata and Jorasanko. Those who were not permanently employed used to visit the commercial capital of the *vilayeti* people and demonstrate their musi-

### Dhrupad and Brahma-Sangit

Although the musical heritage of Bengal dates as far back as the *Char-yapadas* of the 19th century yet the *Dhrupada* form of the Mogul period had something exotic about it so far as the Bengali musicians were concerned. Raja Rammohan is said to have taken his lessons from an *ustad* of the *Senya* lineage and employed his newly acquired knowledge in composing a few devotional hymns which were later called Brahma-Sangit. The Raja used both the *Dhrupad* and the *Kheyal* forms. But his later followers, particularly Tagore, lifted this form from religious functionalism and added to it a dimension not thought of before. Although in his early youth young Tagore was enamoured of the style and technique of contemporary English romantic songs, he was not late in realising the mistake of imitating the European

mode of composition. The year 1885 was a turning point in his musical career when he seriously took to the study and collection of raga music so as to be better able to employ them in his lyrical and devotional songs.

Towards the end of the last century classical music reached a crossroads. It had two alternatives before it: either to respond to the requirements of the times or to conform to the old artistic norms of the late feudal age. The classicists opted for the second alternative irrevocably.

The classicists of the late 19th and the early 20th centuries contented themselves with the repetition of what was done during the times of Tansen (16th century) and his successors in *Dhrupad-dhamar* and *Vin*; and Sadarang and his successors in *Kheyal*, *Sarod* and *Sitar*. Due to lack of co-ordination many of the old compositions lost some of their parts as a result of which a *Dhrupad* or *Dhamar* composition came to consist of two movements only instead of four while the stanza of a *Kheyal* long ceased to complete four cycles of the *Tala* as required before. The process has come to such a plight as to reduce the lyric portion of the song to two words only, for example, *Bhor bhayi* (the morn is come: *Priya-Kalyan*). This minimisation of poetical language in the song is symptomatic of further decadence in classical songs. Less and less words in a song portends mere formalism and lack of genuine human feeling. The singer is more interested in exhibiting his command over tonal combinations and vocal jugglery than in converging emotion and meaning through his song. The song being a by-product of spoken language is subject to social consciousness and meaningfulness which the present-day musician seems to be terribly afraid of. That is why the contemporary classicist is tending to be more and more formalistic and abstract and is favouring the *Tarana* composed of non-sense syllables. Even here the composition scarcely

exceeds the *coda* (the *mohara* of Indian terminology). Instead of creating meaningful patterns the classicist today dwells endlessly on microtonal inflexions of two consecutive notes and prides himself on such mechanized perfection as is exhibited in modern *Tan* and *Sargam*.

#### The Slow Tempo

In order to incorporate the *alap ang* of *Vina* and *Rahab* developed by the *Senyas* of the court of Rampur, particularly by the late Wazir Khan, the modern classicist has improvised after the late Abdul Karim the slow scope of the *Khanapuri Ektal* so as to expand it to 48 matras instead of 12 of the original tempo. Shorn of the lyric portion the singing has now assumed the nature of *alap* in the voice (as in the instrument) where the instrumental *alap ang* has got the upper hand in the name of so-called maestroistic abstraction. Needless to say that a full song would be difficult to knit up with such a slow tempo and would require a long lyric; the *coda* of the *tala* is also difficult to locate without the aid of the percussionist. Attempts have been made to solve the problem by a compromise with the percussionist who is expected to play, not *bol-paran* but *theka* and particularly exhibit the cue of the *mohara* of the *tala* so as to enable the singer to pronounce the *coda* every time a stanza comes to a close on the *sam*. The singer need not conform to the metrical rhythm of the *tala* played on the percussion—what he badly needs to know is where the *coda* of the *tala* begins.

