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JOURNEY TO PEKING

MR Nixon goes to Peking on Monday. The Vietcong, as in previous years, offered not to attack enemy forces for four days beginning from February 14 to mark the Tet Lunar Year. This does not mean that there would be no offensive thereafter—the Americans ignored the offer—when Nixon is in Peking. In fact there are reports of a build-up in South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos and American bombers have been carrying out savage raids. The Seventh Fleet has been reinforced and full-scale bombing of North Vietnam may be resumed. After all, the planes and the pilots have not yet been affected by marijuana and heroin. The addicts on the ground, the American boys, will be confined to barracks.

Mr Nixon was mistaken if he thought that the Peking date would induce the NLF to be quiet at the time of the Tet celebrations. If the NLF does launch an offensive, it would not embarrass Peking; it is Mr Nixon who would not be able to bargain from a position of strength despite the massive and savage air raids. Both Hanoi and the NLF know that the American President, as big a killer as his predecessor, would resort to the air arm. They have taken it before and they would not expect Nixon to be reticent in view of his Peking visit.

But, uneasy intellectuals would raise the question of morality. Is it right for the Chinese to talk to Nixon when his bombers are over Indochina? They did break off the Warsaw talks when Cambodia was invaded (as did Hanoi with Kissinger). The Chinese, whose leader is alone among the great old revolutionaries of this century to have survived, know that misunderstandings, both at home and abroad, are inevitable in a complex and fast changing world. Stalin's Russia survived the God-that-failed revulsion in many quarters over the non-aggression pact with Hitler's Germany. The Chinese themselves refer to their collaboration with Chiang Kai-shek. Their readiness to receive Nixon is an attempt to break the American collaboration with Russia and other powers for spheres of influence. There are many people who refuse to believe that Russia has expansionist aims and want China to get together again with the self-proclaimed socialist giant. But Peking knows better. If this giant who is strong with the weak and weak with the strong can fight small wars by proxy and keep mobilised a vast army on

the frontiers with China after a few clashes over small pieces of territory, China has to look for ways to break through the encirclement. She cannot be a purist while all other powers are pragmatic.

Nothing much is likely to come out of the Peking talks except some modes for further contacts. But the talks will mark the beginning of the end of duopoly and further unsettle the rigid alignments of the 'sixties. The enthusiastic measures taken by Mr Khrushchev to get close to America led to the estrangement with China. It is time the Russians ceased to have the best of both worlds. Mr Kosygin—or was it Mr Brezhnev—once told a French Minister that a Sino-American rapprochement would be terrible for Russia. It would be good if Russia is forced to shed some of her cocksureness. However, the Chinese led by Mao Tse-tung, are not likely to cut their nose just to spite Moscow. Besides, hasn't Mr Nixon been invited to Moscow?

The Captive President

Mr Bhutto has not been able to fulfil as yet many of the promises he made on his assumption of power in Pakistan. Nor does it seem likely that he will be able to carry them out in the near future. It is easy to fault him on this score though his record in the short span that he has been President of Pakistan has been impressive. The latest package of labour reforms, for example, contains provisions that are yet to be enforced in his country. There has, however, been no basic change in the power structure in Pakistan, and it is only a weird combination of forces that has catapulted to power a leader of known left leanings like him. Mr Bhutto would have been passed by if Pakistan had another leader who could hold the country together. That is his forte as also his weakness. The forces that are in command of the levers of powers in Pakistan are ready to tolerate him as long as he

does not attempt to dislodge them, for he has no equal, yet. At the same time, whatever be his personal proclivities, Mr Bhutto, on his part, cannot take any step to rock the boat violently, for that will mean the end of his presidential career.

Much is being made of his inability to end the Martial Law and induct a civil regime in Pakistan. For anyone in this country to criticise him on this ground will be patent hypocrisy, for India is still in a state of emergency and the Defence of India Rules reign supreme. The army has remained deployed in West Bengal for more than a year, although at the time of deployment it had been proclaimed that the troops would be sent back to the barracks in six weeks or so. The Prime Ministers of India and Bangladesh have declared in their joint statement that the last of the Indian troops would pull out of Bangladesh by March 25, but there is every possibility of one being dubbed unpatriotic and what not if one were to ask when the troops would be pulled out of this other Bengal. There is no reason to think that Mr Bhutto would not have lift-

ed the Martial Law if his powers were absolute. But he has been installed in office by a military clique which took over from the defeated and disgraced generals led by Yahya Khan. So long as Mr Bhutto is not able to free himself from this clique and develop a power base that can meet the challenge of the army, he will not be able to abolish the Martial Law against the wishes of the ruling clique in the Pakistan army.

When Mr Wali Khan of the National Awami Party insists on immediate recognition of Bangladesh he forgets that over the past few weeks Mr Bhutto has stopped maligning India and Bangladesh which cannot but conduce to better relations between Pakistan and these two countries. He has promised to negotiate with Bangladesh after the withdrawal of Indian troops, and he will expose himself to criticism if he does not move even after March 25. If Mr Bhutto fails the consequences will not be beneficial to Mr Khan and like-minded politicians of Pakistan. Nor will it do India any good to have a perennially troubled country on its borders.

Little News Is Good News ?

Hard news from Bangladesh is scarce because hard news is often unpleasant. As expected, the press in India and elsewhere is more than friendly to the new State which has emerged after so much bloodshed. What at the moment is engaging many minds there is the conflict between patriotic Bengalis and the non-patriotic, who include both 'Beharis' and Bengalis. The conflict, though not based on religion, is not far from communalism. The non-Bengalis and the Bengalis who collaborated with the military regime set up a terrible record of violence though it would not do to ignore the provocation after the December, 1970 victory of the Awami League and the harassments of March 1971—and worse afterwards in pockets like Khulna. The retali-

ation, after the army crackdown, however, was prolonged and brutal, and many old scores were settled which had nothing to do with politics. In the countryside it was sometimes difficult to tell who was who.

There were fears of another blood-bath after the fall of Dacca. But the general impression was that once Sheikh Mujib was released, the people of Bangladesh would carry out his orders, though the desire for vengeance was irresistible. It was also assumed that the presence of the Indian Army would make a difference, and this was claimed to be an additional reason for its continued presence. The Bahinis were expected to lay down their arms.

According to newspaper reports, many of the expectations have been

fulfilled. But because of some savage provocation on the eve of the surrender and later, there was a serious flare-up in the Mirpur area, a northern suburb of Dacca, where large numbers of non-Bengalis have been cordoned off for weeks. The Indian Army got involved with the Bahini; and, so far as one can guess, the army cordon was withdrawn after hurried consultations between General Aurora and Sheikh Mujib. The Bengal Regiment and the Mujib Bahini have been entrusted with the task of combing Mirpur for arms and armed fanatics. The Bahini report that 100 men on their side were killed in the clashes (later reports say 350) shows the seriousness of the confrontation, though no reliable figures of casualties suffered by the other side are available. Rockets and mortars are said to have been used. Sheikh Mujib declared in Calcutta that no one had been touched after independence; it is a pity that he spoke in the accents of a Chief Minister, not Prime Minister.

It is being suggested that the non-Bengalis, who number about 15 lakhs, should be sent to Pakistan in exchange for the Bengalis there. But 15 lakh refugees, in a rump Pakistan of about 5 crores of people, would mean much greater pressure than that of one crore refugees in a country of 55 crores—the pressure which led to the recent war, according to New Delhi.

The intense obsession with the Bengali language, with 'pure' Bengalis and Sonar Bangla carried the seeds of communal conflict. The obsession is not enough for a new state, though it may gladden our hearts. It gives temporary advantages to windbags, but a new State, to build itself up, requires sterner stuff. The administration that is being set up in Bangladesh is said to be run by the affluent middle class. Some of the representatives who come here now seem to have been transformed: they are such sticklers for protocol, the poshest hotel and superfine amenities that their Indian counterparts are sometimes left speechless.

The refugees, for whom alone Mrs Gandhi went to war, have been forgotten by most of the newspapers here. They went back because of the Indian Army. It is no coincidence that the withdrawal date for the army is expected to synchronise with the return of most of the refugees. How these men, women and children are faring in a situation where human beings are naturally reluctant to give back property and land in many cases is nobody's business.

Some 200 people died in the recent hailstorm in a Bangladesh district, presumably not in their homes.

It has been corpses, corpses in Bangladesh all the way from March onwards. It is time the funeral rites were gone through and the Bahinis and others turned their minds to other pressing business and not talk, in undertones, of the clean sweep that is going on in the countryside. Otherwise, it would be said that mass upheavals on this subcontinent, in the absence of a revolutionary party, tend to have shrill overtones of communal rioting.

Parleys With Japan

The Indian Press suffered from a rare kind of paranoia all through the Bangladesh crisis by bracketing China with the USA. Dr Kissinger's secret mission to Peking, his success in securing an invitation for President Nixon and General Yahya Khan's knowledge of the whole affair helped many to paint a lurid picture of an impending Sino-American collusion. Even after the Indian army liberated what is now Bangladesh, correspondents of the Indian Press who went to Dacca did not care to ascertain from China's known friends there how deep was that country's involvement in the crisis. An Indian working for a foreign newspaper has, however, been told by 'reliable' leftists in Dacca that China was strongly opposed to the military junta's repression in Bengal. General Yahya

received a letter to this effect from Peking. When Bhutto went to Peking in November he was shown a list of 60 district-level leftist leaders and many progressives who were liquidated by the army. The demonstration before the Bhutto delegation, rather an unusual thing in China, and its empty-handed return showed Peking's avowed disapproval of the military junta's doings in East Bengal. China was not against the movement, but it did not want victory for the Awami Leaguers. Its calculation was that if the struggle was a protracted one, the leadership would pass into the hands of the radicals. Leftist circles in Dacca said that things were developing as they expected, but with Indian intervention "the Bengali struggle ceased to be a people's liberation movement". Today their concern is how Bangladesh will be exploited by the so-called friendly Powers. In Bangladesh, India and Russia are no doubt the big winners.

