

# frontier

Vol. 4: No. 3

MAY 1, 1971

PRICE: 35 PAISE

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PRINTED AT MODERN INDIA PRESS,  
7, RAJA SUBODH MULLICK SQUARE,  
CALCUTTA-13 AND PUBLISHED WEEKLY  
FOR GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS (P) LTD.  
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## UNCERTAINTIES

IT is not known what New Delhi will do with regard to Bangla Desh. Its first expectation perhaps was that the "Mujib forces"—it seldom called it the Mukti Fouz—will, with the help of the masses and outside help, make the army steamroller grind to a halt. New Delhi generated a lot of wishful thinking, not without foundation. The success of the Awami League movement was so complete—until March 24—that it was not unreasonable to think that General Yahya Khan would have to climb down even after he had struck with overwhelming brute force. New Delhi could cheer as help flowed across, the new Government of Bangla Desh began to operate in certain areas and world opinion came to wield considerable pressure on Islamabad.

Even the Mukti Fouz and countless people in Bangla Desh were taken in, but the hopes have not materialised. To us the impact of East Bengal is immediate, irresistible, but to others, big powers or small, it may be just one more trouble spot. Indiscriminate killing arousing the conscience and fury of the world? Alas, this old whore of a world has got used to genocide.

Our over-involvement, emotional or otherwise, in East Bengal is also suspect even in Afro-Asia, because this instant involvement is a conditioned reflex to the wretched framework of Indo-Pakistani relations. The two countries have gone to war more than once and any sign of a weakening enemy is welcome. The upsurge in East Bengal, a tremendous blow to the Islamic State of Pakistan, was bound to cheer us, but not other nations.

Meanwhile, the tragedy in East Bengal is once more pushing to the fore our embittered relations with Pakistan as the days unfold, as the Pakistani troops seal off the borders and supplies, coming dangerously near the Indian armed forces, and the influx of refugees goes on. Tempers are rising over the question of the diplomatic missions in Dacca and Calcutta. Apart from the usual motions of correctitude what is New Delhi going to do when the American and Russian ambassadors return to the capital after consultations at home? Understanding as never before was shown over Ceylon.

However, New Delhi may not have to take very brave decisions. After more than a month of ruthless action, Islamabad is likely to wave the carrot

before the unsophisticated masses while being ruthless with the brave but yet unseasoned commandos or guerillas operating from difficult bases. Moscow and Washington did urge moderation and a political settlement; Peking, to the best of our knowledge, has not asked Yahya Khan to continue the massacre but has also referred to consultations. Consultations with whom? Any talks barring the Awami League, though branded traitorous by the President, would be a big hoax. Besides, there are innumerable people who have passed through hell who would not put up with any compromise. A democratic protest movement in West Pakistan might have created a different atmosphere, bringing out the contradictions between the military regime and the people, but no movement can be launched there in support of a sovereign Bengal. At the moment, East Bengal will have to go it alone. Of course there will be no dearth of cheer leaders.

## Tight-Rope Walking

The mosquito-and-garbage-weary SUC may not have helped the CPM to stall anti-CPM candidates from mayoral elections in the Calcutta Corporation, but the Democratic Coalition cannot feel much heartened and hope that the weary party would not oblige the CPM in the Assembly. Add to it the withdrawal of support from the Democratic Coalition by a Muslim League member (who is now said to have changed his mind) and apprehensions of withdrawal of some more who were not given berths in the Cabinet. At present the Coalition has 139 members, the CPM-led front 123 plus the tacit support of 7 SUC and 3 RSP members, with 4 belonging to the Jharkhand, Jana Sangh and Muslim League apparently neutral. Of the four by-elections to be held in early June, two are undoub-

ted and the other two marginal strongholds of the CPM. If the CPM wins all the four seats, its strength will be 127 plus 7 plus 3. The last election however showed that Calcutta had become weary of the CPM and therefore Jorabagan and Shyampur may not return the CPM candidates. What follows from this parliamentary arithmetic?

The first obvious thing is that Calcutta will have a particularly tense time till the by-elections are held, with both the CPM and its opponents going all out to win the elections. The removal of the Calcutta Police Commissioner from the scene becomes significant in this context. Mr Ranjit Gupta, allegedly soft towards the CPM, was not anyway successful in tackling it. Even though the police began rounding up CPM cadres as well as the Naxalites after the elections, the Democratic Coalition does not obviously feel happy. The police, it must have felt, would have to be more ruthless in suppressing the CPM; combing operations, never slack since they started, are certain to be more frequent, harassing and terrorising in the two constituencies in Calcutta and in Dum Dum and Ukra. The Coalition Cabinet has already asked for extension of deployment of the CRP and the Army in the State. The CPM, which looked the other way and sometimes forgot to hide its glee when the Naxalites were hounded and tortured by the police, has now started crying themselves hoarse over police atrocities. This is bound to become louder.

Assuming that the Democratic Coalition would retain its two seats in the by-elections, assuming that the CPM would not compromise and seek to attract the Jharkhand, Jana Sangh and Muslim League, whom it had characterised as unredeemably anti-people, assuming that there would be no more defections, the scene in the Assembly would be favourable, but only slightly, to the coalition. It is however not a secure position to have only 141 to support against 135 to harass and 4 uncertain quantities. It will be a particularly

trying time for all the MLAs who will have to be always present during a vote in the Assembly. Given the human frailties, indisposition of either body or mind, the ministry may fall any time, unless the coalition makes an admirable job of postponing the sessions as frequently as it can. The Assembly will be an exciting venue for an evenly matched tug-of-war, with ministers making fatuous democratic promises outside and the opposition equally fatuous with revolutionary jargon.

## Agricultural Prices

With the Assembly election in most of the States to be held early next year, it was a foregone conclusion that the recommendation of the Agricultural Prices Commission on the price policy for the 1971-72 rabi season would be rejected out of hand by the Chief Ministers. Any cut in procurement prices would have only marginally affected the big farmer, but politicians who know from where power grows in the rural area in a parliamentary democracy can only displease the kulak fraternity at their own cost. But all the three parties involved in considering wheat prices, namely, the APC, the Centre and the States were agreed that the consumer should not be made to pay more as the issue prices of rationed wheat had virtually doubled since 1964. The Commission has found the present the most opportune time to start a process of gradual reduction in procurement prices. If this is not done and the issue price is also not revised upward the Government will have to fork out higher amounts of money every year to subsidise the public distribution system. The recommendation for a cut in procurement prices—ranging from Rs 2 to Rs 6 on different varieties of wheat—is unexceptionable as, from the points of view of paid-out and comprehensive costs, the farmer is adequately paid for his produce. Wheat is now in a buyers' market and its prices would crash but for the prop-

of procurement operation. The Commission is not against giving incentive to the farmer but it thinks that the more "appropriate" way of doing so would be to protect the profit margin through improvement in productivity and consequent reduction in the unit cost of output. Apparently it seems that the consumer will not be affected by the Government's policy of maintaining the status quo, but since he is also a tax-payer the subsidy amount of Rs 35 crores, which in any case is to be made good by additional levies, will have to be borne by him. Following the recent improvement in the price situation, the well-to-do consumer has moved to the open market to buy quality grains and only the poor people now lift their requirements from the public distribution system. If the Government is serious about discontinuing cheaper wheat imports under PL-480 by the end of this year, the subsidy burden will increase substantially in 1972, other things remaining unchanged. The Chief Ministers' argument is obviously based on the presumption that a high level of procurement prices will help strike a balance between rural and urban prosperity. But the reality is that the majority of rural people either do not grow their own food or do not have marketable surpluses. No less than many industries, big farmers are in a position to absorb a part of the rise in input costs. The Commission had perhaps in mind a correction of the crop imbalance—a consequence of the so-called green revolution—by regulating the wheat prices. If striking a balance in the economy was the prime consideration of the Chief Ministers, they would have levied an agricultural income-tax years ago. Whenever an attempt was made in the past to determine the contribution that the agricultural sector should make to the national pool of resources the Chief Ministers cried themselves hoarse.

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MAY 1, 1971

## More Of The Same

The Prime Minister gave the green signal to her régime's so-called fight against unemployment when she launched the crash programme in New Delhi last month. She said that it was planned to initiate 1000 jobs in each district for ten months with a daily income of Rs 3 for each person. The project is to supplement, and not supplant, the Plans and it aims to tap reserve labour power in the villages in order to create social durables.

Close on two decades ago the number of job seekers was about three million. Since then the backlog grew to more than 20 million in the mid-sixties and surely it has gone up further in the subsequent years. If to this is added the underemployed, particularly rural, the real figure would be anybody's guess. Compared to this, new jobs have continuously lagged behind. An informed source has said that out of 80,000 graduates coming out in West Bengal this month only 5,000 could be given jobs. And this is neither typical of this State alone nor is it confined to this particular social category. The situation in other States and in other social strata is as bad.

Much fuss is being made these days about the lack of adequate jobs and their part-time nature in villages. Despite this touching concern, the rural folk have continued to remain in the dark and the money that is being funneled has lined the pockets of the rural elite. No adequate data are available regarding the extent of the problem in the countryside. But a few instances can be quoted. A Reserve Bank of India survey on khadi and village industries shows that the employment position in the sphere is gloomy and the industries have still to be spoon-fed with grants and subsidies. Though the survey covers only a small portion of the rural economy it does give out the dismal state of affairs in village life.

