

# frontier

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Editor : Samar Sen

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## CHINA-JAPAN

THE new Peking-Tokyo ties have been described as historic and welcomed in diverse quarters. The development was not unexpected. After the Nixon visit to Peking it was evident that Japan would have to readjust her policies towards China, despite her heavy investments in Taiwan. And on paper, if one ignores the social systems in China and Japan, closer ties between the two Asian countries, one an economic giant and the other the most populous in the world, can change the international balance of power. But the differences between the two systems, the differences between an ideological giant and a country which has so far been a political satellite of the USA, mean that the effects of the new ties will remain limited to trade and technology. China, whose foreign policy will continue to be swayed by the factor of Russian encirclement, will gain from the new relationship but she cannot afford to relax. The 44 Russian divisions on her frontiers and the 182 American bases in Japan and Okinawa will keep her alert. Any Chinese demand to reduce or neutralise the latter will be countered by Nixon by crafty overtures to the Kremlin. True, by allowing Mr Nixon to visit Peking, the Chinese scored a unique diplomatic victory, but Mr Nixon has not lost much—in the short run, either. He has now a much freer hand in Vietnam as well as in his dealings with China and Russia; and he seems certain of re-election. The visits to Peking and Moscow have given the raper of Vietnam an aura of respectability.

The success with Tanaka is another tribute to Mr Chou En-lai, a brilliant Prime Minister. However, not everything that he has done or will do will be inscribed in marble. In the new Chinese drive for normalisation of relations with as many countries as possible, sometimes the emphasis will be wrong. Not all his past moves have been right either. One recalls his letters to General Yahya Khan and Sirimavo Bandaranaike. In those days of isolation, Mr Chou went out of his way to be much too sweet to the government leaders and much too harsh about the 'handful of people' who were the victims of oppression. In those days of leonine violence in the Buddha-worshipping island, Mr Chou wrote to Sirimavo Bandaranaike (if the letter dated April 26, 1971, released by the Colombo Government a month later and, for some reason, ignored by the world press, is genuine):

"I am grateful to Your Excellency and the Ceylon Government for your trust in the Chinese Government and your friendly sentiments towards the Chinese people. The friendship between China and Ceylon is in the fundamental interest of the two peoples and can stand tests. The Chinese Government and people highly treasure the friendship between our two countries and no one with ulterior motives will ever succeed in trying to sow discord and sabotage our friendly relations.

"Following Chairman Mao Tse-tung's teaching the Chinese people have all along opposed ultra-'left' and right opportunism in their protracted revolutionary struggles. We are glad to see that thanks to the efforts of Your Excellency and the Ceylon Government, the chaotic situation created by a handful of people who style themselves 'Guevarists' and into whose ranks foreign spies have sneaked has been brought under control. We believe that as a result of Your Excellency's leadership and the co-operation and support of the Ceylonese people these acts of rebellion plotted by reactionaries at home and abroad for the purpose of undermining the interests of the Ceylonese people are bound to fail.

"We fully agree to the correct position of defending State sovereignty and guarding against foreign interference as referred to by Your Excellency. The Chinese Government and people admire this and firmly support Ceylon in her just struggle towards this end. As Your Excellency is deeply aware the Chinese Government has consistently abided by the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence, has never interfered in the internal affairs of other countries, and is also firmly opposed to any country interfering in other countries' internal affairs, and particularly to foreign reactionaries taking advantage of the opportunity to carry out armed intervention. I would like once again to reaffirm this unshak-

able stand of the Chinese Government.

"In the interests of the friendship between China and Ceylon and in consideration of the needs of the Ceylon Government, the Chinese Government in compliance with the request of the Ceylon Government, agrees to provide it with a long-term interest-free loan of 150 million rupees in convertible foreign exchange. We would like to hear any views which Your Excellency might have on this matter. We are prepared to deliver a portion of the loan in May and sign a document on it. As for other material assistance, please let us know if it is needed."

If the Ceylonese insurrection was reactionary, then the Government was progressive and all those States which rushed aid and men to Ceylon were paragons of virtue trying to help a damsel in distress. The insurrection failed because of this intervention and because the great masses of workers and peasants were not mobilised. For the latter the JVP is open to criticism but it does not absolve the masses either—whose literacy rate in Ceylon is very high—of the charge of political passivity and subservience to a pseudo-left Government. However, when thousands were getting killed or arrested, it was cynical to refer to 'a handful of people'. Also, the reference to Sirimavo's defence of state sovereignty and guarding against foreign interference came at a time when she had brought in an odd assortment of foreign forces to crush the insurrection.