Strategic arms limitation talks with America, detente in Europe, a strong foothold in West Asia, the 20-year treaty with India and now the agreement with Japan to begin negotiations within this year on a peace treaty have all allowed Russia to concentrate on its borders with China. What Moscow wants is to keep China in angry seclusion. Any agreement between Japan and Russia would be directed to undermining Chinese influence in Asia. President Nixon will definitely be told in Peking about Japanese over-presence in the region. But Gromyko has offered the bait that Japan could hold its own if only it would draw a little closer to Russia. Even though this sort of approach can only encourage the militarists to press for higher defence spending, the Kremlin will be contented if Japan continues to maintain its anti-China stand. To blunt the pleading of the Japanese trading community for improving relations with Peking, Moscow has proposed joint ventures in Siberia. Not much progress can, however, be made in

the political sphere without a satisfactory solution to the Kuriles issue. Although Gromyko has shown softness on four fairly barren islands, Moscow wants to leave the issue

hanging for some time. It does not want to provide Peking with an opportunity to renew its claim to much extensive areas now under Russian control.

With Feet Of Clay

The idea was first aired by Sir Alec Douglas-Home. He commented during his meeting with Mr Swaran Singh that India had become the strongest nation in South Asia. The idea became full-blown when Mr Nixon in his foreign policy message to Congress reiterated that India was South Asia's most powerful country. Those who wondered how India had absorbed the weight of ten million evacuees for nine months would no doubt agree with Sir Alec and Mr Nixon. With a 'little effort', India has borne the cost of another war. The country has become almost self-sufficient in foodgrains. She has not lost equanimity because of Mr Nixon's hide-and-peek policy regarding aid to India. India is perhaps the only democracy that was born in Asia after the Second World War and is still surviving.

This strongest nation in South or South-East Asia is however finding it difficult to repay the debts. India's debt liabilities to foreign countries till September 1971 are Rs. 8,012 crores. Till April 1970, if we remember, they were Rs. 6,570 crores. This is consumption at a galloping pace.

Not that debts per se are a ruinous matter. Every country may require loans to construct its economy. China needed it badly when she became sovereign. She got it, from Russia, but repaid it, capital and interest, nearly seven years ago. It is interesting to note that India took loans, right and left, a privilege which

China did not have. The total loan Russia gave China was not only equated but exceeded by another loan Russia gave India at the same time—an indication that Russia was not exactly engaged during 1949-59 in reconstructing the economy of a fraternal socialist country out of love for international communism but just opened a loan giving service. Any way, China repaid her loans, and India did not. India has to repay the Russian and East European loans, Rs. 461 crores, through export goods. To America, Rs. 2,655 crores in free exchange, Rs. 1,498 crores in rupees. To Britain, Rs. 625 crores, to West Germany Rs. 617 crores, to Japan Rs. 310 crores, to Canada Rs. 177 crores, to Italy Rs. 136 crores, to France Rs. 137 crores and to the IDA Rs. 382 crores.

If these debts were properly used by India, the economy would have been a stable one. West Germany and Japan used the U.S. assistance and loans so very efficiently that both have turned out not only economically independent but also threatening to American monopolist hegemony over the world. But India is as sick as before, if not more. It is nothing surprising. India has not developed on the capitalist path, as West Germany and Japan had; neither on the non-capitalist path as China had. The weak feudal elements of the Indian ruling class and the weak bourgeois class of the same had no intention or strength to develop independently. The line of least resistance, a sell-out to imperialists, was the way out for the ruling class so long as it was good for it, even if temporarily. The aid has therefore, judiciously employed, fattened the coffers of the ruling class.

Talking Business

The ACCI meetings have always been the annual get-together of government officials and business representatives to sort out their areas of agreement and difference, to discuss their present problems and to chart out the future course of action. This year, Mr Subramaniam, the Union Home Minister of Planning, Science and Technology, was present. Although there was difference in detail regarding the extent of the country's economic malaise among the participants and the Minister tended to hedge the businessmen's accusations, they did not disagree that the economic situation was bleak and the scars were most manifest in industrial production. It is said that the basic industries have grown only by 4.2 per cent in 1970 against 8.9 per cent in 1969; the intermediate sector's growth declined from 4.2 per cent to 2.7 per cent; and the consumer industries slumped to 6.3 per cent from 10.2 per cent. As an outcome of this industrial setback the economy is said to have failed to profit from the relative growth in agriculture, or "green revolution" if you so will, and a crucial advantage has almost been flittered away. For this the Associated Chambers of Commerce has identified the shortages in essential industrial ingredients and the lack of demand as their target of criticism.

Despite their agreement on the economic difficulties and the reasons thereof, the debaters, however, could not come to terms on questions concerning the future programme for development and their mutual role in it. Here the differences are more substantial. Although the ASSOC-HAM could not deny the State's supporting role in the country's industrialisation, it was at variance with the latter regarding its own role in the venture. At unit level the private sector seeks larger freedom of action and greater immunity from infringements by the administration in their daily working. The private

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sector, however, seems to be more aggrieved by the inordinate burden of the fiscal system and the damper it has thrown on business initiatives. One of the reasons for its consternation is the levity with which the kulaks have been treated by the fiscal authority and it wants them to share the tax burden, particularly after the recent trend of capitalisation of the farming system which has substantially inflated the kulak's surpluses.

The Minister, however, upheld the concept of State-guided capitalism and the changed social and political priorities that it calls for. The new concept assigns two distinct roles to the State. It has entrusted it with the responsibility of creating an economic infrastructure and provision for industrial facilities including the laying of an industrial base. Along with this, the State has taken upon itself the task of guiding and governing private capital to achieve the newly worked-out priorities. Enactments for controlling the monopolies and industrial licensing and the like are the tools to realise these new relations of forces. The Minister asserted the government's determination to see this economic programme through and urged the businessmen to co-operate. He said the old profit concept had become anachronistic even in the capitalist countries "and that the accumulated surplus can be utilised only to the extent it is in sympathy and conformity with the national objectives". The bureaucrats, all in all, are not unwilling to help the growth of private capital if it occurs with their own guidance and their latest panacea in this sphere is joint undertakings. No doubt private businessmen may be somewhat disheartened to have their rights restricted. But they would very likely fall in when they realise the difficulty of going it alone.

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FEBRUARY 19, 1972

View from Delhi

Dialogue With Nixon

FROM A POLITICAL
CORRESPONDENT

ABSENCE of official reaction to Mr Nixon's offer of a dialogue on Indo-U.S. relation does not imply that the offer has been rejected by New Delhi outright. All the inspired "unofficial" reactions from New Delhi creeping into the newspapers notwithstanding, a positive response some day is not ruled out. The laboured explanation given for the present silence is that the offer needs to be studied carefully. The implication is that any response would have to await Mr Nixon's visit to Peking and a clear idea of its outcome. Which means a decision would come in mid-March when Indo-Bangladesh relations would also become clearer. New Delhi wants the World Bank loans rescheduled but at the same time all the elaborate exercises on aidless development are continuing. It would hardly be surprising if Mr Nixon chooses to recognise Bangladesh in March and offer massive economic aid when we are still imploring the World Bank to reschedule the loans. There are signs that a large section in the Government is chickening out over the United States and all that is needed is some alibi for restoration of normal relations complete with an aid package.

One cannot forget all that brave talk about getting tough with Britain. All those veiled threats to quit the Commonwealth following strains on Indo-British trade have given place to a new bonhomie. So much so, the Kerala Government's proposal for nationalising foreign-owned plantations has virtually been shelved because Britain has been nice to India over Bangladesh. Indo-U.S. relations were barren until 1951, improved a little thereafter and collapsed when Mr Dulles knocked together a military alliance with Pakistan

and the SEATO and CENTO pacts. In 1958 there seemed to be a big change what with an Aid India-Pakistan lobby in the United States and consortium approach to aid. In 1959, reflecting the true Camp David spirit General Eisenhower offered military aid to India against China. The offer was to be utilised in 1962. Indo-U.S. relations collapsed again with the Indo-Pakistan war in 1965 and Mr Lyndon Johnson's clumsy pressure tactics over food aid. India adjusted its relations with the United States in no time the moment Mrs Gandhi took over. The rupee was devalued to oblige the World Bank and the exercises on self-reliance in Shastri's days were put in cold storage. How long will it take to adjust the relations with the United States this time?

The Mrs Gandhi-Mujib talks in Calcutta were not a resounding success, by any means. The joint communique made no mention of any treaty between the two countries which has been a long time coming. Instead there was a firm Indian commitment to pull the troops out by March 25. Which means no treaty would be signed until after the troops have been withdrawn. A treaty at this stage would have made the limited presence of Indian troops under General Osmani's command possible. But total pull-out seems to be a precondition for any treaty. Secondly, India's proposal for a ten-mile free trade zone on either side of the border did not find favour with the Bangladesh side. Thirdly, the Farakka dispute is clearly mentioned in the joint communique. Once, Kashmir used to be the only Indo-Pakistani dispute but when Islamabad identified the Farakka barrage as the second, New Delhi was puzzled. The emergence of Bangladesh has not eliminated the Farakka dispute which, if not realistically handled, might become an irritant in Indo-Bangladesh relations. If India persists in its declared stand on the dispute, relations with the new neighbour would be far from ideal. If India makes concessions which it

was reluctant to make when East Bengal was part of Pakistan, it would amount to opportunism.