Not that political bosses are unaware of the situation. The Prime

Minister has warned the conferring Secretaries that "whatever we have to do we must do very fast. For a neglected manpower is a social burden "breeding disappointment and frustration and even violence sometimes." And it is this tendency that the crash programme seeks to contain by offering new jobs to discontented villagers. Meanwhile New Delhi has increased its defence expenditure by Rs 58 crores for this year.

## Nixon's Date

After the ignominious defeat of the Laos invasion it was perhaps natural that Nixon would try to sooth his electorate with a promise of "total withdrawal" of U.S. forces from Vietnam. Ballyhooed as a test of the "Vietnamisation" policy, the Laos invasion only proved its utter bankruptcy. They had to Americanise the assault from air and Vietnamise the retreat. Nixon, however, could not see anything but success of the "Vietnamisation" programme, which, he said, might even lead to a slight increase in the rate of withdrawal. But despite all this 'success' of Vietnamisation" Nixon would not announce a date for total withdrawal, for that would be throwing away "our principal bargaining counter to win the release of American prisoners...and we will have given the enemy commanders the exact information they need to marshall their attacks against our remaining forces at their most vulnerable time."

How serious is Nixon in opposing a firm date of withdrawal? Hanoi has repeatedly promised to release all captured American pilots as soon as the U.S. sets a date for troop withdrawal. And the talk of giving enemy commanders "exact information" is just ridiculous. Three months before the Laos invasion started, it is now being admitted by the Americans, the Communist side knew about it and prepared a hot reception. They did not wait in front of TV to get the

exact information from Nixon's broadcast. If the President thinks that unnegotiated withdrawal is safer than a negotiated one he had better look at the U.S. casualty figures in Vietnam during the last month. Nixon knows perfectly how phoney are his arguments but then it is his business to carry on his imperialistic ventures and pose as a Buddha before TV.

The "Vietnamisation programme" Nixon pins his hopes on is merely a way of replacing American infantry with American Air Force, and designed not to end the war but to perpetuate it so long as democracy, that is the Thieu-Ky-Khiem clique, does not succeed. He, in fact, said as much in his "state of the world" message. "If Vietnamisation leads to perpetuating the war, it is not by our design but because the other side refuses to settle for anything less than a guaranteed take-over." Defence Secretary Laird made it plain that Nixon's goal of total withdrawal did not in any way mean an end to aggressive activities in Asia. The naval and air forces in Asia, he said, last month, would be part of America's "realistic deterrent" and the withdrawal would not mean a slump for America's war industry. "We will need greater military assistance, not less," he said.

And last week while thousands of Americans were pouring into Washington to protest against the Vietnam war American bombers were raining death on villages 95 miles south-west of Hanoi. This was done under the gangster doctrine of "protective reaction"—a doctrine which claims freedom of movement for marauding American aircraft over the skies of North Vietnam and the right to bomb if the North Vietnamese ack-ack batteries do not oblige. In the south saturation bombing by B-52s continues. Last month the Americans dropped seven-ton blockbuster bombs—the most powerful in the American arsenal except nuclear weapons—to relieve a besieged American garrison in South Vietnam. Vietnamisation or no, Nixon, it seems, would leave Vietnam only after he has exhausted his arsenal.

## View from Delhi

# Slide-Back On Recognition

FROM A POLITICAL  
CORRESPONDENT

THE Indian response to Bangla Desh has been predictable. The identification of the Indian Muslim in general and of the Punjabi Hindu in West Pakistan while that of the Bengali Hindu is with East Bengal. No wonder the enthusiasts of immediate recognition of Bangla Desh are a disillusioned lot in New Delhi today. The Bengali cultural festival is over, the teach-ins have been held and the solemn pledges made. The burden on the conscience of the involved is off and it is time to pack off to the hills with an easy conscience. Until last week, these enthusiasts were confidently predicting recognition of Bangla Desh by New Delhi any day. But they find a sudden slide-back. The Punjabi lobby of officials at the top are among the committed opponents of recognition. In any case, neither of the super powers are in a hurry to recognise the new regime in Mujibnagar either immediately or in the near future if it can be helped. India could have created compulsions short of war to support East Bengal but all that is forthcoming is exaggerated and inspired stories lapped up by the big business press and All India Radio.

What is worrying the Government leadership is that if the present struggle in Bangla Desh prolongs, it would take the form of guerilla warfare. The longer the struggle lasts, the lesser is the chance of the centrist Awami League leadership exercising effective control of the movement. The political initiative might gradually pass on to the extremists. The Awami League leadership has been physically affected at the lower and middle levels and a sense of disorientation is overcoming its following

which might look to the extremists. New Delhi has reason to be unnerved at the prospect of a guerilla warfare at the door step which would make the Eastern zone live.

The motivations behind Indian big business support to Bangla Desh so far have indeed been obvious. It has reason to be happy over the decisive destruction of international competition from East Bengal jute and tea. Support to the Bangla Desh movement is part of the export promotion drive of the Indian big business. When an independent Bangla Desh compels world recognition, the Indian big bourgeoisie would have nothing to lose provided the new nation throws its gates open to Indian private investment. The Marwaris who control West Bengal's economy would be too glad to revive the East Bengal jute and tea industries as the first step towards control. Even a common market might emerge.

Super-power interests have conditioned India's reflexes so much that her behaviour is fairly predictable, be it on East Bengal or Ceylon. Its voluble pronouncements on East Bengal are matched with little action while its studied silence over Ceylon is matched with everything short of direct military intervention. There is no public opinion against India's abetment of the fascist tendencies in Ceylon while the big business press has been most vociferous in demanding all help to Bangla Desh. The Ceylon movement has nearly been crushed but the Bangla Desh issue remains. So New Delhi is in a flap, amidst a flurry of diplomatic activity. Had the Ceylon insurgency not synchronised with the Bangla Desh war, the super-power role in Bangla Desh might have been different.

It is now certain that until the super powers accept the idea of recognition, India will not take the

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CENTRAL NEWS AGENCY  
23/90 Connaught Place  
New Delhi-1

MAY 1, 1971

initiative to recognise Bangla Desh. India will not lead opinion but follow the super powers. The Soviet effort so far has been limited to securing a political settlement which provides for autonomy for East Bengal and keeps it within the larger Pakistan. It would be well to remember that West Pakistan's geographic proximity to the Soviet Union and the Middle East makes the regime in Islamabad more useful to the Kremlin than the government in Mujibnagar. Similarly in the long run, Chinese stakes will be larger in East Bengal than in West Pakistan. An uneasy stalemate is thus developing as the war in Bangla Desh enters the next phase.

The monsoons will certainly de-escalate the military operations and the time-lag would provide India to cool off towards East Bengal unless the West Pakistani regime adopts a belligerent posture. Any military move against India will be a short-term operation now because the monsoons will be here in the Punjab plains before July. India does not have much diplomatic manoeuvrability either to break the stalemate. Which means little prospect of anybody recognising Bangla Desh immediately because the military stalemate will continue there until October and the struggle would have taken the form of guerilla warfare.

There are other preoccupations for the leadership in New Delhi. The Cabinet has to be expanded and the Planning Commission reorganised, a decision taken on participation of the ruling Congress in the Kerala coalition and the like. Mr Chavan who did not want to present a budget has to do it after all. The FICCI has discovered a social commitment and does not want to fight Mrs Gandhi any longer. The big business seems to be realising that there is little use in supporting parties of the right and it would be more profitable to build lobbies inside the ruling Congress. The pre-Swatantra Party style of politics is being restored.

April 25, 1971

## The Beginning

N. R. KALPATHI

**T**HE far-reaching significance of the Indian Army and Air Force personnel lending a helping hand to the Sirimavo Government of Ceylon in the suppression of the Guevarist movement there has largely been missed by our intellectuals who are more concerned with the "dreadful possibility" of a people's war developing—for it is not in their class interest—in Bangla Desh.

No doubt Bangla Desh has become the central issue in South Asia. While the gory events in Nazi-occupied Europe and the massacre in Indonesia have had only a marginal impact on the politics of Hindusthan—an impact restricted to what may be called the concerned minority in the Indian political spectrum—the issue of Bangla Desh has ended, what one could describe for want of a better expression, the age of innocence in India.

In a different sense India's role in suppression of the insurgency in Ceylon has also helped in ending the innocence of many who have been kept in a state of trance for nearly two decades by the neo-Upanishadic chant of peace and non-alignment. For it is for the first time that Indian military personnel have been sent abroad to help suppress an insurgency. On all the previous occasions like the Burmese and Malaysian insurgencies two decades ago, India had provided the ruling élites only with military hardware but had refrained from sending her personnel to man the military equipment for others. Also India had made, in South Block jingo, 'valuable contribution' to peace-keeping from Korea to the Congo, although it had feigned all along not to understand the situations which led to the keeping of peace in those areas. Thus, India has done for the first time what the

imperial powers have been doing all along. The implications of the Indian action are, at least for those concerned, clear enough—and frightening.

Let us look at the Indian case as propounded by our mandarins. It is said that India has gone to the aid of Ceylon because an armed minority is attempting to overthrow a democratically elected radical government. The unsaid part of the explanation is that this armed minority purports to follow the revolution principles advocated by Marx, Lenin, Mao and Che Guevara. And hence it is the business of the 'radical' Indian Government to go to the succour of a regime with similar orientations in a friendly, neighbouring country in its efforts to "pacify"—does it remind you of an American technique? the 'extremist' radical elements.