#### Attitude and Appreciation

The evolution of classical patronage since 1934 set at naught all the good efforts of the Bharatiya Sangit Samaj of Jyotirindranath and the Gayan Samaj of Poona. Publication of the notations of classical music from Calcutta and Bombay in the last quarter of the 19th and the first quarter of the present century increased the musical literacy of the country and did away with the anarchy prevailing in the field of the

musicological system of North India. Although the dedicated endeavours of the late Vishunarayan Bhatkhande and Vishnudigambar Paluskar succeeded in resolving the controversies of musical theory, they were unable to usher in a new chapter in the creativity of classical music. The landlord-bourgeois class stepped into the vacant shoes of the outgoing feudal patrons retaining all the permissiveness over musical enterprises. Music of the capitalist era became a commodity of the newly created bourgeois market, that is, music could be learnt and listened to on payment of cash fees. But instead of reflecting the consciousness of the emerging social reality since 1885 the emotional and linguistic content of music continued to be tied to the heritage of the preceding feudal social order. Tagore was the solitary exception who revolted against this permissiveness and, breaking away from the current, sought to portray the consciousness of the contemporary man in his variegated creations of devotionals, lyricals, music-dramas, dance-dramas, symbolical musicals etc. It was a full-fledged romantic movement in Indian music in which classical melodies and rhythms were most gainfully employed. It was romantic not only in form but also in content. It preached the message of not only the social equality of the colonial individual but also his urge for liberation from all bondage—a tone never before uttered or heard in the thousand years' history of Hindusthani music.

Kazi Nazrul took up the challenge and sought to complement Tagore where he had lagged behind. He sang the song of the gallows and armed rebellion against the existing socio-political order. But, unfortunately, he failed to sustain his fire for long and was soon caught in the snare of pseudo-classical formalism and politico-spiritual obscurantism of his so-called *Shyama-sangit*. Training in classical music which had proved a boon in the case of Tagore to his last day proved a bane in the case of Nazrul who, albeit unconsciously, fathered the so-called *modern*

Bengali song of today through his made-to-order compositions at the bidding of His Master's Voice Company. He was also instrumental in importing excessive sentimentalism and sensuality in modern Bengali songs. The fire of *Karar oi lauha-kapat* fizzled out like a howitzer.

Just as in the land-system, trade, education etc. the colonial capital of India has essentially and integrally been connected with feudalism. Classical music under its benign auspices has retained feudal stamp both in delineation and appreciation. The new socio-political content was never allowed to cast its shadow on the sacred precincts of classical music (even Tagore was never looked favourably upon so far as his musical predilections were concerned) which remained segregated within the confines of the aristocratic chambers of the big cities, admission into which was dependent on invitation and social status.

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The situation has not undergone much change on the founding of the so-called music conferences which used to be run mostly by the *rajās* and *nababs* until the fifties when, after the enactment of the Estate Acquisition Acts, patronage passed to the cash donors, advertisers and their middle-class subservients.

In spite of this superficial change in patronage the emotional attitude of classical music towards man and his social struggle has remained as before. The efforts of Bhatkhande, Vishnudigambar and Chowdhury Nabab Ali succeeded in establishing an all-India musical theory putting an end to the anarchy prevailing during the preceding centuries which has, instead of harming the interest of the proprietor classes, furthered their musical interests. The glaring example in favour of this contention is the total absence of classical response to the happenings taking place in India from 1905 upwards (Tagore never subscribed to the classical view). Instead of taking up the cause of the modern Indian, classicists zealously extolled the glory of the medieval gods and goddesses, heroes and heroines and such feudal princes as Rajaram Baghela of Rewa. The men participating in the historic battles of the 20s and 30s were never given any recognition in the classical songs. The real man was kept at arm's length and the dead medieval concept of heroism and spritualism was installed on the throne of classical songs composed between 1850 and 1950. Reference may be made to the compositions under the pseudonyms of Darashapiya, Ranganatha, Premiya etc. Even the recent compositions of Mr Amir Khan are no exception to the general rule.