In any case, India tried to push the treaty during the talks in Calcutta but the response was chilling. Mujib would go to Moscow before Mrs Gandhi visits Bangladesh and the treaty is discussed again. Bangladesh takes India for granted now. During a recent round of talks between the representatives of the STC and Bangladesh officials, it became clear that the other side was not prepared to make long-term trade commitments on commodities like jute while it wanted everything from India. The STC team returned rather frustrated: it had made all the commitments with precious little in return. No long-term commitment was forthcoming on trade which means the Bangladesh side is assessing prospects of trade with other countries and is looking for foreign exchange. Liberation of Bangladesh is alright but it should end there. If the Indian side had any illusions of wresting concessions, it must have been disappointed.

One hears a great deal here about dovetailing the two economies and a special economic adviser has been put in charge of Bangladesh problems. Joint exercises at the official level might give the impression that dovetailing is possible but the new nation suffers from xenophobia and every Indian proposal may be suspect just now. India will soon find that everyone is trying to undercut it over Bangladesh which would try to get the best of all the worlds. That India was the first to recognise Bangladesh would turn out to be an inconsequential detail entailing no quid pro quo.

A plausible theory here is that once the Indian troops pull out China would even make up with Bangladesh. It is now confirmed that in October when Mr Bhutto visited Peking there was a student demonstration against the repression in East Bengal. The BBC had reported it then but the fact went virtually unnoticed. The Chinese were about

to switch their position on Bangladesh but in their view it took the form of an Indo-Pakistan issue. If the Anderson papers are to be believed, Soviet Ambassador Pegov met Mrs Gandhi and promised a diversionary front against China in Sinkiang if China were to enter the Indo-Pakistan war. Knowledge of the Soviet position in the conflict certainly would not have enthused the Chinese into supporting the Bangladesh movement. It is significant that to date, Rumania has not recognised Bangladesh while the North Koreans have taken the position that they have not yet assessed whether the Bangladesh movement was a national liberation struggle or not. Cuba's recognition did not precede Soviet recognition but followed it, possibly to stress its identity in the international communist movement. Burma's recognition might have been more than a diplomatic probe by China. The end of March might find the sub-continental balance changed beyond expectation.

February 13, 1972

Lucky To Be 37

SANGH SEN SINGH

ADDRESSING a press conference in Calcutta on January 21 the Dalai Lama is reported to have favoured a plebiscite in Tibet to decide whether the people there liked to remain under Chinese rule. It is strange to note that the Dalai Lama was on his way to Bangkok for a two-week pilgrimage. A well-versed Buddhist or student of Buddhism knows that neither the Theravada Buddhism (the official religion of the host country i.e. Thailand), nor Mahayana (more precisely Lamaism which is a religious sect of the Dalai Lama) prescribes any pilgrimage at this time of the year. As almost all the pilgrim centres of Lamaic Buddhism are situated in Nepal, India and Tibet, it is not out of the question to think of any 'pilgrimage' by the

Dalai Lama to Thailand.

What exactly is the purpose of his "pilgrimage"? The answer can be found in what I gathered from a Tibetan Lama staying in Delhi. According to him, Thailand, being an ally of the USA and a Buddhist country, can help the Dalai Lama and a large number of Buddhist refugees in rehabilitating themselves. This is why the Dalai Lama, who is reported to be absorbed in meditation almost all the year in Dharamsala, all of a sudden rose from his slumber to go on pilgrimage to Thailand. This also explains, particularly in view of the coming Nixon visit to Peking, the reconciliatory tone in which the Dalai Lama is speaking these days about the Chinese leadership, particularly Chairman Mao Tse-tung. In an interview given to an American journalist in Dharamsala about three or four weeks ago, he is reported to have described Chairman Mao as a great leader of the Chinese people. As reported in an article in *Sunday Standard*, (January 16, 1972), the Dalai Lama showed no bitterness of the sort he used to show in his earlier statements in New Delhi or elsewhere. The journalist, of course, ascribes this to his long years of meditation and the Buddhistic teachings of tolerance and kindness. But the truth is different. The history of India is replete with instances of how cut-throat rivalry among Buddhist sects played havoc. Were they less devout Buddhists than the Dalai Lama? The fact is that he is a politician in the garb of a monk. He knows when to show his temper and bitterness and when to appear cool.

At his Calcutta press conference he hoped the Chinese Government would realise the "resentment among the people of Tibet against its domination and return the freedom of his country." This statement runs counter to another statement he made that the emergence of Bangladesh was the victory of the determination of its people. Here he equates the so-called liberation of Bangladesh with the liberation of a Tibet of his imagination, although probably he visua-

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lises a different course for the latter. In the case of Tibet, the Chinese people (including the Tibetan people) liberated the Tibetan people from the feudal and reactionary rule by Lamas (Dalai Lama, Panchen Lama—the high priests of the main monasteries and rulers of the territory as well) of the autonomous Tibetan region of China, whereas the bourgeois and feudal leaders of East Pakistan, helped militarily by India, established their government in Bangladesh.

In order to understand the real significance of the revolution of the Tibetan people against the rule of the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama it is necessary to go into the roots of Lamaism which had kept the people of that region in darkness for such a long time. First of all, it should be borne in mind that the Dalai Lama is not the name of the person who is called "His Holiness the Dalai Lama" in the bourgeois press. It is the suffix to the name of the monk ruler of Tibet, who happened to be the high priest of the famous monastery of Lhasa and Chief of the Government of the autonomous region of China. The present Dalai Lama is the fourteenth in succession. The suffix comprises two words—Dalai and Lama. Lama is a Tibetan word meaning 'preceptor', whereas Dalai is a developed word of Mongol origin meaning 'ocean' (TA-LE). This word was popularised by the Mongols. In fact, the Tibetan word Gyar-Mcho (Ocean) was suffixed to the names of all the Dalai Lamas except the first one; thus the Mongols started calling them Ta-le Lama.

How Buddhism went to Tibet and Mongolia and degenerated into Lamaism, is a long story. When the Dalai Lama speaks of himself as a monk, one is reminded of the Buddha who could never think of the idea of amalgamation of monkhood and kingship. Had it not been so, he would have remained a prince of Kapilavastu and professed his 'Dharma' from that position. But he renounced his household and his pros-

pects of becoming king in course of time. According to Suttanipata, the mendicant Siddhartha (before his attainment of Buddhahood) declined an offer of supreme commandship of the Magadhan army by King Bimbisara of Magadha. The early Buddhist texts are replete with numerous instances in which the Buddha had asked his disciples to refrain from not only active participation in politics and statecraft, but also from simple political talks (vide Dighanikaya, Brahmajala Sutta). Such being the case, the amalgamation of monkhood and kingship is a very serious default according to the words of the Buddha himself, who happened to be the first and one of the three 'Refuges' of the Dalai Lama as a Buddhist. Every Buddhist monk or layman goes to the three 'Refuges' (Sarana) viz. the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. (Another sacrilegious thing which developed in Lamaism was Avataravada (incarnation). It is a well-known fact that the Buddha repudiated the theory of soul and God (vide *Maha Manava Buddha* by Rahul Sankirtyayan). Thus, the concept of Avataravada is totally incompatible with the teachings of the Buddha. Yet in the institution of Dalai Lama this concept played an active role all through the centuries. The whole institution has developed on the basis of these two heretical and erroneous concepts.

Death Before 35

The most horrifying fact about this institution is that all the 13 Dalai Lamas prior to the present one died before they completed the age of thirty-five. When the thirteenth Dalai Lama fled to India owing to disturbances in Tibet, he stayed for some time in Saranath (Varanasi) and was reluctant to return. When asked by a senior monk of Saranath monastery, he said that he did not want to die a premature death—didn't all the Dalai Lamas die before the age of thirty-five? (vide *Tibbat Mein Lamavada*, an article by Bhikshu Dharmarakshit, Dharmaduta, April 1959). The fact was that

the Dalai Lamas were not allowed to live beyond the age of thirty-five, that is, the age when one becomes mature enough to understand and take part in state affairs, when they become strong enough to curtail the freedom of the ministers. The practice was that after the death of a Dalai Lama, the ministers along with senior Lamas would move about in every territory where Lamaism as religion was practised, pick up a child whom they found to be extraordinary, declare him to be an incarnation of the previous Dalai Lama, bring him to Lhasa, put him in the monastery for study for twenty years and rule over the people as regent to him. After the studies, he was assigned mostly religious work. When he attained the age of maturity and began to assert himself, he was removed from the picture. The present Dalai Lama was picked up somewhere in the Mongolian region, some years after the death of the thirteenth Dalai Lama. He is now nearly thirty-seven. The man who talks of the "freedom" of his Tibetan people would have been removed from the scene by this time with all the political maturity which he seems to have developed by now, had he been allowed by the Chinese people (including the Tibetan people) to remain in his seat.