From the Indian case presented by the establishment more or less in this manner one could logically deduce several disturbing conclusions. The first is that if a friendly regime with left orientation is threatened by a more radical group India may go to shore up the friendly regime. Second, the Indian Government, suppressing certain forms of radicalism at home, thinks that it is the logical corollary to help put down similar movements abroad too. In short, armed struggles in countries friendly to India, which seek to end "bourgeois" political systems, hereafter may have to take into account in the formulation of their revolutionary strategy not only the fire-power of the indigenous military establishments but also the weaponry of the Indian mercenaries. Back home, in our turn, we have to take into account the possibility of our establishment persuading the silent Indian majority, if more such commitments arise in the future, to get reconciled in the name of national

interest to the death of Indian youth in alien territories defending decrepit causes. Can we really rule out such a possibility after what the Indian Government has done in Ceylon?

The argument that India has only gone to the defence of a democratically elected government has further implications. The crux of the Indian argument, shorn of ambiguities, is simply this: India militarily supports the Ceylonese Government in order to preserve a *system*, and to fortify a *method of politics*. Basing themselves on this principle, the wild hawks whose number is not inconsiderable in our establishment, may well argue—and logically too—that India should broaden her principle to include in the category of countries deserving her military support to preserve their system, not only the democratically elected regimes but also other regimes, democratic or not. In short, India should go, irrespective of the democratic principle, to the support of regimes which are threatened by revolutionary armed struggle. The danger inherent in advocating principles of this kind is obvious.

The Indian ruling caste is not alone in taking steps of this kind. It has illustrious forerunners. But let India pause and ponder over the lessons learnt by the West, particularly the United States. The Americans have learnt or are at least learning—that an alien army cannot cow down a revolutionary people, however poorly armed they are. And hence the desperate American attempt of 'Vietnamisation' in Indochina, an effort to make indigenous mercenaries fight the revolutionaries. That they are not likely to succeed in this effort is altogether a different matter. But at least their stated policy is to withdraw the alien army from the scene of struggle. It is rather ironic that while the United States is Vietnamising the war in South-East Asia, India has moved down the road of Indianising the wars in South Asia. We seem to make a beginning at a point where United States policy seems to be ending.

## Across The Border

# The Masses Are Active

KALYAN CHAUDHURI

SOME political circles do not believe what is being described as people's participation in the Bangla Desh movement. True, the main fighting elements are the East Pakistan Rifles and East Bengal Regiment personnel. But they are not isolated units or groups far away from the masses. The masses are active and lending all-out support to them. It is not a matter of purely passive patronage on the emotional level.

It is somewhat contradictory to believe in the potential fighting capacity of the people in general and then deny its existence in the moment of struggle. My limited experience of the struggle (I have been in Bangla Desh for one and a half weeks, covering two districts, the peasant-based Dinajpur and Rajshahi) is that the movement was inevitable and that it matters little whether or not the Awami League leadership was geared up for it. What really matters is that a large section of the League having indisputable authority over the community had finally foreseen what was bobbing up round the corner. The same awareness was visible in the Maulana Bhasani-led National Awami Party and the NAP of Wali Khan.

The EPR and the East Bengal Regiment did not also err in speculating about the coming revolt against the authority. The authority was equally sensitive to the possibility of an armed insurrection. That is why General Yahya Khan had been working for the past six months on a systematic plan of disarming the Bengalis in the EPR and the East Bengal Regiment, partly by outright official order and partly by ugly diplomacy. The disarming programme made a shrewd start when the Bengali personnel of the EPR were summoned back to towns and cantonments from their

usual positions along the border with India. In army jargon this is a policy of "bottling up".

That the seeds of an armed uprising were ripe is evident from reports in the East Pakistan press before March 25. *Ittefaq*, in its March 8 issue, published a photograph of members of the Chhatra League (CL), the students' front of the Awami League, parading in Pabna in "military style". Its significance is clear when one remembers the context of the essentially non-violent civil disobedience programme of the Awami League. It was a pointer that the powerful students' wing of the Awami League was not always docile enough to toe the line of the party. Further, in the March 22 issue of *Dainik Pakistan* and the March 23 issue of *Pakistan Observer* we find reports of the CL rejecting the usefulness of the Yahya-Bhutto-Mujib negotiations. They even took out rallies in Dacca and Chittagong demanding an open confrontation with the West Pakistan clique. Mujib was asked to quit the "talking table" and provide leadership to the struggle.

Outside the Awami League, Maulana Bhasani's National Awami Party had long been clamouring for the same line of action. The NAP General Secretary, Mr Masiur Rahman, told me early in April that his party was insisting on complete independence. At a Dacca rally in the third week of March he did not roll out any "six-point or hundred-point demands" nor even "autonomy". He was emphatic on independence and nothing sort of it so that the people would have a valid brief to call the West Pakistan troops aggressors on Bangla Desh soil.

Finally, Mujibur Rahman too sensed the inevitable. At his last Dacca

public meeting on the Ramna Race Course he gave a call for complete independence even at the cost of blood and tears. But the very idea of struggle was never rehearsed by the Awami League machinery. And for all practical purposes, a party which has never worked out a plan for an armed movement cannot expect to retain its leadership over a people fighting a trained army as their enemy.

Nevertheless, it is Mujib and none else but Mujib who has released the "flush" in Bangla Desh. Different as he is in political beliefs and actions, the NAP leader, Mr Masiur Rahman, said Mujib might have skipped his set programme, but the struggle which finally flared up was unlikely to assume such massive proportions if he had not leapt into it. It was, as Mr Masiur Rahman explained, a sort of "negative contribution" to the liberation struggle.

Mr Masiur Rahman was very emphatic in the use of the term liberation. The present upsurge has a clear-cut objective of throwing away once for all the shackles of western dictatorship. A few setbacks or even heavy loss of lives, he said, could not stifle the uprising of the Bangla Desh people.

Those who think that the struggle in Bangla Desh has failed to inspire mass participation and refer to the refugee influx in support of their view, should note that the number of evacuees, however large, is very small in ratio to a population of 75 million. Besides, the evacuees are mostly children, women and old men while the youths are staying on in their land to take part in the movement for liberation.

About mass participation one incident is worth describing. On April 2 an army column came out of the Rajshahi cantonment to attack Nababgunj from the border outposts, facing attacks on the way. The situation was hopeless. But what happened was unique. As the news spread that the army was advancing with a tank, about 5,000 civilians grouped together for resistance

with whatever they had—sticks, bows and arrows, spears and guns. It was not just a show of courage. They pounced upon the firing tank and captured it, though at a heavy price. Whatever the wisdom of the tactic it showed that the people acted on their own without any directive from the Awami League or NAP leaders to give vent to pent-up anger. Once the moment came the question of parasitic dependence on leadership just vanished

#### Resistance Groups

During my short tour I found no village where there was no resistance group. Armed with crude weapons like sticks and bows they were a perfect picture of resolve and ambition. Emotionally tense, they will, however, have to learn the brass-tacks of a fight against superior power. They have already become wary of frontal engagements with the enemy and been turning to guerilla actions.

To drive further home my point that the people have taken part in the movement, I would like to refer to some "representative individuals." One is a boatman of Rohanpur of Rajshahi district. The poor man did not grudge cruising his boat every night to carry food given by the local villagers to the liberation forces fighting afar. Or think of the young boy who cycled 40 miles at a stretch to come over to Malda on our side for fuel for their petrol-operated transmission sets. These "representative individuals" are countless, cutting across party lines. With the obliteration of party labels one thing stands out—the "pointed demands" of the Awami League have expanded into a national liberation movement against the coterie rule of the west.

Liberation—that is the word. Even the Swadhin Bangla Desh Government will not be able to sit again with the western oligarchy for a so-called peaceful settlement. It is also a fact that the big powers can no longer push the Bangla Desh people towards a conference table until liberation from the tyrannical rule of West Pa-

kistan, a direct agent of world imperialism, is accepted as the major premise. Even if the new Government is content with big-power recognition under conditions that may annul the concept of liberation, the Bangla Desh people will not accept it.

To convey the general sentiment of the Bangla Desh people I would like to refer to a young girl of Dacca University whom I met in Calcutta. She is the grand-daughter of an 85-year-old political leader and ex-Minister of Pakistan who was killed in front of his Comilla residence. The incident took place before her eyes. The Army raided their house on the night of March 27 and dragged out Mr Datta and his son who was also reported to have been killed as the Army made a bayonet charge. The girl who managed to escape told me that she did not like to stay in India as a refugee. "I must go back to Bangla Desh. I cannot forget for a single moment even in any sleep the ugly face of the brute who killed my old grandfather and the innocent uncle. I must find him out and kill him the same way he killed them."

The liberation forces are very much aware of the price they will have to pay for foreign intervention. They do not want India or any other nation to be directly involved in the conflict. Leaders as well as common people I met did not seem willing to receive from foreign powers any assistance beyond material help such as arms and ammunition. They were obsessed with the idea that the goal of liberation would be realised easier by fighting alone.

There can be no denying the fact that the present movement, is not the outcome of any class conflict. But rigid class consciousness is giving way. The Dinajpur SP, once a student of Dacca University, left his wife in a village camp with certain so-called low class people while he was engaged in operations on the front. He said it was a grand chance to get declassified.