All these things and the decision to allow Nixon to visit China must have disturbed the heir-apparent and his followers. It is a pity. Had Lin Piao been as steadfast to Maoism as the Indian Maoists, he would have realised that the main rhythm of Chinese policies, both at home and abroad, is never broken and the revolution continues. The policy of normalising relations at State level has already loosened the vicious Russian grip.

## Marcos In Arms

Nobody would lend President Ferdinand Marcos the credit of being a progressive. But even then the precipitate manner in which he has acted in the last few weeks has appalled his bitterest critics. At a time when the constitutional convention was working to give the Filipinos their first constitution and a base was being laid for the next presidential election, President Marcos at one fell blow pulled down all his democratic facade. On September 23 he invoked martial law to confer upon himself all the powers and his police moved in to silence every dissenting voice. At the time of writing the announced total of those picked up has shot up to 96 and those detained include his political opponents, important public figures and newsmen. Even Mr. Benigno Aquino Jr, leader of the opposition Liberal Party and his chief opponent in the next election, could not escape the dragnet.

In an explanation of sorts the President has said that he has taken up the cudgels himself to protect the Filipinos from the red menace. In the recent rash of violence in Manila and elsewhere he has found the mischievous hand of the communists and his army has reportedly clashed with Maoist elements. The police have, however, attributed the terror bombings to extortionists and an ex-convict and a policeman have been rounded up for questioning. Maybe, the attack on City Hall, power stations and petrol depots are the doings of urban guerillas. But the President could not provide any evidence other than his own. The Communist Party of the Philippines and other political groups have denied their involvement in the violence. *Aug Bayan*, an organ of the Maoist New People's Army, has dismissed the official claim of an encounter between the army and the NPA operatives. The CPP, blaming the government for all this, says that to cover up its own extreme

measures the government is indulging in terrorism. Other political parties and youth activists support this view. And Marcos' subsequent moves have added further credence to their allegations.

Signing the martial law declaration the President said that it was meant for the subversionists and the terrorists. But he did not say that it was his misrule and repeated bungling with social and economic reforms that has encouraged them. The country has been pawned to the Americans. A faint sense of relief that could be evident last year following a balanced payments position was washed away in the last floods around Luzon. Rice and sugar production has been severely affected. Added to the worsening economic situation is the increasing disillusionment of the nationalist Filipinos with the Americans. There were clashes last month on the land question and against the American in-

fringement of the Philippines security system. Reports of guerilla activities are also steadily trickling in.

Only the army can get Marcos off the hook. The recent spate of extreme measures is the first step.

## Indochina

SUBROTO SEN

"I will not place any limits on the use of air power"

Richard M. Nixon  
 "There wasn't a night when we thought we'd live until morning... never a morning we thought we'd survive until night. Did our children cry? Oh, yes, and we did also. I just stayed in my cave. I didn't see the sunlight for two years. What did I think about? Oh, I used to repeat, 'please don't let the planes come, please don't let the planes come...'"

—A Laotian refugee from the Plain of Jars talking to Western newsmen.

**T**HERE was a time when the American Air Force carried out strategic bombing missions in North Vietnam and Laos and conducted tactical strikes in South Vietnam to help the half million American expeditionary force in Indochina. The job was to pulverize the North Vietnamese infrastructure, destroy logistical supply and provide air-cover to embattled American and puppet soldiers in South Vietnam. But experience has shown the Pentagon how ineffective this traditional use of air power is in a people's war. The crippling cost, both in men and material, suffered by

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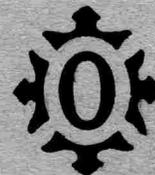
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the American ground forces, the resultant protests at home and the growing reluctance of American soldiers to fight—all this forced a revision of their strategy. Never sure of the effectiveness of the local mercenaries, the Pentagon turned to the air force as the *principal instrument* of war. It is no longer a question of supporting missions for American troops. In the name of Vietnamisation more and more mercenaries were recruited to replace the Americans while the job of winning the war was left to the air force—through a *total war* from the air.