The Dalai Lama talks of "liberation" of the Tibetan people from his safe perch in Dharamsala, India. He is quite aware of the fact that they are busy consolidating their revolution and building up socialism. He forgets that the people are wise enough to know whose interests the Dalai Lama continues to serve. He should not forget that the Chinese-Tibetan people have already opted for socialism instead of the hated feudal rule. If he wants to return to his homeland, he can do so, provided he is prepared to accept the verdict of the people. The Dalai Lama is reported to have said that he sees nothing wrong in communism provided it ceases to be anti-religion. In other words, he wants communism to forgo one of its sharpest weapons in the fight against capitalism. His

motive is self-evident when he talks of communism, which must not be "anti-religion". Where has he learnt this art? Now the question is, should the Dalai Lama be allowed to secure

his earlier position through the invocation of the religious sentiments of the people and thus be allowed to bring back the Tibetan people under age-old bondage and backwardness?

The Bombing*

DAN JACOBSSON

ACCORDING to U.S. statistics, the bombs dropped during the Johnson administration (1963-1968) and the Nixon administration (between 1969 and May 1971) far exceed the number and tonnage of bombs dropped during the Second World War and the Korean War. The USA has dropped 135 kilograms for each man, and child in Indochina, and 9 ton bombs for every square kilometer. The Americans particularly aim at terrorizing and annihilating ordinary people.

The economy of Indochina is based on agriculture. As people live all over the countryside, they are less vulnerable to conventional bombing. The result is, the American planes do attack whenever and wherever people gather at hospitals, factories, during working hours, religious buildings during the time of prayers, schools when children are having lessons, villages and fields as soon as people are out of their hiding-places.

* This article is mainly adapted from an article written in the Swedish socialist monthly journal *Kommentar* in December, 1971. The article in *Kommentar* is based exclusively on American sources. Further the author has himself used other journals.

I Fundamentals of Aerospace Weapons Systems, Manual, U.S. Air Force, 1966.

Aviation Week, March, 1966

Pentagon Report

Asian Survey

The contemporary Asia

The Air War in Indochina, Center for International Studies, Cornell University, Ithaca, October, 1971, etc.

Explosive bombs are usually effective against concrete targets like houses, factories, railways etc. To terrorize and annihilate ordinary people it is necessary to develop other kinds of weapons. During the period 1965-68 more and more advanced types of splinter-bombs and napalms were mixed with other chemicals to raise the temperature further. The round steel pellets of splinter-bombs are substituted by sharp fragments and steel shafts. These pieces are extremely difficult to take out from the body during an operation and cause maximum suffering and slow death. Further, they serve two purposes: instead of killing a person, more and more people and resources have to be engaged to take care of the wounded, and the sufferings of the badly wounded people have serious psychological effects on other members of their families and their friends. An American military journal explains that the weapons which maim and terrorize people "build a deterrent capacity"; "besides the real devastating destruction they cause, they have a separate and a special psychological effect."

After an attack against a village in a liberated area leaflets are dropped. The leaflet no. 147-66-R which was dropped in South Vietnam says: "As it was previously informed, you shall not have time to choose when the planes return to spread death. Follow the example of your 70000 countrymen who used the pass, who admit that they have been allowed the freedom of movement and to carry on a comfortable existence, or stay to die in suffering and confront terrible danger". Since 1965 the

USA has dropped 26 billions of such leaflets in Indochina.

In 1966 the U.S. administration began to worry about the results of the bombings against the DRV. Also, the opposition against the war increased. The policy-makers began to prepare new tactics. In summer 1966 the leading scientists of the so-called Jason section within the Institute for Defence Analysis held a seminar. They and the political scientists analysed in three months the results of the bombing of North Vietnam. They were very critical because of the poor results and negative political consequences. The CIA and the Pentagon also held the same views.

The scientists recommended that the USA should use her technological resources in order to construct electronic fences, one along the demilitarised zone and the other along the border of Laos. The Army and the Air Force should use other electronic equipment. These equipment had already been tried in the jungles of Thailand—mines which could be spread in their thousands over a large area and could be developed into a better system of bombing. In this way, the USA would cut off the DRV and Laos from South Vietnam.

McNamara, who was then Defence Minister, ordered an immediate research programme to carry out the project. While the research was going on the intensive and extensive bombing of both South and North Vietnam increased considerably. In 1967, the first part of this comprehensive military-technological system was tried in Laos. But by 1969 all plans for electronic fences were given up. The plans demanded the involvement of a great number of U.S. troops which was not acceptable on political and economic grounds.

Machines and technology replace soldiers. These depersonalise a hideous crime. In 1969 research works were co-ordinated by the Defence Department. In 1969, General Westmoreland, the chief of staff, was in ecstasy when he said "the U.S. army will again show the way".

During questioning by the Standing Committee of Ways and Means of the House of Representatives with regard to the budget for the year 1972, a military spokesman said: "constant efforts are going on inside the Department to find the ways of decreasing the number of staff and mechanise more and more, ..how we can industrialise our operations, which means how we shall obtain greater fire-power with less men".

In November 1970 the military presented a new system of weapons to the Senate. The system is built on co-ordination between the ground forces, the artillery and the attacking planes. Co-ordination comes about with the help of new electronic equipment, electronic computers, modernised radars, methods of night reconnoitring, interceptor equipment on the ground and new methods of aiming bombs at targets.

Now two kinds of seismic sensors are used. These are ADSID and ACOUSID. ADSID is most popular and is used by the Air Force along the Ho Chi Minh trail. ADSID does not produce any sound but catches the movements of people and lorries. ACOUSID, above all seismic, can also produce sound.

The other types of electronic equipment are dropped in the liberated areas and along the transport routes in Laos and also along the demilitarised zone. These are covered with small mines called 'green leaf-mines' and are as small as a tea-bag. When they explode they activate the electronic equipment. Signals are sent via a relay-plane to the electronic computers' centre in Thailand or Laos. These computers can quickly identify and locate the target and this information is fed into the electronic computers' unit of Phantom bombers. The plane, already air-borne, quickly flies towards the target.

These weapons and methods which the U.S. imperialists are using against the people of Indochina are a menace to the other struggling people of the world.

Curses And Hopes

BY A CORRESPONDENT

TO verify the CPM allegations that the coming elections to the State Assembly will not be free and fair this correspondent met a senior leader of the Party.

Correspondent: Is it true that both CPM leaders and workers are being terrorised by the Youth Congress and the Chhatra Parishad?

Leader: Certainly. They decided to crush all of us. They have already killed hundreds of our well-trained and active cadres. We have thousands of such active, well-disciplined and courageous cadres who run the entire organization both in towns and villages. They build and maintain our bases.

C: Then, your party is a cadre party. Do you disagree?

L: Always. Our party has the characteristics of a cadre party but at the same time it has the support of millions of people. And it is a fact that not only our cadres, but also our common sympathisers are being repressed by the Congress.

C: Will you give same examples of the repression?

L: Look at Khardah and count yourself how many of our cadres and sympathisers have been killed there. Even old men and women have been mercilessly beaten up. The same thing is happening in other places also. Everywhere the shameless police and CRP are serving as the repressive arm of the ruling party. I will give you one example of their shamelessness.

On 10.2.1972 at about 2 a.m. in the morning a jeep loaded with Congress gangsters arrived with weapons, raided the sleeping village of Mohanpur (Burdwan) and tried to kidnap some of our supporters. But as the villagers woke up and chased them away, nothing happened.

Next morning, the O.C. of Memari came to the village with several jeeps loaded with CRP and beat up the villagers. When I heard of it, I

asked the O.C. to explain his conduct. But do you know what that man said? He said some people were campaigning for the Congress, but the villagers disturbed them. See the fun! Election campaign at 2 a.m.! Hypocrisy should have some limit.

C: But is it not the same police and CRP of whom you talked so much during the United Front regime? Aren't they now Frankenstein's monsters unleashed by you?

L: Certainly not. Our treatment of the Congress was just and correct.

C: If so, then why don't you get the same just and correct treatment from the police in return?

L: Ask them. They may answer.

C: Why should I ask them? You used to talk about your just treatment of the police. And now you are talking about their corruption. So you can answer better.

L: Next question?

C: Are you a Marxist?

L: Is there any doubt about it?

C: And your party?

L: I've just answered.

C: Then, tell me, how long will you stick to the ballot box?

L: As long as the people want it.

C: Can you read the mind of the people?

L: Yes, we can. Mind that we are Marxists.

C: Has Marx ever talked of participation in elections for an indefinite period?

L: The time to discard elections and the parliamentary system has not yet come.

C: Then, till that time comes don't call yourself a Marxist.

L: We must call ourselves Marxists and communists.

C: But, how without any real class-struggle can a Marxist party exist?

L: The last election is an answer to your question. We fought alone but emerged as the biggest party in

the State. This time also we will bag more seats, about 155.

C: If so then how do you explain the success of the Chhatra Parishad in the recent college elections? They have won 98 out of 117 such elections.

L: Simply by terror tactics. In all cases the Chhatra Parishad threatened the BPSF candidates that unless they withdraw their names or stopped campaigning they would be murdered. Many of the BPSF boys were thus killed or seriously injured. And it is the police and the CRP, who connived with the Chhatra Parishad. Any way defeat of the BPSF will not influence the election.

C: Well. Though you are a Marxist party you believe in election and depend on it. But is it not a fact that in spite of your victory in the elections you failed to stay in power?

L: Ask the Centre. They are responsible.

C: That is also my moot point. If the Centre does not give enough importance to elections or the parliamentary system, why do you, being a Marxist party, stick to that system?

L: We believe in public opinion. The more the Centre indulges in such undemocratic methods, the more the people will come to our side.

C: So you are a non-violent Marxist party and you will not resort to violence to check violence.