When any art form embraces a mechanical formula and clings to it for self-expression, the art form before long becomes moribund, like the idol-making art of Bengal which was very aptly criticized by Abanindranath. The idol of *Kartikeya* is the same as that of *Viswakarma* with only the *Vahana* interchanged. Similarly the singing of some Khan is least dissimilar to that of another

Pandit with the sole exception of the *raga-nama*.

It is no wonder that such music is increasingly falling in disfavour not only is its archaic language (seldom properly pronounced) unintelligible to the modern listener but it is related to the ethos of such a bygone age that people would be least concerned with the predicament of the heroine who is making a sojourn to her lover's secret place while the bells around her ankle are betraying her to her unkind in-laws. Few conscientious modern people today would sympathise with such promiscuous enterprise of an otherwise respectable housewife. In short the content of Mogul music, particularly the *Kheyal* one, is poles apart from the psychological make-up and social consciousness of the modern listener. He is therefore scarcely to blame if he cannot appreciate such classicism.

Classicists are by nature conservative and in their doggedness to hold fast to the traditions of the 18th century they overlook one most important thing—that this world is much changed from the one in which these songs and *gats* were composed. If art be the criticism of life, music as an art form must have contact with contemporary life. It should at least have some relevance to and rapport with the reality of the society which is supposed to sustain it.

Since man is the measure of all values and since he has been the subject-matter of all musical endeavours since time immemorial, it would not perhaps be illogical to expect that today's man will regain his rightful place in Indian classical music from where he has been very cunningly banished. Then, rejuvenated by human warmth, music will again flow in the melody of our head and heart instead of stagnating in the decadence of merely vocal acrobatics and meaningless formalism.

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# Theatre In Three Cities

M. C. NERURKAR

THE sort of plays that are being written or staged in any city in India may or may not reflect social thinking of the people of the region. Why people prefer one kind of theatre to another is no guide for analysing differing collective attitudes to current social phenomena. Nevertheless, one striking difference that even a cursory perusal of plays written or produced in the last seven or eight years in the three principal urban centres of the theatre in India brings out, makes one wonder if theatre, because of the very nature of this social art, may not provide some clue to attitudinal traits. In any case the particular difference in the content of the plays merits notice.

The theatre in Delhi, by and large, chooses plays where social content—and comment—is either absent or muted. In Bombay the theatre shows greater social awareness. But in neither does one come across, what may be called, a political theatre. Political involvement or argument is hardly ever brought in either as a dramatic point or as motivational impulse for any action on the part of the characters. By contrast, politics seems to have become a dominant theme of the theatre in Calcutta. The dominance is proved not only by the large number of plays having political ideology as their, apparently, exclusive concern but more so by the way political and social issues get into almost all varieties of plays.

Whatever the reasons for this difference in the theatrical thinking in the three regions, the phenomenon seems to militate against the emergence of an accepted notion of what the national theatre in India should look and talk like. Contentwise the Hindi theatre and the Marathi theatre seem to be set on courses divergent from the Bengali theatre.

The most talked of Hindi play of recent years is Mohan Rakesh's *Adhe Adhure*. It has been performed to

wide acclaim by different groups at many places. *Adhe Adhure* is about a disintegrating middle-class family where the members live off each other's nerves with non prospect of escape from the claustrophobic confines of their hopeless existence. It is a well-structured play of considerable power set in today's India. But while the disintegration of middle-class mores is there as a backdrop, there is no social enquiry or political prognosis. This is not meant as a criticism of the play: given the characters any such enquiry would perhaps have been out of place. The point is that the unconcern of the characters for the need of such enquiry reflects the unconcern of the dramatist and viewers alike.

Rakesh's earlier two plays are set in historical periods. The themes of the plays—a creative writer's predicament in one and the problem of self-abnegation in the other—have, without doubt, contemporary relevance. But the relevance is not to social issues. Kalidas-Mallika in *Ashad ka Ek Din* and Nand-Sundari in *Lahron ki Rajhans* grapple with problems which have no social connotation of a kind that can be reinterpreted in terms of modern politics.