It is hundreds and thousands of peasants in the sprawling villages of Indochina who sustain the guerillas, transport supplies to the front and in the final analysis constitute the principal source of strength. And the only way of winning the war, as the Pentagon saw it, was to drain this human reservoir through the most intensive bombing in human history. The people who choose to live in the guerilla-controlled zones of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia are *ipso facto* enemies who deserve to be burnt by napalm and sprinkled with pellet bombs. If the survivors flee the village and become refugees, that helps to prove the growing 'popularity' of the puppet regime by increasing the number of people in 'government controlled' areas. The U.S. propaganda machine has never ceased shedding tears for the refugees fleeing "from communist terror", and the world outside, even if suspicious of the American claim, considers the refugees to be the 'natural' result of "sustained military activities" in the countryside. Few would imagine that the U.S. Government, supposedly spending millions of dollars for the welfare of the refugees in Indochina, is itself "generating" refugees through bombing. A recent U.S. Government Accounting Office (GAO) report shows, rather candidly, that the air war has been a major factor in producing nearly 2,000,000 refugees in Cambodia, nearly one-third of the total Cambodian population. In Laos too, 700,000 people or about

one-fourth of the population are homeless because of U.S. bombing.

While this massive destruction of Indochinese land and people continues Nixon is withdrawing troops from South Vietnam with much fanfare. The war, the world is told, is being ended. Pentagon spokesmen are even claiming a fall in the number of air sorties over Indochina. People unaware of the perfection attained by U.S. bombers would not suspect that even a lesser tonnage of bomb, now is causing greater destruction than ever before. A study of the American air war in Indochina recently made by Cornell University shows that "only" 140,000 tons of bombs dropped on Cambodia have made 2,000,000 people homeless whereas 1.5 million tons of bombs in Laos produced 700,000 refugees.

What, however, has been the greatest of wonders is that despite the genocidal bombing and ruthless destruction of the Indochinese landscape, according to American estimate, some

800,000 people in Laos, 1.4 million in Cambodia and from 2 to 5 million in South Vietnam have been living in guerilla-controlled zones. Living in deep underground shelters, stealing time in between bombing raids to cultivate their paddies these Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian peasants are laying the foundation of a new society, whose heroism and iron will in the face of the biggest and most perfect death-machine the world has seen is unparalleled in human history. And nothing perhaps could be a better tribute to them than a complaining U.S. pilot in Da Nang: "A lot of people in the States under-estimate what we're up against. They're just primitive little jungle fighters, sure. But they're shrewd, good tacticians. They have equipment, too, like the SAMs up North. And they use a lot of stuff we discard, like tin cans. They make fuses out of them. And they'll make a damn good booby trap out of a couple of boards and some nails."

## West Bengal : Premonitions

SUMANTA BANERJEE

ONE is not yet sure whether one should call it pre-fascism, semi-fascism or neo-fascism. An exact replica of the set of economic prerequisites that led to the rise of fascism in Europe before World War II, might not be there. But events in West Bengal today have an eerie resemblance that preceded the birth of fascism.

The Leftists as in pre-war Germany, had their chances in West Bengal and misused them so irresponsibly that they left the people thoroughly disgusted. In such circumstances, a politically immature mass in economic distress, looks for saviours from above. On the same principle that weak lungs are the point of gravitation for the tuberculosis microbe, such mass mentality is the point of gravitation for the tribe of Mrs Gandhi's.

Mrs Gandhi succeeded in establishing a legally unrestricted majority rule in West Bengal, through a cunning combination of high-falutin socialist slogans and ruthless physical intimidation of opponents. In many ways it is reminiscent of Mussolini's rise to power. The Italian dictator started his career as a radical socialist, and even during the height of his fascist totalitarianism, never ceased to declare that he was a socialist. Hitler in Germany also swore by socialism when he founded the National-Socialist movement.

As Dimitrov put it: "Fascism aims at the most unbridled exploitation of the masses, but it appeals to them with the most artful anti-capitalist demagoguery, taking advantage of the profound hatred entertained by the toilers for the piratical bourgeoisie, the banks, trusts and the financial magnates, and advancing slogans

which at the given time are most alluring to the politically immature masses... Fascism delivers up the people to be devoured by the most corrupt, most venal elements, but comes before them with the demand for an 'honest and incorruptible government'. Speculating on the profound disillusionment of the masses in bourgeois-democratic governments, fascism hypocritically denounces corruption." (Report at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, 1935).