L: Until people ask for it.

C: Then the hue and cry that you raise at rallies and also in your organs that people are being repressed by the Congress are half-true. Otherwise, people would have, by this time, forced you to resort to violence.

L: What we are saying is all true. But our experimentation with the parliamentary system has not yet ended.

Congress Leader

Later on, this correspondent met one of the topmost leaders of the Congress.

C: Who will win the elections?
Cong.: The Congress-led bloc.

C: What is your assessment of the CPM in this regard?

Cong.: They have no ground under their feet. They will soon be trapped.

C: What do you mean by that?

Are they so naive as to be provoked by your actions?

Cong.: Wait and watch. They may try to avoid a confrontation with us. But ultimately they will be forced to resort to violence. And once the process starts, it will end in our favour.

The Progressive Patriarchalist

A. K. LAHIRI

A comprehensive evaluation of Swami Vivekananda's ideas is usually inhibited by two factors. Lamentable indeed is the failure of one section, which is loud-mouthed in smashing him off as an opium dealer, to see the distinctive characteristics of the sannyasi to whom food and not religion was the crying need of the people. The other section bordering on extreme liberalism, in its turn, particularly enthusiastic about discovering seeds of 'progress' in Vivekananda's stray and often volatile comments.

(Both are victims of over-simplification; and as an effective antidote, this quotation of Lenin's comes in handy: "We reject any morality based on extra-human and extra-class concepts." (P. 145, Lenin on Literature and Art—Moscow, 1967).)

Even though he was a monk in gerua robes, a disciple of Ramakrishna, as he preferred to call himself, Vivekananda did have some clear-cut social objectives too, notwithstanding of course the fact that for him it was religion that was the ultimate saviour of mankind. It would not therefore do to write him off simply as a religion-monger. What is required is to contour his position in the particular milieu and to find out precisely what responsibilities he fixed upon whose shoulders and to what purpose.

The glory of our age-old socio-economic immobility is singularly illustrious; it would bend rather than crumble down. When feudalism was beginning to end and yet a

way out of the impasse was in sight, the English intervened. It is for the scholars to enquire how deep the impact penetrated into and what specific effects it produced upon the traditional order. But one thing is definite: in those first days of British ascendancy every class was, in however varying degrees, affected. As days passed, village handicraft was steadily meeting its doom, the zamindars, if they could be called so, were losing influence, and as for the dumb millions, they got themselves out of the frying pan of the zamindars into the fire of the British traders or their touts.

A dying village-handicraft, a gradually sinking class of native landlords and the ever poorer masses constituted the Indian scene at the end of the 18th century.

There were therefore signs of the age-old inter-class immobility being off balance, the granite-like stability that had stood firm in the face of numerous political upheavals over the ages was at last threatened with dislocation. But, be it noted, these signs of mobility were by no means the result, nor the precursor of a class struggle. The revolutionary classes did not overcome the rulers to gain control over the means of production. Instead, the country as a whole got sold, lock, stock and barrel, to a foreign power, in other words, became a colony.

But foreign occupation was nothing new to this aged country. Then, what was all this fuss about? In the words of Marx, "Arabs, Turks, Mo-

guls, who had successively overrun India, soon became Hinduized, the barbarian conquerors being, by an eternal law of history, conquered themselves by the superior civilization of their subjects. The British were the first conquerors superior and therefore, inaccessible to Hindu civilization, (P. 31, *The First Indian War of Independence—Moscow, 1968*). Thus for the first time in Indian history the social structure was hurt by a civilization the 'superiority' of which was manifested in the destruction of almost anything it would lay its hands on.

Quite naturally the only relation that came to exist between the two countries was that of a robber and the robbed. But in a civilized 'superior' world, you must have a way of doing everything. Indiscriminate barbarous looting, which caused the social breakdown, does not, firstly, look civilized, and secondly and more important, is not paying in the long run. The British were, understandably, in search of a class of levers which could operate as intermediary. The most competent men for this purpose were found to be those having little or no connection with production—the *baniyas*, the *gomastas*, the *mutsuddees*. And these people began to inflate all of a sudden, economically, socially and culturally.

This was something ominous for the British, at least something more than they were prepared to put up with. Under the favourable condition of decaying feudalism, there was every possibility that this huge wealth would break through in indigenous industrial endeavours, unless an artificial outlet could be provided. Is not this the implication of the famous statement of Cornwallis: "There

is every ground to expect that the large capitals possessed by the natives which they had no means of employing will be applied to the purchase of land as soon as the tenure is declared to be secure." The immediate logical outcome was, needless to point out, the Permanent Settlement. 'This in effect closed all other avenues to this class of capitalists who naturally turned their attention to land.' (P. 5; N. K. Sinha—*Economic History of Bengal*, Vol. I).

Nature abhors a vacuum. The vacuum created by the near-absence of a dominant class in Bengal (we are primarily concerned with Bengal) as a result of the disarray in class-relations caused by the British advent did not last long. To fill in the gap came 'a new ring of vested interests' (Ibid). Promode Sengupta sums up very neatly the character of this new ring: '... the class of people who are called comprador bourgeoisie... A characteristic feature of the Bengali comprador bourgeoisie was that most of them were semi-landlords and semi-bourgeois' (P. 55: *Bharatiya Mahabidroha*). The same prefix 'semi' might act, without doing any harm to our conscience, to the 'change' the British brought about. The breach with feudalism, as some people love to call it, turned out to be little more than a mere whitewash, pretty important though. 'Under the British, the base of the solid pyramid of the village-society received a blow. ... The class nature of the village-society was changed a bit... but there wasn't any radical change of form.' (P. 11, Benoy Ghose—*Banglar Samajik Itihaser Dhara*).

This new class of semi-landlords and comprador semi-bourgeoisie was destined to pay an all-important role in the making of modern India. It would not be much of an exaggeration to say that the total character of the superstructure of our society today has been shaped by and is the necessary offspring of this semi-feudal and semi-bourgeois origin. One might recall what strong links even our 'progressive' intelligentsia maintained with this class, which itself

played a dominant role in reforming our culture. How could it be otherwise? Between the motives which lay behind the Permanent Settlement and those behind the education policy, there is a very clear line of analogy—that of creating a buffer class that would, out of self-interest, save the ruler's skin. Superfluous to say, both bore fruit. In this connection, it would surely not be a digression to remember the slighting hatred with which the oppressed people of India looked upon these parasites, as expressed in the unforgettable folk-poem of the Indigo Revolt:

On luxury-boats there came
The Baboo-brethren of Kolkata

To witness our dance

of the sword.

It was thus the backsliding which out-manoeuvred forward movement, true to the very nature of comprador-capitalism: to strengthen ties with feudalism and obstruct indigenous development of capitalism by subjugating itself to foreign capitalists, depending upon imperialism for its existence and development. Viewed from this angle, the miserable failure of Dwarkanath's bold attempts was only to be expected. That this backsliding was the predominant strain in the cultural sphere too was not at all strange, nor unexpected. The apish Europeanism of the baboos gave rise to, in contradiction, a revivalism in so many varied forms. As days crawled to the middle of the 19th century, retrogression established itself as the main trend.

Criteria of Judgment

By now, one hopes, the criteria of judgment as to who represented progress and who reaction, have made themselves pretty dear. He alone was progressive who could lead the funeral march of feudalism (he had first to finish it off, of course; and that called for offering poison and not palliatives to it) and could burst into the triumphant chant of indigenous capitalism. At this point it is worth remembering Lenin once more: "We reject any morality based on

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extra-human and extra-class concepts."

The following questions, therefore, call for discussion:

Firstly, How far were Vivekananda's social ideas conducive to the destruction of feudalism and construction of indigenous capitalism?

Secondly, Which social classes he stood for and to what purpose?

Thirdly, What was his attitude towards the British colonial rule?

Fourthly, How far, to what extent, were his ideas 'extra-human'?

The purpose of the present article is to deal with the first two problems.

But, before proceeding any further, a word of apology is needed. Paying the devil of authenticity its due, the writer has been forced to resort to the thorny practice of quoting in profusion, to the disadvantage of the reader. The quotations are all from the Mayavati Memorial edition, 1958, except where otherwise stated.

What was the nature of the model society—a la Vivekananda? This is our key question. (In order to facilitate investigation we would however put this question a bit obliquely—what were the factors that led to the degeneration of India and what ways and means Vivekananda sought for her regeneration?)

But this quest might stop short at the very beginning when one comes across such point-blank declarations:

It is not true that the Indians have degenerated. (IV—309).

Nevertheless, he concedes afterwards, reluctantly perhaps, that even as we are degenerated people, it is only to the extent that the invaluable never-to-be-forgotten treasure of the Advaita system has eluded us, since the rout of Buddhism:

Here is the glory of the Advaita system preaching a principle, not a person. It was fully conscious and vigorous in old days, and less so of late; in this sense alone we have degenerated. (IV—311).

Obviously enough, the formula of regeneration is to be deduced herefrom too. Liberation consists in un-

ravelling the veiled revelations of the Advaita system and just because India still nurtures these propensities, her degeneration is not at all beyond hope.

that vitality of India has not been touched yet. They have not given up that... in spite of all their... hideous superstitions... the national life-current is still there—the mission of the race. (VIII—75).