Plays by other well-known Hindi writers deal with a variety of themes. L. N. Lal, a prolific writer, in his best known play, *Mr Abhimanyu*, has an honest government official surrounded by a host of adversaries as its subject. B. M. Shah in his *Trisanku* deals with the "outsider" content of modern youth's predicament but in the end suggests that the resolution of the problem of neither-here-nor-there existence lies in going to the villages.

It is interesting to note how even in plays dealing with an event having obvious political bearings, political issues are skirted. In Lalit Senghal's *Hatya Ek Akar Ki*, an intense play on Gandhiji's murder, the playwright is concerned with the psychological

problems of the conspirators rather than their political motivations. Gyandev Agnihotri's *Suturmurg*, a straight political satire of no great complexity, is the nearest to a political play in Hindi drama of recent years. The scene is set in a mythical kingdom and the political issues posed revolve round palace intrigues and dupes, hardly the meat for a modern political play.

Even so, *Suturmurg* is an exception. More typical is Surendra Verma's recent play, *Draupadi*. Its theme is the disintegration of the personality of an upper middle-class person under the stresses of modern life—the competitive business world, the harassing disharmony at home, the uncertain future. Here again there is no examination of the social causes of the protagonist's predicament.

## Marathi Theatre

Marathi theatre's most outstanding modern playwright is, of course, Vijay Tendulkar. A dramatist of real stature, he has written more than fifteen full-length plays most of which have been produced in Bombay and elsewhere. Not all of them can compare with his socially purposeful plays like *Gidhade* or *Manus Nawacha Bet* or the brilliant *Shaniata Court Chalu Ahe*. One recurring theme in many of his plays is the working woman with family or emotional responsibilities—struggling, rebellious, seeking her own identity. The social framework of his plays is often finely realised but as is usual with Tendulkar nothing is underlined or highlighted. He has no use for political messages or larger than life committed characters.

C. T. Khanolkar, whose later plays have so far belied the promise of his remarkable *Ek Sunya Baji Rao* is, like Tendulkar, deeply sensitive to the social nuances of the motivations of his characters. But they do not, again like Tendulkar's characters, show any interest in politics. It is significant that in *Aayee* which thematically has considerable affinity to *Caucasian Chalk Circle* he cuts out the political syndrome altogether.

The same lack of interest in politics is also a feature in the plays of Vasant Kanetkar the most popular of the Marathi playwrights. Vasant Kanetkar's forte is the theme of betrayal which occurs in one form or other in many of his plays. Yet he has never felt tempted to exploit the fertile field of political betrayal as a dramatic motif.

It is not that criticism and satire on the social scene are absent in the vigorous theatre of Bombay. In fact the amazing P. L. Deshpande who, more than anyone else, personifies the elan of Marathi theatre is devastating in the way he lambasts the hypocrisy and the double talk, the hollow moral pretensions, the perpetuating injustice and cruelty of contemporary society. But he rarely allows politics to enter the world of his theatrical creation.

The indifference to politics in dramatic writing or play production is equally noticeable in the Gujarati and English plays which contribute in no small measure to the theatre in Bombay. Madhu Rai, the best known of the young Gujarati playwrights, seems to be wholly concerned with psychological contortions of individuals existing in a social vacuum. Vinayak Purohit, another promising playwright, creates, it is true, his characters within recognisable social parameters. But political concepts or happenings are outside the scope of reckoning of those parameters.

The groups producing plays in English have the advantage of a wide range of plays to choose from. The few Indian playwrights who write in English like Pratap Sharma or Asif Currimbhoy are also mostly Bombay based. Maybe because of this advantage the English theatre groups can claim to have, in the last four or five years, put up a few of the plays by those European and American playwrights known as the exponents of the theatre of commitment. It is ironical that the political component of the theatre in Bombay, such as it is, addresses itself to the miniscule audience who have the least use for such theatre.