The close similarity with the Chhatra Parishad and Yuba Congress mode of operation in West Bengal is too clear to be glossed over. The Congress toughs started by invading government offices, and hounding out trade unionists in the name of removing corrupt employees. In June, they were agitating in Calcutta for an end to corruption in the University, while in Burdwan which I visited then, I found them forcibly installing their own men at the univer-

sity examination centres as invigilators, to allow mass copying. Their Ministers breathe fire now and then against blackmarketeers and hoarders, while prices continue to rise and food disappears from the market. Hypocrisy is not new in Congress politics. But this time there is a certain kind of aggressiveness about it, reminiscent of the fascist militancy.

Like Social-Democrats in pre-war Europe, the Right Communists and other liberal elements were quick to be taken in by the Indira Congress propaganda. They discovered genuine anti-capitalist and socialist forces in her party. I remember how some CPI intellectuals went ga ga about Chhatra Parishad boys who were supposed to have started a campaign in some colleges against "shirkers" among lecturers and were reported to have dragged some such teachers into classrooms to force them to take the classes. On inquiry, I found that the teachers were forced all right, but the students who dragged

them were not to be found in the classes when the lectures began. One wonders whether their actions were motivated by any genuine desire to pursue studies or were a manifestation of the new-found effectiveness of strong-arm tactics, a desire to demonstrate a show of might, which usually fosters in a fascist atmosphere, where brutal sadism is encouraged in the youth.

Fascism pampers youth, taking advantage of an opportunistic activism inspired by dissatisfaction with the existing order and stresses the negative anti-Leftism.

But such tactics in West Bengal might boomerang. The pre-election Congress slogans sought to encourage the youth to become a generation of hitchhikers seeking to thumb a ride from the State. But after the elections, it is evident that the State bandwagon is too full and unable to accommodate every unemployed youth. A red-herring becomes necessary in such circumstances, and

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we saw how batches of Chhatra Parishad and Yuba Congress boys surrounded factories, prevented CPI (M) workers from entering them and demanded their jobs. But how many can be satisfied in this way? It is becoming apparent that soon non-Bengali labourers might be made the next target, on the plea of giving jobs to sons of the soil. But such regionalism, on the lines of the anti-semitism of Nazi Germany, has its limitations in a country like India, and would jeopardize the unity of the ruling party at the Centre.

### CPI-Congress

One of the most shameful chapters in the history of the social-democratic movement would be the story of the CPI-Congress alliance in West Bengal. The sight of CPI boys following meekly Chhatra Parishad toughs in a joint procession and listening helplessly to slogans like "Give up Red slavery" and shout "Vande Mataram", was quite common during the 1972 election campaign. It was sought to be rationalized by the CPI theoreticians as a necessary stage in the evolution of the party's elusive goal of a national democratic front. One is reminded of a commentary in the *Daily Herald*, organ of the British Labour Party, on Nazism, as late as May 2, 1933. It said: "The National Socialists, it is essential to remember, call themselves 'Socialists' as well as 'Nationalists,'... Their 'Socialism' is not the Socialism of the Labour Party or that of any recognized Socialist Party in other countries. But in many ways, it is a creed that is anathema to the big landlords, the big industrialists and the big financiers. And the Nazi leaders are bound to go forward with the 'Socialist' side of their programme."

Similar hopes entertained by the Right Communists about Mrs Gandhi's Congress are about to collapse now. The combination—'Indira Socialism'—like National Socialism—is of course baroque; but so is Indira. The decorative facade of 'socialism' and 'anti-corruption' is slowly drop-

ping, and all the grotesque are baring their fangs. The Naxalites and the Marxist Communist cadres were finished off at the earlier stage. It is the turn of the other milder varieties of Leftists now. The CPI has now started complaining about attacks on its trade unionists by Congress hoodlums. The CPI MP, Mr Kalyan Roy, met the Union Labour Minister, Mr Khadilkar, in Delhi some time ago with allegations about attacks on AITUC workers in Durgapur and Asansol by Congressmen.