From this, one would easily be tempted to jump to the conclusion that all our tribulations, the inhuman humiliations, are for Vivekananda manifestations of Shankarian *Maya*, had he not thrown on our face the stark observation that 'the root of all our wretched miseries is the poverty of the common people'. But poverty, as much as affluence, is very much of a mundane proposition and if you acknowledge poverty, you cannot possibly turn your back towards oppression. Accordingly in the same letter dated 23rd June, 1894, addressed to the Maharaja of Mysore, Vivekananda points out:

Priest-power and foreign conquest have trodden them down for centuries, and at last the poor of India have forgotten that they are human beings. (IV-362).

Then again,

Ancient India had for centuries been the battlefield for the ambitious projects of two of her foremost classes—the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas.

On the one hand the priesthood stood between the lawless *social* tyranny of the princes over the masses... On the other hand, the Kshatriya power was the only potent force, which struggled with any success against the *spiritual* tyranny of the priesthood, the ever-increasing change of ceremonials which they were forging to bind down the people with. (IV—324). (Italics added).

One cannot be blamed if one reasonably wonders what are these 'ever-increasing change of ceremonials' meant for, if not for social, or to be more exact, economic exploitation, using as a tool the 'extra-eco-

conomic' status of the priest. Linked professionally as they were with the Divine, everything concerning these gentlemen has to be given a mark of divinity, even oppression, even tyranny! This 'spiritual tyranny' could not be, and indeed, was not anything other than a particular form of social oppression. The King and the Priest were thus the two prongs of the pincers round the neck of the common man. And in this dual horse-race, the one who was swift enough to clutch first at the common prey, the masses, began to be treated by the other as an enemy intruding upon one's sovereign integrity as an exploiter. What other explanations could be given for the zeal with which both these classes were out to 'rescue' the people from the hands of each other? The contradictions between the King and the Priest can only be understood as that between two stallions carrying forward the one establishment of exploitation.

But this is self-defeating for Vivekananda, this inadvertent admission of religion as a means of exploitation. Yet, no!

...this state of society exists not on account of religion, but because religion has not been applied to society as it should have been. (V—48).

As to how it should have been applied to society, we get an indirect hint:

The degeneration of India came not because the laws and customs of the ancient were bad but because they were not allowed to be carried to their legitimate conclusion. (IV—324).

So, if these 'laws and customs' had been properly complied with, it would have been possible to dissuade the princes and the priests from exploiting the masses and the nation would not have stooped down; and that would have been the 'legitimate conclusion'. But these laws and customs were based upon those very conditions which made inevitable 'illegitimate' conclusions; the acknowledged and accepted set-up in

which the handful could lord it over the millions; in which exploitation was tacitly accepted with the acceptance of the kingly order. The only 'legitimate conclusion' was degeneration.

Now, fighting shy of, and glossing over these essentially basic facts, Vivekananda goes to propound that the crux of the matter was that religion poked its nose, quite unnecessarily into petty social matters:

The terrible mistake of religion was to interfere in social matter.

What business had the priests to interfere (to the misery of millions of human beings) in every social matter? (IV—358-9).

The zenith of social perfection is deducible herefrom: it is that very point where the two parallels meet—on the one hand the high tide of the Advaita-system and on the other, a deterrence to any form of oppression. About this social order Vivekananda speaks in very clear and precise terms:

We believe in Indian caste as one of the greatest social institutions that the Lord gave to man... it has already worked wonders for the land of Bharata and is destined to lead Indian humanity to its goal. (IV—299).

Now, this greatest social institution eliminates the terrible mistake, since, we are told:

The caste-system has *nothing to do* with religion. A man's occupation is hereditary—a carpenter is born a carpenter; a goldsmith a goldsmith; a workman, a workman; and a *priest, a priest*. (IV—200). (Italics added).

We might carry along and add, 'the landlord a landlord and the

landless, a landless'. However, that is a separate point. What strikes one at once is that in the same breath as he pronounces the unconnectedness of *Varnashrama* with religion, he cites the example of a priest, and that as compared to a 'workman'. The logic behind this fantastic analogy is that labour is to the labourer as religion to the priest—a means of obtaining livelihood. Thus he finds nothing wrong in that a priest should live off religion and a slave off slavery. This, incidentally, furnishes a strong evidence for the legitimacy of the illegitimate conclusions of 'laws and customs of the ancients'.

His 'arguments' about the independence of the caste-system of religion boil down to that if religion is admitted into this system *only* as a profession, that does not signify that the system as a whole is religion-controlled, even if it is concerned with religion. Queer as it is, even this 'argument' falls through when we remember that this institution is supposed to deter 'spiritual' as well as 'social' tyranny. For, it is the priests, 'a class of Brahmins, not worth the name, who by their ignorance and vanity' have prevented such a noble system from bearing the expected fruit. To this contradiction, Vivekananda seems to suggest the solution that the cult of the Advaita system, 'preaching a principle, not a person', would stand in the way of the priests by 'limiting' the field of 'practised' religion and with it the adamant individualism of the priests would be checked. In any case, any such 'solution' can be arrived at only by discarding the premise that 'the caste-system has nothing to do with religion'.

However much the caste-system may have to do with religion, there is the possibility, at least for argument's sake, of bringing the priestly oppression under control. But peculiarly, Vivekananda does not even suggest how to tackle the other form of oppression, the purely 'social' one. It would not help to argue away the existence of kings in his wonderland;

for the Kshatriyas are the second most honoured class there. Thus, in whichever way we might proceed, we are sure to end in a blind alley. None of the two kinds of tyranny which the Swamiji himself was eager to do away with could be proved to be non-existent even in the most hypothetical case. So what is the point in going into raptures over this all-cure talisman called *Varnashrama*, which cannot even solve the very problems posed by the protagonist himself?

The Two Facets

Well, let us penetrate a little more into the core of the subject—what actually was the inward cause the outward effervescence of which was the cock-fight of the two top castes on the one hand and the tyranny perpetrated upon the people on the other? In the celebrated words of Marx, 'these idyllic village communities, inoffensive though they may appear had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism... this undignified, stagnatory and vegetative life, this passive sort of existence evoked on the other part... wild, aimless unbounded forces of destruction and, rendered murder itself a religious rite in Hindustan. (P. 19 op. cit.).. Stagnation and tyranny are thus seen by Marx as but the two facets of the one crystalline form of vegetative life. And what else could be expected of a society the foundation of which was a class-division based upon inherited profession? Was it not inevitable that progressive growth was nipped in the bud? Was it not unavoidable that the revolutionary forces would rot in this dark hole, polluting the whole atmosphere with excrement? Otherwise, how is one to account for the apparent anomaly that in spite of having such subtle productive abilities, we Indians could not succeed in shaping for ourselves a social order that would lead to the fullest fruition of such qualities? It is because of this peculiar stability outliving the ages—which, incidentally for Vivekananda is the irrefutable

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evidence of our vitality—that 'the Indian trading classes lacked the quality necessary for the autonomous growth of the bourgeoisie, as in the Western countries. Thus in India despite the 'high level of craft production and merchant capital, no organic relation was established between the two at any stage of development.' (P. 21, Ranajit Dasgupta—*Problems of Economic Transition*). These 'myriads of industrial patriarchal inoffensive social organizations' constituted the innumerable links of the Gordian knot round our neck.

Still, Vivekananda has an eye for everything. He does admit that 'the greatest drawback of the caste-system was that it eliminated competition and that contributed towards our *political* downfall'. By this 'political' debasement he no doubt implies the change of hands the state-machinery underwent to every foreign power that might have had the option to invade India. This and no further. And just because he stops short at this political hurdle, with what beguiling naivete he can prescribe a cure to the ills of the princely oppression:

Just think! The poor subject, however much he may wish to, hasn't got the capacity to do good honest work. But the king already

has in store the capacity to provide welfare to thousands of his subjects. Only, he hasn't the will to do so; and if I can arouse that will in him, there will be an immediate turn of the subjects' fortune for the good, and how immensely will the world be benefited. (Bengali [Centenary] edition—IX: 374).

That cursed equilibrium! The perpetuation of tyranny is for him nothing but a reverse action of an all-pervading ethereal substance called 'will' and not the symptomatic malignity typical of a stagnant society. It is in this context that his somewhat baffling 'apathy towards explaining the role of the caste-system in putting an end to the 'social tyranny obtains significance.

It is entirely probable and indeed true that abstractly, in separation from social reality, he does perceive the necessity of evolving an unhindered dynamic form of life—as evinced by the way he explains the word *jati*, caste, by which, obviously he tries to justify his ideal social pattern:

The original idea of Jati was... freedom of the individual to express his nature, his Prakriti... Any crystallised custom of privilege or hereditary class in any shape

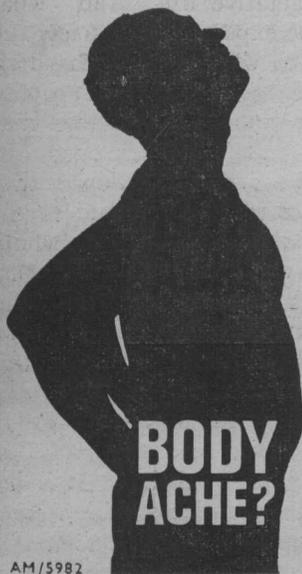
really prevents caste (Jati) from having its full sway.....

In America, there is the best scope for caste (real Jati) to develop, and so the people are great. (IV—372).

Not only is this interpretation of Jati not coordinated with the caste-system, but it is the exact antithesis of it. Had this been the original idea of 'Jati', then that must also have been the *raison d'être* of the caste-system *originally* which after such a sublime beginning had so degenerated as to block the road towards the fulfilment of caste. Thus, whatever the theory in abstraction, as soon as it is put to the acid test of social practice, its imbecility becomes glaring. It is therefore absolutely preposterous to accept this interpretation of caste as a justification of the caste-system, even if only as a means to trace back to the original caste; for, the very basis of the caste-system, as applied to society, is 'hereditary class' in some shape.