The question is whether the ground

for a liberation movement was fertile in East Pakistan. An analysis of certain socio-economic aspects would show that it was. In Pakistan's budget last year about Rs 350 crores was earmarked for defence expenditure out of a total of about Rs 750 crores. About Rs 150 crores was set apart for annual loan repayment while maintenance of administration was allotted about Rs 100 crores. The rest—Rs 150 crores—was mainly spent on the development of West Pakistan where most of the private and public sector units are located. Strangely, the Rs 350 crores meant for defence expenditure was lifted fully from East Pakistan. East Pakistan used to raise about 65 per cent of the budget expenditure by selling her jute, tea and tobacco and most of this revenue was spent on the army. Since 1965 West Pakistan has received Rs 1700 crores from the United States also as defence aid. All things considered, there was a glaring economic imbalance between West Pakistan and East Pakistan. The latter was treated not a shade better than a colony.

Another disturbing factor was the heavy land rewards to the retired Pakistan Army officers who are hardly recruited from the East. Once the army officers of the west are out of active service, they get land ranging between 50 and 300 bighas. In other words this privileged class of West Pakistani army officers is turned into feudal overlords and become a powerful tool of the machinery of exploitation. These are some of the long-standing grievances of East Pakistan against the western wing.

Of late what hurt East Pakistan was the refusal of the army men to come to their help at the time of the devastating cyclone. American troops had to be invited to clear the huge masses of corpses from storm-ravaged localities. The army apart, no political leader from the west also cared to visit the cyclone-hit areas in East Pakistan.

## Rajshahi : A Post-mortem

D. CHAKRABARTI

**R**ETURNING from Rajshahi in the second week of April it became evident how our news media have been distorting facts. When on April 14 and 15 Rajshahi town and the adjoining villages were burning before my own eyes, the town being under the complete control of the Pakistani army, and the fighting forces of Bangla Desh had retreated from the area and were trying to build up a second line of defence at least some 20 miles away, AIR kept saying that Rajshahi was still under the control of "Mujib forces" and that fierce fighting was going on.

In this sector during the first few days of battle against the Pakistani forces, besides men of the EPR, the Mujahids and the Ansars, the student volunteers of almost all the left parties like the EPCP(ML), NAP, other pro-Peking groups and even pro-Moscow EPCP, took active part. Those who became conspicuous by their almost total absence were the Awami League and Chhatra League leaders. Even the District President of the Wali-NAP (and also of the EPCP) left the town "for want of security". Only when the army had taken shelter in the Rajshahi cantonment and when, besides the regular forces, armed peasants from Nababgani, Natore and Nowgaon had encircled them from three sides, did the AL and CL leaders come back and demand a dominating position in action committees. In reality, among the civilian population, mainly the left forces gave the leadership. It is an unpleasant fact but it must be mentioned that some rightist parties fostered communal killings of even innocent and poor non-Bengali Muslims. One of them even declared at Berhampore on March 30 that all Pakistanis were their enemies, not only West Pakistani military forces, businessmen and spies, but also the West Pakistani labourers and peasants. At Rajshahi many innocent

men were killed and their property looted. In some cases the left students saved innocent non-Bengalis at the point of the bayonet.

The military strategy of the AL leader who was made the convener of the Action Committee was such that he stopped even the supply of diesel oil to the farmers, thus hampering agricultural production, while supply of petrol did not pose any problem to the Chhatra League members in their unnecessary journeys by jeep. Supply of food and ammunition to the frontline fighters was hampered. All this explains the note of despair in the statement of Capt. Giasuddin Chowdhury of EPR after the retreat of the freedom-fighters: "The political leaders promised me all things, and then I never got them. I find it hard to trust any of the local leaders. I know that they are sitting around in Calcutta and Agartala. But their place is here and not in meetings that can't possibly yield any result." (*The Statesman*, April 16).

But even then the EPR forces fought gallantly. The student volunteers showed great courage. On the morning of April 13, the army, cooped up within the cantonment, were on the verge of surrender. But precisely at that moment new forces advanced by road from Nagarkotaghat through Ishwardih, Pabna and Sardaghat, setting fire and killing almost everyone on the roadside. They reached Rajshahi and attacked the liberation fighters from the rear. After a few hours' fight the EPR, who were in the front line of the cantonment encirclement, had to retreat in the face of superior armed forces. From the morning of the 14th, the army began to control the town. They killed or destroyed almost everything in it, set fire to villages on both sides of the road up to Kathalbari, three miles from the town, and killed thousands of panicky villagers who were crossing the Padma.

My talks with students of all shades of political opinion revealed that the left-wing students are determined to continue the struggle. The EPCP(ML), and pro-Peking elements,

and even the pro-EPCP Students' Union cadre said they would go back to villages and organise armed resistance. Many rural people came to Indian territory for shelter, but there were many who were determined to remain at their native places. One thing became clear during my journey through the villages outside Rajshahi town: many villagers want to fight but did not know how to organise themselves.

Reports of fighting from Pabna, as available in Rajshahi, showed almost the same picture. There, too, left forces were in the forefront of the struggle and AL leaders came forward only after the initial victory, to be included in the leadership. A curious leaflet was circulated declaring that "the West Pakistani enemies have been finished, and now it is time to finish off the other enemy, i.e. the Communists". There were of course militant CL supporters who fought bravely; but they were exceptions.

A few EPCP(ML) and pro-Peking fighters whom I met explained their thinking very clearly. According to them, Sheikh Mujibur Rahaman and the Awami League have utilised the genuine grievances of the East Bengal people against the West Pakistani big bourgeoisie and tried to limit people's resistance to "peaceful" means—so that East Bengal does not become another Vietnam, so that U.S. imperialism, after its tremendous defeat by the Indochinese people, can turn East Bengal into its military base, and the imperialist plot to encircle China succeeds. But owing to the conflict of interests with the West Pakistani expansionists, Yahya Khan had to resort to armed onslaught on the East Bengal people. People's armed resistance has grown spontaneously, even the militant patriotic elements with the AL-dominated CL revolted and the Sheikh had to support this for survival. But in the world today, any national liberation movement must be a part of the world people's war against world imperialism, headed by U.S. imperialism.

Hence the fight of the East Bengal people against the big bourgeoisie of West Pakistan must be linked with their fight against US imperialism. But forces are trying to turn the anti-imperialist revolutionary spirit of the East Bengal people into a reactionary plot. Lakhs of people have shed their blood for genuine freedom, not only from the West Pakistani bourgeoisie but also from US imperialism and Soviet social-imperialism. The wheels of history cannot be turned back. The people of East Bengal have learnt the revolutionary lesson that "political power comes out of the barrel of a gun." Under the leadership of the revolutionary communists of East Bengal, the agrarian revolution must merge with the liberation struggle; political power will be established in rural areas and the cities surrounded by the rural base-areas, and final victory won through protracted struggle. None can stop it.

These pro-Peking fighters fully support China's stand in this matter. Pakistan's future, as well as the future of East Bengal, must be decided by the people of that country. No interference of U.S. imperialism, Soviet social imperialism and Indian reactionaries will be tolerated; otherwise the revolutionary struggle of the East Bengal people would be dominated by the imperialist design of turning East Bengal into a military base and using it in an anti-China plot. According to them, China has correctly promised to support the Pakistani people against imperialism and colonialism. But China did not support Yahya Khan in his military onslaught against the East Bengal people, which is evident by China's protest note to the Indian Government stating that it was a slander that China was aiding the Pakistan Government in its war on the freedom-loving people of East Bengal.

These boys were confident that whenever their liberation struggle becomes part of the world people's war against world imperialism, China will support it.

## Perspectives

# Poverty, Unemployment And Indira Priyadarshini

ASHOK RUDRA

IN an article in the April 17 issue of *Frontier*, P. K. Bardhan has given a staggering statistical portrait of the extent of poverty prevailing in India after almost a quarter of a century since independence. Statisticians might have differences with Mr Bardhan on purely statistical grounds; it is possible to make somewhat different assumptions and arrive at somewhat different results. Thus, Dandekar and Rath in a recent study suggest the figure of Rs 18 (at the prices of 1964-65) per capita per month as the minimum consumption level and find that about 40% of the rural population lay below this limit in 1964-65. Dandekar and Rath's estimates could also be criticised on various statistical grounds. But that is not our purpose here. The problem of absolute poverty in India is stupendous and it has probably been getting worse. What does Mrs Gandhi propose to do about it?

The reasons for seeking an answer from Mrs Gandhi are obvious. She is the supreme leader of the country, wielding the powers of a Mughal empress; the slogan that she used to win her landslide election victory was "abolish poverty, liquidate unemployment". Naturally people expect her to set in motion some dramatic series of actions that will halt the process of absolute pauperisation of the rural masses. Not only the lay masses; many from even among the educated public, even from among the professional economists and other social sciences, not to speak of the soft-headed revisionists are waiting impatiently for her to announce the steps of a peaceful social revolution.

Yet there is no reason to believe

that she has indeed any measures up her sleeves. She has no doubt proved herself to be the most fabulous politicking genius of the country since Gandhi. She surely knows how to manipulate party organisations, precipitate crises, take risks like no one has ever taken in modern Indian politics. She can pick up persons as easily as she can drop them, she has got almost a parapsychological sense about timing. She has all that ; but she has not in all these days proved herself to be quite the wizard that one would call for solving the problem of unemployment within a social framework designed to maximise the rents and profits of certain property-owning classes. She has to date only two major economic policy steps to her credit. The first was devaluation: this she took under the dictation of the American experts of the World Bank. The second was bank nationalisation. This was a perfectly innocuous step from the point of the interest of the monopoly capitalists of India. By this she created for herself the image of a radical socialist, thanks to the unthinking propaganda that had been carried on over the years by the bankrupt left parties. This apart, what Mrs Gandhi has done since she became Prime Minister is to dismiss members of the Planning Commission. In this respect she resembles one of those impotent monarchs of history who used to behead one queen after another for not being able to present any successor. Gadgil is going, the search is on for yet another distinguished economist who will agree to be hired for the sole purpose of taking upon his shoulders the responsibility for the government's failures in economic matters.