The pattern of attacks is similar to the blackshirt offensive. The fascists started by eliminating the communists, to be followed by social-democrats and liberals, and ended up by suffocating all forms of dissent, even from traditional conservative quarters. The Chhatra Parishad attitude towards the Press in West Bengal is illuminating in this connexion. Threats to the editors of some Leftist Bengali weeklies, like *Darpan* and *Bangla Desh* were soon followed by public bonfires of these papers. The news editor of a Bengali newspaper, very much identified with the Congress establishment, was threatened by a saucy, half-baked Chhatra Parishad MP, with dire consequences, for having dared to bring out an editorial somewhat critical of the Government. Another comrade of this gentleman—a young Minister of State in the West Bengal Government—went a step further. Let us quote what happened, from a newspaper report. "The Statesman... is said to have incurred the wrath of the powers that be over the publication of a report of a press conference held by the Chhatra Parishad general secretary, Mr Kumud Bhattacharya, after a meeting with his president, Mr Subrato Mukherjee, who also happens to be the minister of state in the Home department, on the subject of the spiralling prices and the government's duty. Apparently piqued by the headline and the display... Mr Mukherjee first telephoned to the newspaper and then, along with Mr Bhattacharya and two others, burst into the daily's news

room late that night in a huff. While handing over a rejoinder for publication, he is reported to have told the news staff: "You may have the pen; but we have other means"—as if the Calcutta papers had any doubt on this score!" (*Times of India*, September 11, 1972).

The Chief Minister of West Bengal himself is also reported to have inquired about sources of uncomplimentary reports and the names of their authors. The familiar symptoms of witch-hunting are quite apparent.

But the sheer funk of those who run these big papers is something which can only match the impertinence of the Chhatra Parishad hoodlums. It was not very long ago when these same newspapers were publishing on their front pages photostats of letters purported to have been written by Naxalites threatening the editors with death. During the United Front regime, their management raised the hue and cry that freedom of the press was in danger, just because a few demonstrations were held in front of their offices in protest against anti-UF propaganda. When the Chhatra Parishad hooligans finished off Naxalites, these same papers blessed the occasion as "people's resistance". But fascist intolerance is apparently more powerful than Leftist dissent. What during the UF regime would have been a provocation for a spate of statements by the newspaper owners' organization—the Indian and Eastern Newspapers Society—and a rallying cry for the overthrow of the Government, seems to have become now an embarrassing cause of impotent rage.

For the survival of fascism, it is necessary not only to eliminate the Opposition and suffocate the press, but to gradually reduce the whole cultural level of the people. Art and literature have to be destroyed. Under the decaying democracy of Mrs Gandhi's cynical system in West Bengal, the first steps in this direction, are already apparent. A tendency of unofficial censorship has al-

ready gripped the publishing circles. Except unmitigated mediocrities, who are easily pliable to fascist demands, no voices of originality are to be allowed.

Typical is the experience undergone by Mr Lokenath Bhattacharya, a well-known poet and dramatist. His latest novel—*Babughater Kumari Machh* (The Virgin Fish from Babughat)—was first rejected by the big publishers and then had to pass through a number of printing presses before it could see the light of day. But even after its publication, it was not allowed to be kept in the book-stalls of Calcutta, under pressure from some unseen quarters. Book-stall owners complained that the book was "too obscene". But if one reads the book, one might find the real reason for the unofficial ban on it. It is an allegorical treatment of fascism. Although the setting of the incidents narrated—a nudist prison camp—might titillate the imagination of some readers, the style is far from realistic. It is in the form of a diary kept by one of the inmates. The captors feed the prisoners well and keep them in comfort, but want to strip them, along with their clothes, of all their finer feelings. They are gradually being dehumanized and are reduced to animals, mating indiscriminately, although they struggle hard to remember their human past. As days pass, they begin to forget language and this is reflected in the diary, which becomes incoherent at times. Their children born in the camp, completely divorced from the background of civilization, are the most pampered by the captors who train them into a pack of beasts and turn them against their parents. Finally, there is a spark of rebellion among the inmates. A young mother who gives birth to a child kills the newborn, thus refusing the captors the pleasure of bringing up another human beast.

Our agent at Varanasi  
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OCTOBER 14, 1972

Tamil Nadu

## Sarvodaya And CPM

FROM A CORRESPONDENT

IF one observes closely the agitations by Sarvodaya and CPM leaders in East Thanjavur district over the occupation of Trust land, one finds the Sarvodaya workers on a more militant path than the CPM (The spot is Valivalam village near Venmani village where 44 landless Harijans were burnt alive in December 1968). The agitation was led by the Sarvodaya leader, Mr Jagannathan, and all party workers including the CPM, CPI, DMK and the DK participated in it. The purpose of the agitation was to get back and distribute among the Harijan labourers 588 acres of Trust land now enjoyed by Mr K. M. Desikar. Mr Desikar was a Congressman and took part in the independence struggle. But this nationalist bourgeois is very reluctant to share the land with the poor.