From this it is only consequential that the idea of a substantial, palpable remodelling of—not to speak of an all-embracing drastic upheaval in—class relations is not much wooed by Vivekananda.

(To be concluded)



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Caste And Outcast

BY A FILM CRITIC

SAMSKARA, a Kanada film, is a surprise from the South. It has just been given the National Award as the best film for 1970, and the screening by Calcutta Film Society provided the opportunity to see it. This is indeed the first mature film from the South, showing the social mosaic of a caste-ridden society where deeply embedded prejudices sharpen social distance, and mechanical observance of outdated rituals hides hypocrisy in a welter of formalised behaviour in the name of religious practice. T. P. Rama Reddy's film tears the veil in a gentle, subdued, unobtrusive yet ruthless, manner rendering a social phenomenon into excellent cinema.

The milieu also provides a backdrop to one man's (Girish Karnad) search of himself. The deep anguish he passes through leads him to realise the utter futility of sitting in judgment on others' conduct of their own affairs. And this is delineated in a powerful way. A Brahmin, a rebel in a somewhat exhibitionist sort of way, who has taken a lower caste woman as his mistress and has been fond of drinking and corrupting youth suddenly dies. The village Brahmins, some of them the dead man's near relations, meet to decide whether he deserves a decent funeral (Samskara) according to the shastras. The Acharya (Karnad) finds no answer. The other Brahmins start their trek to another village to have the benefit of their Guru's directive. He orders the surrender of the land and gold of the deceased in favour of Lord Krishna, the presiding deity of the Guru. This exposes the dehumanised code that perpetuates the religious order's stranglehold of the individual even after death, in the name of salvation of the soul.

Meanwhile the Acharya's experiences begin to have a chastening effect on him. He first succumbs to the lure of the mistress of the dead

man in a scene of idyllic purity. His long ailing wife dies the same night and his overpowering sense of guilt and listless yearning make him roam about. He runs into an unsophisticated villager who, by his disarmingly frank demeanour, instils in him the sense that simple acceptance rather than hypocritical adherence may mean a more meaningful existence. Self-indictment makes him see the bare truth.

The first half of the film reveals the rigidities of the stratified society peopled by mortals who have their feet of clay. The pre-title sequence establishes the milieu and the principal character's daily chores of worship and attending to the sick wife's needs. The news of death of the rebel Brahmin brought by his mistress sets off a chain reaction by destroying the placidity of the world around, the placidity magnificently mirrored by shallow waters which recurringly appear in the film. The conclave of villagers sits in a circle on the floor, their austere, lined, annointed faces hardly hiding their greed. The gold offered by the Shudra woman causes a flutter not only among the high-caste housewives peeping through the doors, it turns their devout husbands into a quarrelsome lot. The vultures in the sky are after the corpse but the human vultures are less bothered about the dead. The dead rats, carriers of plague, seem to come from nowhere to litter the roads creating consternation among the older folk but to the innocent boys these are an object of mirth and dance. Images succeed one another perilously pointing to the evil omen in the incongruous milieu of a beautiful landscape. In a memorable scene, when the Acharya goes to Marut's temple to find the answer to the problem created by the dead Brahmin, his companion Brahmins who stay behind are shown as silhouetted figures in stark black and white and as the Acharya moves forward a patch of darkness envelops the group in sharp contrast to the bleached whiteness around.

The first half follows a taut script.

The issues come to the fore and the environs and people are presented in a rare economy of words and image. The flashbacks in which we see the rebel Brahmin scowling against the creatures of his own blood establish his identity but the antics and drunken quartet seem a needless distraction. In the second half the protagonist's self-indictment and agonising search for truth are lent authenticity by a powerful performance by Girish Karnad. The village pal whose acquaintance he picks up on the roadside comes as a useful prop to the story. In a rather casual way he kills a snake and then goes on to "cremate" it—not being an 'outcast' it is perfectly entitled to funeral rites. In a telling way it brings home the glaring truth.

Tom Cowan, the Australian cameraman, does a less distinguished job in photography compared to another of his countryman, Steven Cartheu who does creditably in editing. Karnad who figures in a magnificent performance is also credited with writing the dialogue which even in English sub-title retains its crisp and dramatic qualities.

Altogether a fascinating film from the deep South.

Book Review

THE AGONY OF WEST BENGAL
By Ranajit Roy
A Hindusthan Standard Publication. Rs 5.00

IT is the wrong economic, fiscal and rehabilitation policy, framed and implemented by the Government of India since 1947, that has brought about the rapid economic and consequently social decline of West Bengal. This helps develop politics of murder and desperation which is neither sudden nor confined to any single specific social, political and economic issue. Independence has particularly brought about no change for the better in West Bengal which continues to be denied a fair deal.

It remains a victim of discrimination and that is why a spirit of violence and iconoclasm has inevitably seized the State.

The concluding line of Ranajit Roy's books which is a bit provocative says the cancer of much ignored problems arising out of the Centre's constant indifference to this State has festered for 23 years and has manifested itself during the last three general elections, four coalition ministries and three spells of President's Rule in the last four years and days of violence and terror. Mr Roy is confident that violence, unrest and political tension prevailing in West Bengal will disappear soon if its problems are sincerely looked into and at least partially removed by the Centre. Until these are resolved, West Bengal, he strongly feels, will continue to harass the Centre, no matter how active and large the police force becomes.

To a non-Marxist, problems, economic or political, do always come in concrete forms. The basic point is that all these problems are not isolated and they cannot be removed without a thorough change in the social structure of a country. Mr Roy looks at the problems of West Bengal as they appear on the surface and he thinks that mere removal of these will help restore peace. He is yet to be convinced that they cannot be removed under the bureaucratic machinery of the existing government at the Centre.

The economic condition of West Bengal, Mr Roy points out, has been deliberately allowed to deteriorate. According to four plan documents, West Bengal's First Plan was of the size of Rs 154 crores and that of Maharashtra and Gujrat of Rs 224 crores. Compared to these two and many other States, West Bengal lagged considerably behind during the Second Plan for which she had Rs 145 crores, Rs 9 crores less than in the first, and Maharashtra and Gujrat together had Rs 350 crores. In the Third Plan the position was still more dismal for West Bengal which, after great taxation efforts made by

Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy, had a sanctioned plan of Rs 250 crores, while Maharashtra alone had a plan of Rs 390 crores and Gujrat of Rs 235 crores. The position has further deteriorated in the Fourth Plan for which West Bengal has a sanctioned outlay of Rs 322 crores, and Maharashtra (Rs 898 crores) and Gujrat (Rs 455 crores) together have Rs 1,353 crores, that is four times as much as West Bengal has.

No other State has such a melancholy record to show. The per capita expenditure on plans is the lowest in West Bengal today. The first three plans were prepared by Dr B. C. Roy, and the Fourth Plan, prepared while Mr P. C. Sen was in charge of the State, was finalised with inconsequential modifications, during the second United Front Government. Long before the leftists came to power, the State's malady had gone deep and affected every aspect of its life—economic, social, cultural and political.

Supported by authentic government records Mr Roy says, in per capita income West Bengal maintained its first position till 1955 but by 1961 came down to the second place, the first place going to Maharashtra. Every State, other than West Bengal and Assam, recorded an increase between 1950 and 1960. In West Bengal it declined by 2 per cent and in Assam by 1.8 per cent. Every year thereafter West Bengal came down a place or two to stand seventh in 1965-66, after Punjab, Maharashtra, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Gujrat and Assam. In West Bengal, the failure to make progress between 1950 and 1960 was most appalling in agriculture, a sphere in which she was in such a vantage position in 1950. During the decade the State's output in this sector increased by a mere 12.2 per cent, by far the lowest in the whole country.

Because of the Union Government's discriminatory policy and the State Government's uncertain stand the old refugees have become West Bengal's most explosive social and political problem. To this has been added,

during all the plan periods, a steadily increasing urban and rural unemployment which, by the time the first United Front Government was in office, had reached much vaster proportions than anywhere else in India.

Anybody who has the most fleeting acquaintance with West Bengal knows what havoc the failure of the government to tackle the refugee problem has wrought. It is strange that after so many months of President's Rule, one wing of the Central Government—a vital wing for West Bengal—should continue to put into practice Hitler's propaganda technique (Never tell a little lie; tell a lie so big that people cannot simply believe that you are lying). The Union Rehabilitation Ministry in a public statement has not merely challenged the fact that the Government has done "considerably less" for the East Pakistan refugees than for the refugees from West Pakistan it has gone further to suggest, by tendentiously citing certain figures of expenditure, that more has been done for the former than for the latter. Lies of this kind are not of recent fabrication. These have almost been the stock-in-trade of the Rehabilitation Ministry since Mr Meher Chand Khanna, a refugee from the North-West Frontier Province, assumed charge of the Ministry in 1954. No one had even thought till then that the East Pakistan refugees, like the West Pakistan refugees, needed rehabilitation.