While these are the specific activities the Prime Minister has been busy with, the country has seen the virtual ending of the plan era, industrial growth has been slowed down and agriculture handed over to the Americans for bringing about a revolution.

But let us leave Indira Gandhi alone and ask ourselves, is there anything that anybody can do to deal with the problems of poverty and unemploy-

ment? Several apologists of the present social order in the country have of late been anxious to come forward with various answers. It is instructive to go through some of them critically, illustrate as they do the total futility of all these attempts at squaring the circle. In the present article we shall concentrate on the chapter entitled "Right to Gainful Work" in Dandekar and Rath's recently published study, *Poverty in India*. At the very outset, let us say that we find ourselves in agreement with most of their observations and arguments. It is just that these lead us to a conclusion totally opposed to their very central recommendation.

#### The Trap

The authors lay bare at the very outset the trap into which they end themselves up by making very clear that they are restricting themselves to within "the institutional framework of private ownership of the means of production". Within such a framework, they observe, "there are two alternative approaches to the problem of equitable distribution: one is the equitable distribution of income without an equitable distribution of the means of production". They reject the first alternative with the following words: "the dimensions of rural poverty are such that it is not difficult to see the distribution of the available land among all those who need it can do little good to the poor and undoubted harm to the prospects of agricultural development generated by the recent technological advances in agriculture". This is a very correct observation that ought to be driven home to the revisionists who plead that land redistribution is one major social revolution that can be achieved through parliamentary politics.

Having rejected the idea of land redistribution as the panacea of "village industries" which, again correctly, they observe to have proved to be unworkable, they end up by taking the position that for an equitable distribution of income "...an essential prerequisite... is a guaran-

teed employment at a minimum wage to all those who do not have adequate means of production to employ themselves with and who are willing to work for the minimum wage".

This leads the authors to a search for ideas regarding how to tackle the unemployment problem in our plans. It is not good ideas that is lacking most in our official thinking. So it is not surprising that Dandekar and Rath should come across sensible assessment of the problem in the Third Five Year Plan. Thus, they write, "For once it was recognised that the additional employment to be created had to be, in the main, wage employment on development works and not the make-believe self-employment in traditional hand industries as envisaged in the Second Plan. It was also recognised that when someone worked, he might be paid wages..." The idea in the Third Five Year Plan which the authors feel so enthused about is of rural works programmes for the employment of the under-employed millions in the countryside. But when it comes to implementation, the picture, in their own words, is as follows:

"Tentatively it was envisaged that employment through works programmes should be found for about 100,000 persons in the first year, about 400,000 to 500,000 persons in the second year, about a million in the third year, rising to about 2.5 million in the last year of the Plan. ....it was reckoned that the programme as a whole might entail a total outlay of the order of Rs 150 crores over the plan period." But "in all, only a sum of Rs 19 crores could be made available for the rural works programme".

In the place of 2.5 million persons who were supposed to be given employment, it was reckoned that 400,000 persons got employment for an average number of 100 days during the last year of the Plan. If Dandekar and Rath only stopped at this point to look into the factors that were responsible for such dismal performance of a scheme that ought to have been defended as of

the greatest importance, they would have been convinced of the utter futility of all such schemes in the social frame of reference they have chosen to accept. But they move on, without looking too closely.

The Third Plan is really the last plan, properly speaking, the country has had. The Fourth Plan was supposed to have begun in 1966, after several false starts it finally got launched only in 1969. During this period of the idea of planning being systematically made disreputable, the idea of rural works programme underwent various changes. Thus, in the Draft Fourth Plan issued in 1966 it was calculated that rural unemployment might be expected to increase by the equivalent of 4 million persons wholly unemployed and suggested that if a rural works programme was to have a real impact it had to accommodate at least 4 million persons. But the Draft Plan provided only Rs 95 crores for the programme.

The whole programme was however dropped from the Fourth Plan in its final version, with the unexceptionable proposition that "the principal means of enlarging employment opportunities is to get the economy move as fast as possible with the maximum dispersal of production throughout the country". Not only that. The plan makes a very convincing argument about the difficulties of measuring employment or unemployment, and decides to leave out any figures about the backlog of unemployment, fresh additions to the labour force or creation of new employment opportunities. Apart from improving the statistical quality of the plan by thus removing from it some very bad statistics, this has the additional advantage of making it impossible for anybody to assess the impact of the plan on the unemployment situation. This indeed is the most revolutionary attack on the problem of unemployment which the Planning Commission has ever mounted before.

But Dandekar and Rath do not accept that rural works programmes need not be there because the plan is

there to generate employment and there are no dependable estimates of unemployment. They argue that if 40% of the rural families lie below this poverty line defined at Rs 15 worth of consumption per capita per month, then for all practical purposes these 40% families could very reasonably be treated as suffering from the efforts of unemployment and employment has to be provided to them to raise them above the poverty line. They plunge into a mass of arithmetical calculations and finally emerge with the figure of Rs 800 crores as the amount needed annually if the problems of rural unemployment and rural poverty have to be scaled.

"This then is the size of the problem. If the Planning Commission does not desire to look at it, there are good reasons for this. Indeed, the size of the problem itself is a good reason for not wanting to look at it or even to know what it is. But lack of data and estimates cannot be the reason. About Rs 800 crores worth of additional employment has to be created annually to enable the rural population, leaving out the ten per cent poorest, to secure a level of living which is 25% below what the Planning Commission has accepted as the nationally desirable minimum. This is a measure of the backlog of unemployment and underemployment at the beginning of the Fourth Plan. No greater precision is needed if anybody wants to do anything about it."

It does not matter whether Dandekar's estimate is wide off the mark. Instead of his Rs 800 crores, maybe the amount necessary would be as high as Rs 1,000 crores or as low as Rs 600 crores. In either case this has to be compared with the Rs 19 crores that was spent on rural works programmes in all the five years of the Third Five Year Plan. Here then is a measure of the problem Indira Gandhi has to tackle if she indeed means to abolish poverty and liquidate unemployment. At the rate of Rs 800 crores per annum she would require Rs 4,000 crores in five years. This is to be compared with the total

Third Plan budget of Rs 8,577 crores on the one hand and with the Rs 19 crores actually spent on the rural works programme on the other. Of course there is no question of her ever attempting to spend so much on rural works alone. But even if she spends Rs 500 crores she would be touching the problem only to one-eighth of its extent!

Dandekar and Rath do not give up their study on discovering what mammoth dimensions their calculations were yielding. There are two questions that have to be faced now. How to obtain the supplementary resources which amount to 25% of the Fourth Plan budget? And how to spend them so as to reach the rural poor? As to the first, the authors exhibit a simplicity and courage that would make a Don Quixote and Sancho Panza blush. "A 15 per cent cut in the consumer expenditure of the richest 5 per cent of the rural and the urban population and a 7.5 per cent cut in the consumer expenditure of the 5 per cent rich below them is all that is needed". There is no mistake in the arithmetic; but one has to have a satisfactory answer to a question which does not concern arithmetic but politics: why has there been no taxation of agricultural income until now? If indeed so much additional resources could be raised by cutting the consumption of the rich how is it that even a fraction of it has not been mobilised or is not even proposed to be mobilised for increasing the plan budget? As to the organisational channels through which to reach the money to the rural poor, Dandekar and Rath visualise an organisation whose "essential functions must be to move the people who are willing to work to wherever work exists. It is unlikely to be near everybody's home". The organisation is to be neither a departmental one nor based on labour co-operatives, but involves the use of licensed labour contractors. Innumerable questions arise as to how to ensure that the money would indeed reach the poor families and the unemployed workers would indeed do useful work

against this payment. The chances are very high that a very large part of the funds would get directed to other sections than the rural unemployed and that the latter would treat the payment as doles and not render any services to the best of their capabilities. All these problems arise because, liberal intellectuals that they are, the authors are determined to look away from the most obvious solution to the problem that stares one in the face. The problem can be attacked as follows. An institutional framework which will permit the millions of underdeveloped rural masses to engage in labour-intensive construction activities must satisfy the following conditions:

1. There must be incentive to work, i.e. there must be benefits accruing to each labourer in proportion to labour contributed.
2. There must not be any wastage of resources; i.e. no labour must be paid more than what his labour would contribute to produce.

#### Commune

The institutional arrangement that would most easily and directly satisfy these two criteria is the Chinese type of commune. Members of a commune pool all their labour power and whatever of this power remains in excess of the needs of current production is devoted to works resulting in capital formation. Incentive lies in the fact that each unit of labour power contributed is paid at the prevailing rate in terms of a share of the produce of the commune. Economic use of resources follows from the fact that labour devoted to capital formation would be paid in terms of the increased production due to the particular price of capital formation only if and when that increased production actually materialises, not otherwise or before. This is a scheme of deferred payment in kind and this removes any need of taxation and any possibility of pressure on prices generating through the creation of money income unmatched by a commensurate flow of goods. As there is no diversion of resources involved the question

of inefficient allocation of resources does not arise.