The agitation of the landless Harijans under Sarvodaya leadership began from July 1972. But Mr Desikar obtained an interim stay order prohibiting the entry of the tenants and others into the fields of Trust land. The case was between Mr Desikar and the Sarvodaya movement. Recently, Mr S. Jagannathan, the secretary of the Tamil Nadu Sarvodaya Sangha and Gandhian peace centre, and his wife, Mrs Krishnammal, along with 120 labourers of the CPM and other parties were arrested by the police for defying the court order.

A landlord from East Thanjavur says that Sarvodaya has become more of a nuisance than the CPM. The CPM, according to him, knows nothing more than agitations for increased wages—say from 10 paise to 11 paise but the Sarvodaya fellows, who have had close contacts with the Harijan labourers, have spoiled their minds by creating all sorts of trouble in the name of Gandhi. He wondered if there was any difference

between communism and Sarvodaya in this country. Perhaps the Thanjavur landlords have forgotten the old days of 1950 when the communists in Thanjavur stood on a revolutionary path. As the Indian communists (CPI and CPM) have ignored the need for military and revolutionary training of the landless Harijan agricultural labour communities, there is no wonder that the landlords of Thanjavur equate the CPM and Sarvodaya.

The revolutionary path now followed by the CPM unit of Tamil Nadu consists in

(i) Sending telegrams to the Chief Minister and Prime Minister urging them to intervene in a particular strike in a particular firm for increased wages or bonus.

(ii) Submitting memoranda and petitions to the Governor and President.

(iii) Crying at public meetings that usually have a very thin attendance.

(iv) Starting processions in small groups of 10% of the total workers in a particular firm.

(v) Hunger-strike.

(vi) Aiming at electoral alliance with the DMK.

(vii) Criticising the CPI and Naxals in their regional daily printed from Madurai.

Part of this path was charted by Father Gandhi and part by opportunist leaders in the name of revolution. One Sarvodaya worker at the peace centre at Keevalur remarked that only Sarvodaya and Naxals are the organisations that stand for certain ideologies. By commenting this way, he wanted to point out that they were more militant than the CPM.

As the press will remain closed during the holidays, the next issue of Frontier will come out in the first week of November.

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MRINAL SEN'S

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# Pre-Political Rebellions In Bengal

BENOY GHOSE

WHAT Antonio Gramsci said of the South Italian society and the southern peasants in the 1920s, applies largely to Bengali society in the 18th and 19th centuries. Gramsci said: "The southern peasants are in perpetual ferment, but as mass they were incapable of giving a unified expression to their aspirations and needs". The peasants of Bengal, Hindus, Muslims, tribals and semi-Hinduized tribals, were in continual ferment in the last two centuries, because of the impact of the British land-revenue administration, the Permanent Settlement, the new police and the new judicial system. A host of foreign elements entered the rural society of Bengal with the advent of the British merchants and rulers, besides that most powerful element, 'money', that "common whore of mankind" (Shakespeare), which is the cause of "the universal confusion and transposition of all natural and human qualities" (Karl Marx). These elements disturbed the equilibrium and the internal structural coherence of the traditional rural society of Bengal. The consequence was continual social ferment in the villages. That continual ferment, the inchoate struggles of the oppressed rural people (mainly peasants) for their vague aspirations, for righting the wrongs, and the various ways in which the struggles evolved, from armed risings to Messianic movements, are the subject of this paper. It will be presented very briefly, with one or two historical examples.

These movements have been called 'pre-political' because they evolved at a time when there was no organized political movement of any kind, based on different socio-political ideologies. Several such movements together may, therefore, be considered a kind of 'pre-political' or 'primitive' or 'pre-historic' stage of social unrest, protest and rebellion

of the oppressed. The heroes of these movements were not political leaders or organizers in the modern sense. Some were known as religious 'prophets' and 'messiahs', and almost all, including the messiahs, were condemned as 'bandits' and 'outlaws'. It is true that some of these rebellions hovered on the fringe of 'banditry' or a sort of 'roving brigandage' and, in the last stage, degenerated into scattered outlawry. But still, these pre-political rebellions or 'messianic movements and banditry are nothing but "endemic peasant protests against oppression and poverty" (Hobsbawm), and they ought to preoccupy the social historian today, as much as they preoccupied the military and the police in the past.