The Rehabilitation Ministry's big lie has succeeded in misleading the people about the discriminatory policy of the Government against the East Pakistan refugees. Almost the entire country, including many Bengalis, have come to behave that the fault lies with the East Pakistan refugees themselves. Propaganda was carried on that if only the East Pakistan refugees had agreed to go to other States they would have found all arrangements ready for their rehabilitation. While all the West Pakistan refugees have been rehabilitated on land and in houses of evacuee Muslims and shops and houses, built by the Government of India at its

expense in different States and compensation given to them, hardly ten per cent of East Pakistan refugees have been provided with economic rehabilitation. Annual reports for different years would show that the Ministry has not even refrained from manipulating budget figures to deflate the expenditure for the West Pakistan refugees.

Nearly 75 residential colonies have been built and numerous large modern market centres opened in Delhi for West Pakistan refugees. The expenditure incurred on refugee rehabilitation in Delhi alone is Rs 60 crores. But not a single East Pakistan refugee got a house or a shop or anything out of this expenditure. Delhi city typifies better than anything else the attitude of the Centre towards the problem of the West Pakistan refugees on one side and of those from East Pakistan on the other.

The book by Mr Roy, a veteran journalist, is a collection of ten of his articles published in *Hindusthan Standard*, the paper for which he works in Delhi, between February 14 and 25 last year in the series—*The Agony of West Bengal*. Mr Roy's love for this State is genuine. But his approach to the subjects he has dealt with to show the Centre's callousness and sometimes deliberate indifference to West Bengal may create misunderstanding among those who do not like provincialism to grow and spread.

KALYAN CHAUDHURI

Clippings

The Center & West Bengal

Mr Dias must have been deeply anguished by the size of West Bengal's plan for 1972-73, as sanctioned by the Planning Commission. With a population of 4 crores 44 lakhs, the State has an allocation of Rs 73.5 crores or Rs 17 per capita, the lowest in the country. Maharashtra has a population of 5 crores and an annual plan of Rs 205

crores or Rs 41 per capita. Tiny Haryana with a population of one crore, has been sanctioned for the same year a plan of Rs 82 crores or Rs 82 per capita. It is necessary to remember that West Bengal's first plan was considerably bigger than Maharashtra's and Haryana's.

By 1966-67, West Bengal had reached a moribund condition in the fields of industry and commerce. Nevertheless, that year the State yielded a revenue of Rs 359 crores under three major heads—excise, corporation tax, and income tax. Another sum of Rs 195 crores was collected by the Centre as customs at Calcutta Port. Taxes and duties under many other heads also were realised in the State. Despite the political turmoils of the past five years, Central revenue collections did not fall much in the State.

We have a totally different picture when it comes to the question of the Centre giving money back to the State. Under the Fourth Finance Commission's recommendations, the State was to get back in five years, from 1966 to 1970, a total of Rs 197 crores or an average of a mere Rs 39 crores a year. The West Bengal Government is one of the poorest State Governments today, although it is the second biggest producer of revenues for the Centre.

If this is the position in relation to public finance, conditions for industrial growth of West Bengal are worse and not for the uncertain political situation there. In the past, the British had a freight policy by which Indian raw materials or semifinished goods were carried to Britain at the cheapest cost and finished goods from there were sold at the highest price. As a result, Indian industries suffered and lost ground. Now-a-days, the same privilege has been extended to the other regions at the cost of the eastern region, which includes West Bengal.

Equalisation of the price of iron and steel has been brought about by equalising the freight irrespective of the distance carried. But the Railways cannot charge arbitrarily. For

their own internal calculations they have rates fixed for specified distances. These internal rates, now in force, are Rs 30 for a tonne from Jamshedpur to Howrah and Rs 120 from the same place to Bombay. For two tonnes of steel carried, the Railways realise a total of Rs 150, the Bombay consumer actually paying Rs 75 and the Calcutta consumer also Rs 75.

The result is that the Calcutta industrialist has not only been made to lose his locational advantage of Rs 90 per tonne of steel over his Bombay rival, but is being made to subsidise the Bombay industrialist to the extent of Rs 45 per tonne. The domestic consumer in the eastern region has been put in an equally unenviable position by this fiat of Mr Krishnamachari when he was the Union Minister in charge of iron and steel. It is not only Bombay, but also Madras and Delhi which have gained.

Coal is another important industrial material produced mainly in Bihar and West Bengal. Except for the consumers nearer the coalfields the freight structure has been so arranged that the distant consumers are heavily subsidised. Because of this, the freight on coal represents only 20 per cent of the Railways' earnings although the commodity constitutes 30 per cent of the goods traffic. The loss is made good by overcharging industrial raw materials moving from the other regions to the eastern.

Cotton, oilseeds, soda ash, molasses and salt are among the important industrial raw materials the eastern region imports from the other regions. The freight on all these commodities is much higher than that on coal. While Ludhiana in Punjab takes coal from Raniganj, it pays a freight of Rs 49 per tonne. On return journey when the wagons carry cotton from Fazilka to Howrah the freight is Rs 165 per tonne and when oilseeds are carried from there the freight is Rs 91 per tonne.

Why only iron and steel prices have been equalised and similar action has not been taken in respect of other industrial raw materials has never

been explained. This invisible drain of wealth from the eastern region to other regions must be stopped if West Bengal and the other states of the region are to develop industrially. No one should quarrel with Mr Siddhartha Ray for his criticism, however, that he would not harm the interest of either the State he comes from or those of India if he raises a little noise about these uninteresting but very vital things for the economic life of West Bengal as well as about the microscopic share the State receives from the revenues the Centre collects from there (Ranajit Roy in *Hindusthan Standard*).

Letters

Guidance From Outside

Although I have many points of disagreement with Mr Manik Ghosh (in his "China and our left intellectuals", February 5, 1972). I shall keep myself confined to one point only.

Mr Ghosh, while correctly saying that the internal contradictions are the basis of development of revolutionary conditions and revolution in a country, incorrectly concludes that guidance of revolution from outside amounts to export of revolution, that stimulation from outside, is an external factor and as such plays a 'secondary role'. This apparently innocent line is dangerous to the proletarian internationalism of the Marxist-Leninists. Of course, a few lines after he writes: "While the framing of a formal international body to officially guide world revolution is avoided... the role of the socialist country in providing guidance for the struggling masses all over the world is by no means ignored." One is at a loss to understand whether Mr Ghosh is opposed to "official" and "formal" guidance from outside and is a supporter of non-official and informal guidance from outside or opposed to any guidance from outside. Perhaps his objection is not against guidance from outside as such but against the "pompous guidance" given by Comintern to the Chinese Revolution. He has categorically said of Comintern guidance as export of

revolution, "stimulation from outside", and as an external factor.

Guidance, a subjective factor, is the theoretical and political generalisation on the basis of a concrete study of the internal contradictions of the country concerned, while the condition of revolution is an objective factor which grows from within. It is composed of certain relatively constant elements. First, the historic nature or content of a given historical stage (whether it is a bourgeois democratic or socialist revolution stage), second, which are the classes destined by history to accomplish the tasks of a given stage and, third, an estimate of the direction of the historical process of any given stage, the relations of class forces. The Comintern gave this guidance to the young and inexperienced Chinese Communist Party. And instead of "misguiding and confusing", the Comintern directly steered the course of revolution. The bungling was made, not by the Comintern, but by the then CPC leadership in concretising and implementing the general directives. If Mr Ghosh takes pains to go carefully through the writings of CPC, Mao Tse-tung, Chen Po-ta and others he will find this. Marx and Engels guided the Communist movement of Europe and America from London, Lenin guided the whole revolutionary movement of Russia from 1903 onwards and even in 1917, after the February revolution from "afar". China, even today, is guiding the revolutionary movement of the world from outside the countries concerned.

However, there is a difference between guidance and guidance. The then Comintern guidance looked "pompous" only because the ruling party of China, the Kuomintang, had a pact with the Soviet Government as well as with the Soviet Party, by which the Soviet Party was duly bound to reorganise the Kuomintang and the National Revolutionary Army. The Chinese Communist Party was also in a united front with both the Kuomintang and the Government. Secondly, there was a centre of revolution and a general staff for guiding the international

proletariat in the shape of the Comintern and its ECCI and the Eastern Bureau. The question of interfering in the internal affairs of a national party did not and could not arise as all national parties as sections of the CI and were in *one single international organisation*. So, the character of guidance was different from today. We have no formal organisational binding today, but due to our developed experience and consciousness, our conscious moral links with proletarian internationalism are expected to be far superior. But that does not mean that "That is why the Chinese genuinely accepted the principle of *Pancha Sheel* which involves recognition of one another's sovereign status by friendly states and their respect for each other's territorial integrity" as Mr Ghosh asserts? *Pancha Sheel* is a correct expression of relations of a Socialist State with another State only.

The 'Five Principles of Co-Existence' are: (1) Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, (2) Mutual non-aggression; (3) Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs; (4) Equality and mutual benefit; and (5) Peaceful co-existence, while the principles of guiding relations among fraternal communist parties are: (1) Principle of solidarity, (2) principles of mutual support and mutual assistance, (3) principles of equality and independence, and (4) principles of reaching unanimity through consultations—all on the basis of *Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism*. As there is no supreme body today to interpret and impose its interpretation of proletarian internationalism in the context of present-day reality, the national units of the international army of the proletariat find no other suitable alternative but to remain satisfied with these guiding principles. Here lies the tragedy of the present-day world communist movement which has given and is giving birth to polycentrism and 'national communism'.

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With mechanisation of farming displacing people from agriculture, it is imperative that villages should offer alternative opportunities for employment. The traditional farmer is under-employed in any case. Dairying offers a part solution to both problems.

*This survey was conducted by the Department of Economics, Sardar Patel University, Vallabh Vidyanagar. The computed income included remittances from relatives in Africa.

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