It may be emphasised that these results cannot be enjoyed by any scheme which retains private ownership of the means of production. Rural works programmes, to the extent they would result in land improvement and the building of infrastructures, would benefit different owners of land differently, depending on the size and location of their holdings. Dandekar and Rath do not propose any levy proportionate to the benefits accruing to the different beneficiaries. Their scheme is of taxation of the rural rich at certain flat rates. Why should a person who might draw no benefit whatsoever from the rural works agree to contribute the same as another who might see his income several folds multiplied because of the improvement of his land? Yet another problem that Dandekar and Rath underplay is that of the inflationary implications of such vast expenditures when the returns for the investments in many cases are somewhat uncertain and in any case subject to long time lags.

Thus Dandekar and Rath have produced yet another unworkable scheme, yet another attempt at squaring the circle. Not that they do not realise that communes provide the only answer to the problem. They themselves write. "For so poor a country like India, with limited land, capital and other means of production, Communism offers a classical solution to the problem of poverty." They are too shrewd students of political economy to really believe in their own schemes. Gathering Rs 800 crores per year by taxing the rich and distributing it among the poor through labour contractors! Whether they wanted it or not they have only highlighted the absurdity of trying even to touch the fringe of the problem within the present social framework. But men do not live by bread alone. They also like to listen to highfalutin platitudes and empty promises uttered in impeccable public school English. The peasant

masses of India admire and worship the grace and hauteur that goes with the non-landed culture and aristocracy of the country that sets the style in all matters for the country. The poor peasant masses must continue to live in poverty and unemployment for some more time to come so as to be able to pay for the fare consisting of elegance and style that they appreciate so keenly.

## Calcutta Diary

GYAN KAPUR

WE have just passed through what used to engender much heat and speculation among the Calcuttans but over the years has ceased to really mean anything to the common people. The election for the posts of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Calcutta has been a classic example of the non-event. Apart from the corridors of politics, the prospects of either set of candidates do not appear to have caused even the faintest stirrings in the mind of the man in the street. There was a little more interest in the prospective change of the Municipal Commissioner. So much for democracy as it is worked.

With the break-up of the former United Front, voting for the election followed expected patterns but much horse trading seems to have gone on for the marginal votes, particularly of the independents. From this doubtful game the CPM, even though the largest single party, could not keep itself aloof though what good it expected, win or lose, the party alone knows. As it is, with its own 37 votes and the RSP's 8, or 45 out of a total of 49 polled for the combination, the candidates for the posts of Mayor and Deputy Mayor supported by the combination were from neither of the two parties and in fact were the only two independents in the bloc. This, obviously, was their price for going along with the bloc and which the CPM and the RSP had no objection

to paying. If any principles were involved in this, they are not obvious on the surface. Was it not considered the CPM's right to have the Chief Ministership in the United Front by virtue of its position as the largest single party? And its willingness to forego this right as its contribution to keep the Front intact in face of intransigence of the other partners?

As it is, with a margin of two in their favour, the new Mayor and his Deputy and the citizens of Calcutta can look forward to some hectic times. No doubt the Corporation meetings will keep up their past reputation for being a model of what such meetings should not be. In spite of the best efforts of the Congress, it must be admitted that during the recent past the Corporation was somewhat falling in this respect.

Whether I have missed it I don't know but mercifully along with the smiling faces of the new Mayor and his Deputy, the usual speech of all newly elected mayors promising garbage removal, increase in water supply and bustee improvement was not there. If this means there will be less talk, citizens may even be grateful.

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No tears need be shed for the newly sent Pak Deputy High Commissioner going from pillar to post on arrival in Calcutta just for a place to stay. If things had been allowed to take the course they did as a matter of well-thought out policy, it would be understandable. But thinking and policy are not strong points of New Delhi. If policy there be any, it is 'parkalam' though the gentleman who made the word popular in all Indian languages is not in the Government. A carnival air surrounds the office of the former Deputy High Commissioner for Pakistan, now the office of the Diplomatic Mission of Bangla Desh, with curious sightseers lounging about and songs being played from temporary tents put on the pavements. It may look like a victory that Mr Masud is unable to start functioning and may have to leave the city empty-handed.

The fact remains, however, that New Delhi has been caught napping on the issue and will find it extremely difficult to get out of the situation. It is really astounding that the step taken by Mr Hossain Ali was not at all foreseen and adequate steps taken beforehand. As it is, there is a large Indian establishment in Dacca whose repatriation has now been linked with that of the Pakistan office in Calcutta, the majority of whom have switched their loyalty to Bangla Desh. If this had been foreseen, and even without this, there is no reason why the major part of the establishment in Dacca should not have been pulled out after the outbreak of hostilities. So far as the Bangla Desh Mission in Calcutta is concerned, Pakistan has definitely caught India on the wrong foot. If Bangla Desh were to be recognized, it would be quite another thing. But as this has not been done, Mr Hossain Ali and his staff still remain Pakistan nationals legally. They have not even asked for and been granted asylum in India. To hand them over to Pakistan is something which even New Delhi cannot do. In the absence of this, repatriation of the Indian Mission is not likely to be an easy affair. Pakistan is not likely to let go this opportunity of linking the Bangla Desh movement squarely with the eternal Indo-Pak love-hate relationship, clouding the main issue to some extent at least.

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Among the minor controversies or problems agitating the intellectuals on this side of the border is what name this State should have now that East Pakistan has re-christened itself Bangla Desh. Since we had East Bengal and West Bengal and even now there is Punjab (India) and Punjab in Pakistan there does not appear any reason why the present name should not continue. But for national identity names are, of course, all important and judging by recent Indian history the trend is towards going back to names used in pre-British days and even further back. A suggestion made in this connection in a local daily by a correspondent

is that West Bengal should be named Gaur Pradesh. It is argued that historically West Bengal and East Bengal were all along separate entities and only the region east of the Padma was known as Bangla Desh; the present name is only a recognition of this fact. As a result, following the same argument, West Bengal should go back to its old name and call itself Gaur Pradesh. According to this line of reasoning the two regions had separate entities, the Brahmanic civilisation extending up to the bank of the Padma while the people on the other side were different. This, if accepted, would cut at the very idea of Bengalis on both sides of the border being the same people. As such it is doubtful if the people of West Bengal can be made to put up much enthusiasm for getting the name of the State changed to Gaur Pradesh whatever the validity of historical premises. West Bengal it is and West Bengal it is likely to remain in the foreseeable future.

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# Notes From USA

FROM A CORRESPONDENT

**N**OW that the Americans and the South Vietnamese puppet troops have been soundly beaten in Laos and the so-called Vietnamisation programme has proved to be a fantasy, Washington is trying to swallow the bitterness that follows such disasters. For all the government and military agencies—State Department, Defence Department, Pentagon, CIA—there is a twofold problem: how to explain the events of the Laos adventure, and what kind of military and political objectives to pursue in Indochina.

Several explanations and interpretations have come forth. High-ranking military officers, particularly in Saigon, have claimed outright victory. Thus official sources are still trying to flaunt their statistics: the "enemy" suffered a loss of 13,668 dead—25% of his strength in Laos. As usual, this is not a body count but an "estimate" by B-52 and helicopter gunship missions, and even American field officers consider it an exaggeration. On the other hand, the same official sources have announced that 25% of the ARVN troops were casualties along with about 200 Americans. As for machines, over 100 helicopters have been lost and over 600 damaged. When one adds to the official version journalists' reports of ARVN soldiers refusing to fight, hanging on to helicopters to get out of Laos, of at least one U.S. army unit disobeying orders to return to the "fire zone", of stragglers stumbling south, there emerges a clearer picture of irrefutable defeat.

Since it is difficult to take the victory claim seriously, Washington is more concerned with the familiar American (fundamentally liberal) game of neutralisation: They lost some men and material, we lost some men and material—then they went home and we went home. On the whole we achieved our goals. Thus there is no change in Indochina.

This is also the sour-grapes argument. For example, during the retreat of the routed troops the Defence Secretary, Mr Laird, said that the puppet troops "did an outstanding job" but were leaving Laos because of the "tremendously vicious reaction on the part of the North Vietnamese". As if he always sends his men into battle with ice cream, Coca-cola, and baseball bats for self-defence! The whole affair was put in a correct perspective by a Vietnamese friend on the very first day of the Laos invasion. "Look how suicidal the whole thing is," he said. "The communists knew four months in advance that the invasion was coming. They have some of the world's best soldiers—the Iron Divisions—in the border area between Vietnam and Laos. Then the terrain is not like Cambodia, there are mountains covered with dense jungles. Even B-52s cannot dislodge troops from fortified tunnels among mountain rocks. Of course, 500-pound bombs will do some damage, but they won't change the outcome of the coming battles. So watch for a catastrophe." And he was right.

But it is the future which holds the bigger problem for the warmongers. Right now an invasion of North Vietnam seems out of question, in spite of Thieu's initial enthusiasm and Washington's refusal to rule out such an eventuality. Certainly Chou En-lai's visit to Hanoi and Le Duan's trip to Peking have instilled caution and fear into a few hearts here. Then in the first week of April the DRVN and the PRG claimed over 1000 U.S. casualties in over 100 separate attacks within South Vietnam. Most publicized here was the overrunning of an artillery base 50 miles south of Da Nang. At first American count, there were 33 soldiers dead and 76 wounded. So even outside Laos things are not going well for the imperial power. It is thought by some that

this major crisis facing Nixon and his cohorts may begin a new version of Eisenhower's "threat" to use nuclear weapons now. It is conceivable that in future the U.S. will try to line the demilitarized zone between North and South Vietnam with nuclear mines.