Thus such voice as politics has in

the theatre in Bombay or Delhi is hushed and indistinct. The voice of politics in the theatre in Calcutta, on the other hand, is strident and near-obsessive. From the time, fifteen years ago, Utpal Dutt wrote and produced *Angar* he has written, directed, acted in, and produced with unflagging energy play after play heavy with politics and political messages. He is of course the schoolman par excellence of the politically committed theatre. But his is by no means a lone or discordant voice in the chorus that ceaselessly issues forth from the numerous pulpits of the political theatre in Calcutta. Numberless groups, reputed or unknown, choose plays which deal with the problems of men in society conceived and stated in terms of political ideology, dogma and polemics. Social conflicts and political upheavals, be they in Bengal, Bolivia, Cuba or Vietnam and whether they belong to the past or the present—everything is grist to the playwright's mill.

#### Varied Fare

The fare that the theatre in Calcutta offers is varied and obviously not all the plays staged are concerned with propagation of political viewpoints. The commercials are content to attract custom through eye-catching faces and gimmicks. Nor have religious plays and musicals vanished. And, needless to add, there are the groups whose loyalty is to theatre and to theatre only. But even their arena is often invaded by politics.

Sambhu Mitra's famous Bohurupee have, in recent years, chosen many plays like *Baki Itihas*, *Barbar Bansi* and *Kimbadanti* which have distinct political overtones. Tarun Roy, hardly a politically committed playwright, deals in his latest play, *Parajita Nayak*, with the psychology of a political leader. In many of Badal Sarkar's plays political themes are an integral part of the total design. Even a non-committed symbolist playwright like Mohit Chatterjee in his play *Rajrakta* brings in the theme of pervasive state power. Nor have

jatras, the traditional form of religious and mythological plays, remained immune. Recent plays put up by many popular jatra troupes have such titles as *Lenin*, *Hitler*, *Se-poy Mutiny* and *Vietnam*.

It needs to be said, however, that for all its stridency and ideological wrappings the political theatre in Calcutta has not risen above theatrical journalism. It has no Brecht, Weiss or Hochuth of its own to serve as an exemplar and give it vital shape. By adopting methods more suited for slogan copy and propaganda it has, on the other hand, devalued some of the basic tenets of good theatre.

But, good theatre or not, the preoccupation with social and political problems has become a fact of life of the contemporary theatre in Calcutta. Whether or not such preoccupation reflects a collective attitude of the people different from the attitude of people in Delhi and Bombay, there is no doubt that, for good or ill, it will affect the future of Bengali theatre deeply enough to veer it away from the goals the Hindi and the Marathi theatre seem to be pursuing.

## Films From Cuba

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

THE new Cuban cinema is a child of the Cuban revolution and the prominent figures of the Cuban film world have all been working with a missionary zeal to perfect the techniques of creative propaganda, by making the camera a powerful instrument for the projection of revolutionary ideals. During the brief span of about twelve years, the Cuban cinema has been able to make a considerable impact on the international film scene, throwing up about half a dozen talented features and documentary film-makers. Actually, the beginnings were made during the Bastista regime when a group of fire-brand young cinemaest formed intel-

lectual societies and film clubs and along with theoretical training also tried their hands in actual film-making. Santiago Alvarez, Tomas Alea were among these people, many of whom were to emerge later as leaders of the Cuban cinema. After the overthrow of the dictatorship, the Cuban Institute of Art and Film Industry (ICAIC) was founded with the object of developing the Cuban film industry on socialistic lines and it is due to the untiring efforts of this organisation that Cuban cinema has today risen to the peak of technical perfection from the primitive level of the pre-revolution era.

The recent session of Cuban films in the Film Society circuit gave a fairly comprehensive picture of the revolutionary cinema in Cuba.