The pressure on Nixon, particularly from his generals, to create the illusion of a military victory before being forced out of Indochina is considerable, and so far all the "conventional" means have been unsuccessful. (Incidentally, an American journalist stated the other day that even a quarter of the fire power used in Vietnam would have brought any European nation, in a contemporary situation, to its knees.) On the other hand, an indefinite continuation of the war may cost Nixon his presidency in 1972 and may bring the U.S. into a conflict with China. Both would be inevitable consequences of a desperate attempt to "win" a war that cannot be won. In the last analysis, it will be the American monopolists who will choose the Presidential course that is most profitable to them. At present there are trends and speculations but no clear indication of a different (suicidal or not) Indochinese policy.

## The Calley Trial

It has been several years since the Bertrand Russell War Crimes Tribunal pronounced that U.S. action in Vietnam was genocidal and the U.S. government was guilty of war crimes on a scale unprecedented in history. (Some consider the Nazis to have been worse, but a dispute on this question is not flattering to anybody). Americans held in DRV have always been referred to as war criminals and there has been no lack of journalistic evidence, which is substantial within the bourgeois press, of the wholesale atrocities committed by U.S. troops in Vietnam. After all this the court-martial of Army Lieutenant Calley for pre-meditated murder of Vietnamese civilians has certainly been ironic. Why single out one officer and one instance out of a continuum of massacres? Although

two other court-martials are being publicized, those of Captain Medina and Colonel Henderson. These are around the same My Lai incident, and constitute a division of labour: the Captain who gave the orders, the Lieutenant who carried them out, and the Colonel who looked the other way when he saw reports of the incident.

There are several reasons for this well-publicized "trial". First, the whole thing was started by an ex-soldier who had been involved in the My Lai massacre and who broke the story to the press. Subsequently, journalists unearthed a lot of evidence to corroborate the story, forcing the Pentagon to take some action. Secondly, given the general feeling about the war both at home and abroad, a gesture defending the "good guys" position taken by the U.S. would not be inopportune. Thirdly, a diversion toward personal problems and individual action upholds the prevailing ideology in American society and moves the blame for any perversity in Vietnam from imperialist policy and the class character of the war to a few "misguided individuals". Fourthly, a test case like Calley's, accompanied by the proper dose of sentimental outbursts, is likely to sway public opinion, at least temporarily, toward forgiveness and even defence of the poor victim, particularly when the prosecutor and the defendant are on the same side. So, by trying Calley the U.S. army had nothing to lose.

But when there is a division among the ranks, it is not always possible to foresee all contingencies. What has emerged from the trial, where Calley was convicted of premeditated murder and sentenced to life imprisonment (with the possibility of getting out after ten years), is essentially a feud between two factions of the ruling classes of this country. The rightist argument is not new: wars are fought like this, orders must be obeyed, Calley's court-martial reflects on the integrity of our fighting men and lowers their morale, USA right or wrong (when has it ever been

wrong?), etc. The liberal faction argues: our enemies are savages but not we, justice is on our side and we must be just, what about (bourgeois) morality?, there is precedence in the U.S. army for such trials, laxity with Calley may ruin military discipline, etc. The split has become particularly painful since Nixon first ordered Calley moved from jail to house arrest (after sentencing), and then declared that he would personally review the case—all this under the pressure of patriotic zeal.

The conflict within the ruling ranks reflects, of course, the contradictions of bourgeois democracy, and therein lies its real significance. We must remember that beside being unable to defeat the "enemy", the U.S. troops in Indochina are suffering a great deal from internal dissension. If Calley is to be freed, what about the many rank and file GIs who are being held for having killed, in one way or another, their superior officers? Within the framework of a bourgeois democratic argument, the clear indication of a double standard regarding court-martials reveals the true character of bourgeois dictatorship. This the Kennedys and the Galbraiths do not like, particularly when they are the political "opposition". That is why, on the domestic front, these liberals have to talk about introspection and sharing Calley's guilt, as if all Americans have sanctioned the crimes of their rulers. The right, on the other hand, is more forthright. It hails Calley as a true patriot and a victim of misguided policy, and wants to move Americans another step closer to fascism. The truth is that Calley is a criminal *and* a scapegoat, and the calculated "controversy" around his case only allows the arch-criminals to continue to smile. Right now Nuremberg is often mentioned but the history leading up to those trials is not remembered.

#### The American Left

An unfortunate fact accompanying events like the Laos misadventure and Calley's court-martial is the inability of the Left as a whole (bar-

ring a few individual efforts) to grasp the situation, analyse it, and present the analysis to the American people. The necessity for such action is obvious:

"The more powerful enemy can be conquered only by exerting the utmost effort, and by necessarily, thoroughly, carefully, attentively, and skilfully taking advantage of every, even the smallest, "rift" among the enemies, of every antagonism of interest...among the various groups or types of bourgeoisie within the various countries, by taking advantage of every, even the smallest, opportunity of gaining a mass ally, even though this ally be temporary, vacillating, unstable, unreliable and conditional. Those who do not understand this do not understand even a particle of Marxism, or of scientific, modern socialism *in general*" (Lenin, "Left-Wing" Communism).

Not carrying out this kind of patient work involves a blatant contradiction. Because the very people who are the potentially revolutionary force in this country are the ones who are being fed, day in and day out, the news stories about Laos and My Lai, through television, radio, newspapers, magazines—all that constitutes the mass media. In the American context there is also the factor of *immediacy*. The facts, distorted or not, are presented immediately, "professional" news analysis is immediate, and response to facts and analysis is immediate. Under the circumstances, adherence to Marxism is not served by merely claiming the victory of the Laotian people or calling the Calley court-martial a trick of the ruling class. Such statements lack the thoroughness and attention that Lenin talks about and are no match for the manipulative powers of an institutionalized mass media. They do not point out the necessity of contradictions and "splits" within the affluent society, even though they enforce the feelings of those who are already on the left.

The main reason for this problem may be the fragmentation of the American Left, complete with revisionism,

mystification of Marxism-Leninism, cult of experience and Trotsky's ghost. The ensuing verbal feuds and bickerings have produced volumes of literature, but very few communists. This matter is, of course, the subject for a separate discussion. Right now, however, it seems that a Left incapable of continual and concrete analysis of events which matter to most Americans, is only allowing the mass hypnotists to put on their best front.

## Clippings

### The Calley Case

A handful of Senate Democrats somewhat sheepishly began criticizing President Nixon's intervention in the case of Lieutenant William Calley, having been startled into activity by the young Army prosecutor who sent a scathing letter of denunciation to the President.

As forthright as when he was prosecuting Lieutenant Calley, Captain Aubrey Daniel III, a 29-year-old conscript, accuses his C-in-C of damaging the system of military justice, making it appear subject to political influence, and helping to make a national hero of a murderer.

...Captain Daniel, in his letter, expresses shock and dismay at Mr Nixon's intervention "in the midst of the public clamour", saying: "Your decision can only have been prompted by the response of a vocal section of our population who, while no doubt acting in good faith, cannot be aware of the evidence.

"It is a fundamental precept of our judicial system that the legal processes of this country must be kept free from outside influences. It would seem to me to be more appropriate for you as the President to have said something in the jury's behalf, and to remind the nation of the purpose of our legal system and the respect it should command.

"I would expect the President of

the United States... would stand fully behind the law of this land on a moral issue which is so clear and about which there can be no compromise."

Captain Daniels, recalling the President's initial expression of abhorrence at the My Lai killings, and speaking of the scrupulous fairness with which the trial was conducted, said he wanted to believe that the popular reaction was an emotional one based on ignorance of the evidence—but he wonders.

"To believe that any large percentage of the population could believe the evidence which was presented and (then) approve of the conduct of Lieutenant Calley would be as shocking to my conscience as the conduct itself, since I believe we are still a civilised nation. If such be the case, then the war in Vietnam has brutalized us more than I care to believe, and it must cease.

"How shocking it is if so many people across this nation have failed to see the moral issue which was involved in the trial of Lieutenant Calley—that it is unlawful for an American soldier to summarily execute unarmed and unresisting men, women, children and babies.

"But how much more appalling it is to see so many of the political leaders of the nation who have failed to see the moral issue or, having seen it, to compromise it for political motive in the face of apparent public displeasure with the verdict."

He told the President he regretted having to write the letter, "but innocent people were killed under circumstances that will always remain abhorrent to my conscience".

The letter, while damaging to President Nixon, could be of moment if it serves to make more logical the distraught argument over the verdict. Too many people, especially liberals, in their haste to indict the whole system for "war crimes", seem to have overlooked the basic fact of individual responsibility before the law. (Fred Amery in *The Times*, London).

## Murder Spree

Ten American veterans of the war in Vietnam described... how they watched and took part in the mutilation or murder of Vietnamese civilians by American soldiers.

The former soldiers, appearing before an audience of nearly 1,000, told of using their 2½ ton lorries to run down villagers and of the shooting of pregnant women and old men "for a three-day pass." The testimony was part of a series by the Vietnam veterans against the War called "the Winter Soldier Investigation."

The speakers displayed copies of their military discharge papers and award citations.

"I killed a 68-year-old civilian who was cutting pineapples. I got credit for a kill and a three-day pass." Michael Hunter, a winner of three Purple Hearts, said: "If you killed gooks (American soldiers' slang for Vietnamese) you got a leave." He added: "You take his ears to show you killed him."

"I saw two young Vietnamese shot", Richard Warren, a winner of several decorations for battlefield heroics around Da Nang, said: "There was no evidence they were enemy soldiers."