Tomas Alea's *Memories Of Underdevelopment* deals with the problems of adjustment between the values of the old and the new society in Cuba. Sergio, the central character, is a member of the upper-class bourgeoisie who refuses to run away after the revolution, but finds it difficult to involve himself in the new socialistic experiment. As a result, he becomes a tragic loiterer on the fringe, suffering from a sense of void. He is, as Elena, one of his casual girl acquaintances succinctly points out, "neither a revolutionary nor a counter-revolutionary... a nothing". Alea prefers to paint Sergio in enigmatic greys. At one point he emerges as a decadent snob, and at the next he brims with tender human qualities. Ultimately, however, the missile crisis in 1962 brings his dilemma to a jittery conclusion. As Kennedy's voice

*Coming out shortly*

### "Mukhtir Sangrame Purba Bangla"

(East Bengal in the struggle for Liberation)

An anthology of essays on the liberation struggle of the revolutionary people of East Bengal.

By

**Shafiqul Hassan**

To be had from Robin Mukherjee,  
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booms on the air and the convoys gather along Havana's waterfront, we see Sergio on his balcony, watching all these through binoculars and slowly the screen bleaches out. Is it the resolution of Sergio's conflicts? A voluntary surrender to new ideas? Or a total withdrawal from the realities of life? Alea refuses to answer and we are left to our own surmises.

Alea's film bears signs of conceptual ambivalence but he compensates for his theoretical confusions by sheer brilliance of his visualisation. The spirit of revolutionary Cuba with all the rights and wrongs is captured in telling detail and Sergio's loneliness acquires a universal significance. The lucid editing style connects the fragmented episodes, imparting to the film a taut, cohesive narrative structure and the shreds of past memories are neatly embroidered into the visual scheme.

Humberto Solas, another distinguished film-maker, believes in direct approach and his films *Lucia* and *Manuela* are revealing studies of Cuban women in different stages of social evolution. *Lucia* is a film in three parts, each one having a character named Lucia, featuring the periods of insurgency against Spanish hegemony in 1895, the period of bourgeois revolution in 1932-33 and finally the period of revolutionary consolidation during the sixties. Each story has a message of the assertion of womanhood and the heroines sort out their solutions in a way befitting their peculiar socio-historical environments. The first episode is a super essay in grand Guignol passion, filled with anti-clerical overtones and shades of cathartic violence (the debt to Bunuel is obvious) and the other two episodes, although failing to match up to the excellence of the first part look quite fresh for their keen social analysis done in a highly sophisticated cinematic style. *Manuela* leads us back to the fiery years of revolutionary struggle in 1956-59, throwing a new light on the Cuban women who came forward to join the guerillas, leaving behind the security of their homes. In his films Solas reassures us that the much-maligned "positive character" of the

## NOTICE

*As the press will be having a holiday, the next issue of Frontier will be that of October 16.*

social-realist aesthetics is not odious-jargon but has a purifying connotation.

Manuel Gomez in *The First Charge Of The Machete* blends the fictional and documentary methods with astonishing success and we feel that a team of camera reporters have travelled back in time to give us an eye-witness account of the Cuban uprising against Spain in 1868. The battle-scenes are photographed in sharp half-tones, creating a kind of surrealist effect and the different sequences are bridged by an evocative song embellishing the film with an operatic flavour.

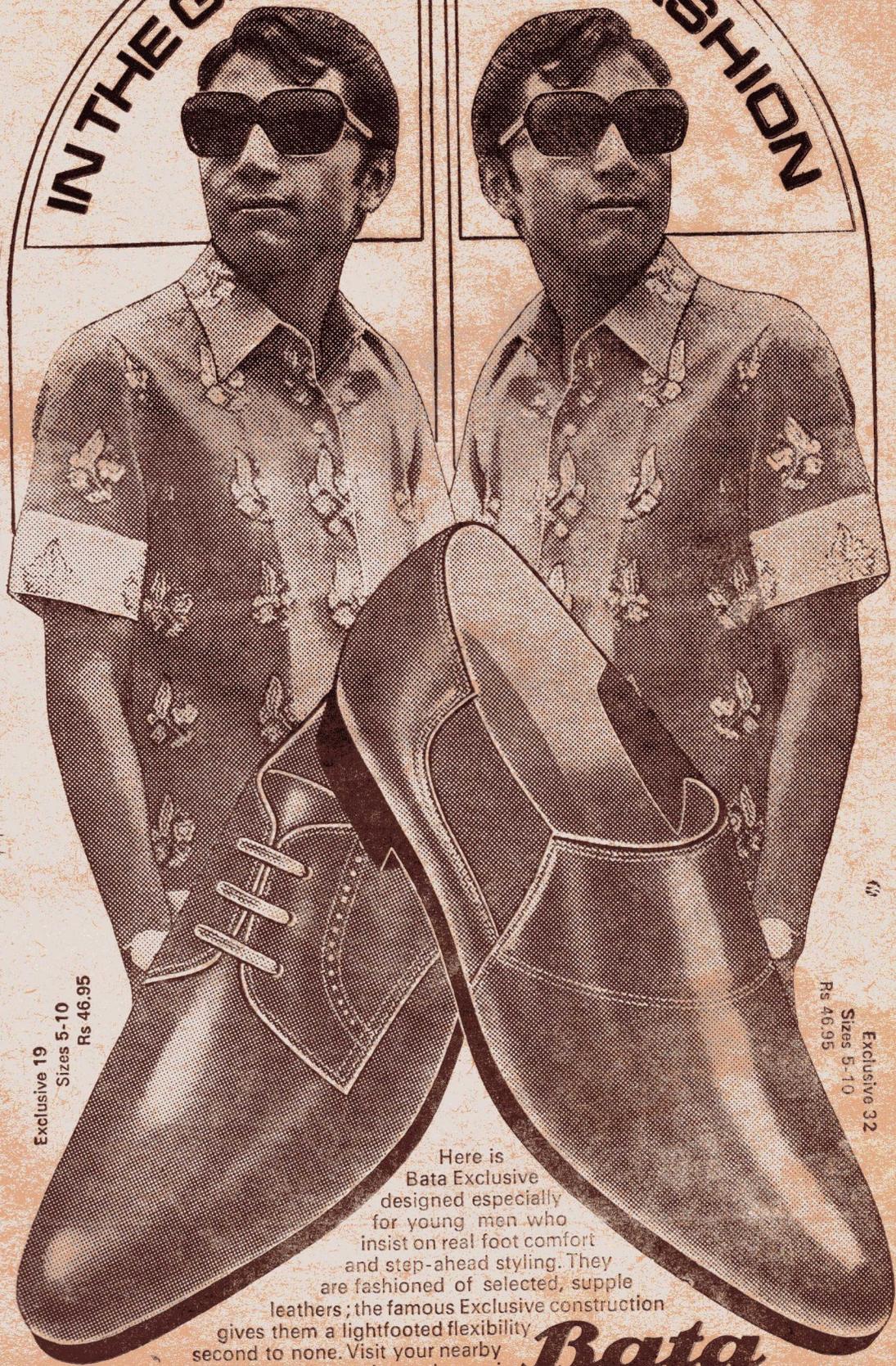
Along with feature film production, short films are also very much encouraged by ICAIC and Cuban newsreels and documentaries, commonly termed as "Popular Encyclopaedia", have already attained a high level of creativity. Santiago Alvarez, renowned for his film *L. B. J.*, a pungent, satirical commentary on violence in America, and his Vietnam coverages, is the most prominent name in this field. The recent session featured his film *Cyclone*, a heart-rending document of floods in Cuba which conveys the misery, agony and the pathos of the situation without the use of a single word of off-screen commentary. Other shorts included *The Story Of A Ballet*, the stylised coverage of a dance troupe remarkable for the intricate choreography, an imaginative score and the virtuoso use of colour, *Chess Olympics*, a light-hearted record of the chess-tournament interspersed with ironical comments on international tension and *Cycling*, a rhythmic portrayal of youthful exuberance.

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