Mr Warren said the youths had been allowed to run bleeding into a village.

John McGuinness, awarded a Purple Heart and Silver Star, described the shooting of a pregnant woman and her young son. "One of the squad members was interrogating a Vietnamese woman, pregnant, concerning the whereabouts of her husband. The squad member was talking in Spanish and English to her. When she started crying and saying: 'I do not know' in Vietnamese, the squad member let off a burst of may be five or six rounds and shot her and her son. They died of chest wounds."

When asked why the woman was shot, he said, "She was a gook".

Mr Hunter, who said he had served two tours of duty in Vietnam and whose father is a colonel in the

Army, also told of cutting off the victims' heads and putting them on spikes outside villages.

He also told of lining up women outside villages, holding guns to their heads and ordering them "to submit to our sexual desires". He added that commanding officers never intervened.

Mr Hunter described himself as being "as gung-ho (patriotic) as you could get". "There is just nothing like running down a V. C. (Vietcong) and shooting him", he said. "I guess I was crazy. I was a good old G. I. Joe."

Jeff Jurens, who had served as a lorry driver in Chu Lai, said standard procedure for driving was "not to stop our trucks for anything." He had driven through one village, had run down a civilian on a motorcycle and continued driving. He also said the wind from the lorry had knocked down the thatched huts.

The Army had been invited to respond to the accusations, a coordinator of the programme said, but declined.—(Agency report).

### Born Foolish ?

Some lines of the great Chilean poet Pablo Neruda have come home to roost. Salvador Allende, who became Chile's first Marxist a president last year, recently appointed Neruda as Chilean ambassador to Paris. Did he perhaps recall the following extract from Neruda's great poem *Canto General* ?

If you are born a fool in Romania  
you follow a fool's career.  
If you are a fool in Avignon  
you are known for what you are  
by the old stones of France,  
by the schools and by the disrespect-  
ful kids on the farms.  
But if you are born a fool in Chile  
soon they will make you an  
ambassador...

(The Times)

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## Letters

### China And Pakistan

I have been an admirer of the People's Republic of China for her revolutionary practice in and outside the country. But I am at a loss to understand her policies in regard to East Bengal. In one place China says that it is "slander" to say that China "is aiding the Pakistan Government in its war on the freedom loving people of East Bengal". Fine, this is exactly what we expect from China. But in another place she says, "The Chinese Government and the people will always vehemently support the Pakistan Government and the people in their just struggle for safeguarding national independence and state sovereignty and against foreign aggression and interference." How do these two views reconcile with each other? Certainly they are in contradiction.

The East Bengalis are fighting for a just cause, because for the last 23 years West Pakistan has imposed economic as well as political slavery on East Bengal and there is no other way than to fight and this fight of theirs for economic and political emancipation is inseparable from the freedom struggle.

So to speak of national independence and state sovereignty goes definitely against the freedom of East Bengal. Moreover, Pakistan comprising East Bengal and West Pakistan is not a nation in the true sense of the term. It is an Islamic spectre superimposed by the British imperialists in collusion with the Muslim capitalists of this sub-continent. At best there can be two Pakistans. So the sooner the present Pakistan disintegrates into two nations, the better it is for the development of revolutionary forces.

SUMANA MAJUMDER (Miss)  
Ranaghat

### "Friends Of The People"

Who are the friends of the people? On the pretext of supporting the 'freedom fighters of Bangla Desh' *The Statesman*, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *Jugantar*, *Ananda Bazar Patrika* have all been very much active again in their anti-Chinese propaganda. In doing so they have adopted the old tactics of misquoting or distorting Chinese statements, propagating baseless, Hongkong based news and then drawing strange conclusions. They often display the lack of a minimum sense of logic and consistency, not to speak of evidence. Take *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of April 14. It says: "The Chinese Premier, Mr Chou En-lai's message to President Yahya Khan offering China's all out support to Pakistan's military action in East Bengal posed a threatening stance towards India, according to China watchers here." But in a later paragraph of the same article the *Patrika* writes, "But in fact, an analysis of the telegram sent to Pakistani President Yahya Khan, parts of which were published in Rawalpindi yesterday, shows that the Chinese leader does not really come out for West Pakistan against the Bengalis but simply attacks India."

To dupe the people these papers have now assumed the role of judges and are giving verdicts on revolutionary actions. But mere propaganda does not work, not, at least, in the long run. People cannot forget that these big tycoons of the Indian press who are now shedding tears for the freedom fighters of Bangla Desh have always tried to distort, belittle and slander the role and actions of the revolutionary freedom fighters of South East Asia and elsewhere. They have supported the traitorous, puppet governments of Saigon and Lon Nol. Even now when the Bandaranaik government is killing in the same brutal and naked way as Yahya Khan, the revolutionary youths in Ceylon and the reactionary Indira government has been very prompt in associating itself with that government, these papers have been ardent

supporters of the Indira and Bandaranaike governments. Thus their past records and the events in totality show quite clearly what their real nature is.

SANJAY MITRA  
Calcutta

## Two Deaths

Without taking part into the debate whether the CPI(ML) is following a correct path or not, I want to reply to some of the points made by Mr Arun Majumdar.

Who are the "finest sons" of Bengal and in what respect are they the "finest"? It is a fact that many good students who participated in revolutionary activities later joined the CPI(ML). But should we judge a revolutionary by his performance in the bourgeois educational system? How do we judge lots of good cadres who were never good students? A communist party can only boast, when along with its 'ideological correctness' it has the "finest sons" of the working class and rural proletariat in its ranks. Even an enthusiastic supporter of the CPI(ML) cannot deny that it has failed to rally behind it the "finest sons" of the proletariat.

Secondly, even if a party is successful in rallying the "finest sons" of the revolutionary classes, this qualification does not contribute much to its revolutionary character. Many so-called left and reactionary parties have many 'finest sons' of the toiling people in their ranks, but that does not make them revolutionary.

It is childish to think that Mr S. Roy is a counter-revolutionary agent of the establishment just because he differed with Mr Majumdar. This attitude reflects the petit bourgeois tendencies and weaknesses of the Indian revolutionaries. They have only a few thousands followers. Their duty is to organize crores of Indian people.

TARUN SEN  
Jalpaiguri

## Punjabi Literature

In the wake of the Naxalbari movement Punjabi literature underwent a qualitative change. Punjabi literature has always had revolutionary traditions. But it was the bankrupt political line of the CPI that helped the so-called 'experimentalists' to dominate the scene of Punjabi literature for a decade. But it was the Naxalbari movement which on the one hand brought in its wake the message of revolution for the toiling Indian masses and on the other dealt a shattering blow to the bourgeois degeneration in our culture. Once again the poets committed to the cause of people came to the forefront.

The impact of the Naxalbari movement was visible first in the sphere of poetry. The majority of the poets who came under the influence of this trend are members of the CPI(ML). To name some of them—Pash (under trial for a 'murder' case), Lal Singh Dil (landless and poor peasant, underground), Darshan Singh Khatkar (under arrest, charged with nine 'murders'), Harbhajan Halvarvi and Amarjit Chandan (both "proclaimed offenders"). Another poet, Gurdeep Grewal, was arrested, tried for a 'theft' case and acquitted. A guerilla poet, Iqbal Singh Manguwal, was tortured to death and later declared as killed in an encounter with the police. Surendera, the editor of *Hem Jyoti*, a Punjabi monthly magazine, was arrested under the State Security Act for his alleged Naxalite activities. Kumar Vikal, Mrityubodh and Ajit Singh Rahi were taken into custody and were interrogated.

The militant writers of Punjab have formed a Co-ordination Committee of Revolutionary Writers to bring all those writers and artistes who are committed to people's war on one platform. The convener is Mrityubodh.

The growing militant trend in Punjabi literature has also activated its opponents. One self-styled litterateur, Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia, officer on special duty to the Chief Minister, Punjab, is convening a symposium.

The Punjabi writers and artistes who accept Mao Tsetung Thought as the Marxism-Leninism of our era have to prepare to face all such reactionary attacks and to popularise art and literature in the language of the common masses.

GAUTAM NILAMBER  
Chandigarh

## Sudhin Datta

Apropos the literary review by Ashok Mitra (March 27), it is a fact that Sudhindranath Datta has serious limitations as a critic and poet. But it is difficult to understand what Mitra says. "Whatever he wanted to say could surely have been said in quarter of the space each poem has taken." Any love-poem may be condensed in a sentence: I love you—if Mr Mitra's razor is used. Sudhindranath Datta's poems have many structural flaws despite the fact that he declared himself a Mallarmezist. But this should be judged in a serious way. Is Mr Ashok Mitra, the reviewer himself a victim of the cynicism of Sudhin Datta the author?

Mr Mitra asks: "What is the relevance of Sudhindranath Datta in today's world? Must we read him merely to explore our heritage?" Those whose mother tongue is Bengali need not explore the heritage in the English translation of Sudhindranath as they can read the original.

What is the relevance of Dante or Shakespeare to us, the Bengalis of the 1970s? Would Mr Ashok Mitra advise us not to translate them? And what is the relevance of Bengali literature in today's world? Why is it taught in foreign countries? Sudhindranath is definitely not a Shakespeare or a Dante, but if Bengali literature has any relevance, Sudhindranath's role in the post-Tagorean period, at least historically, is significant despite his peculiar and contradictory literary views. Not only Sudhindranath Datta, but others like Jibananda and Bishnu De must be translated into foreign languages.

ARJUN BANDYOPADHYAY  
Naihati

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