## The Chuar Rebellions: 1767-1800

In 1760 the East India Company acquired the territories later known as the Jungle Mahals, and Dhalbhum, then in the Midnapur district. In 1765 when the Dewani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was granted to the Company, its territories covered the whole of Chotanagpur. From 1767 the British penetration of this hill-and-forest region began when Graham, the Resident of Midnapur, despatched a military force under Fergusson, to subjugate the defiant jungle chiefs, to demand reparations for their defiance and banditry, and to proceed in right earnest with the revenue assessment of these areas, rich in silk, lac and other forest products. Fergusson set about doing his job by attacking and capturing the fort of the Jhargram chief. Elated at his success, he pushed on to Ramgarh, Lalgah, Jambani, Silda, Balarampur, and made the chiefs of Supur, Ambikanagar, Manbhum, Chatna, Barabhum, Raipur and Phulkusma (in Bankura and Purulia districts) submit to British power. Submission he got from some of the chiefs, by

parading his troops, but he knew it well that the defiance of jungle chiefs and their spirit of independence could not so easily be subdued. Within a few days the Dhalbhum chief bade defiance to the British authority, and other tribal chiefs immediately joined forces with him. Fizzled Fergusson sent his envoys to the Dhalbhum chief, but they were turned back by a force of 150 archers only. He had to fight his way, therefore, through some 16 miles of dense forest, and storm the Ghatsila fort. The old raja (the chief) did not surrender, but took to the hills. Later he was captured and sent to Midnapur under heavy escort. His nephew was installed in his place as raja, but he also turned a rebel. Banditry became rampant in the area. The Ghatsila fort was again captured and the rebel nephew was forced to surrender. Some other local chiefs pledged submission again.

Things started looking up in western Midnapur in the beginning of 1768. But in mid-1768 trouble was brewing again in Ghatsila. Two companies of sepoys were despatched to re-establish British authority, but the attempt failed. The Ghatsila chief, with all his principal *sardars*, took refuge some forty miles from his fort, the *paiks* stayed in arms, and the dependent chiefs stood firmly by him. The most turbulent of these dependent chiefs was 'the Dampara fellow', a notorious bandit by all official reports, and Captain Morgan, therefore, wrote to Vansittart, the Resident of Midnapur, "I intend his head shall grace the entrance of this fort" (Ghatsila fort). The name of this Dampara chief (*Sardar Ghatwal*) was Jagannath Pater. Morgan's threat could not be executed. A petty chief of Chakulia so heavily stockaded the path of one sergeant's detachment, sent to seize him, that half their ammunition was used in forcing

through it. Other detachments were similarly harassed and their headquarters, the Narsingharh fort, was repeatedly sacked. By July 1768 Morgan wrote to Vansittart in disappointment: "I wish to God, this business was over, for I am really tired of doing nothing, and my poor sepoy fall sick continually."

Lt. Nun and Captain Forbes were then sent with a large contingent of sepoy to stop the depredations of the rebels, who were then roving in their thousands in hills and forests. The Resident of Midnapur got so furious that he ordered his military officers to seize the obstinate *chuar* chiefs and to hang them on the spot. But the sepoy began to be harassed by the insurgents, and many subadars and sepoy were killed. Both Nun and Forbes, severely wounded, saved themselves by flight. As Morgan wrote to Vansittart in 1768 about these jungle fellows: "It is all a joke to talk of licking these jungle fellows: they have not the least idea of fighting, but they are like a parcel of wasps: they endeavour to sting you with their arrows, and then fly off. It is impossible almost to kill any of them, as they always keep at a great distance and fling their arrows at you..." Another officer, Lt. Goodyar, was therefore sent with fresh reinforcements to 'lick' these jungle fellows and restore order. In all six and a half companies were then engaged in encounters against the 'bandit' bowmen. Order was restored by building forts and police posts in cleared areas (1771). But the strongholds of the rebel *chuars* in 1771, located in Dhalbhum, Dampara, Koilpal, Silda, Shamsundarpur, Supur, Ambikanagar, Manbhum, Barabhum and Dhadka, could not be easily subdued. The Midnapur authorities had for years to contend with such turbulent rebel chiefs and sardar ghatwals as Subla Singh of Koilapal, Samangunjan of Dhadka, Jagannath Pater of Dampara and others.

The disturbances continued in intermittent waves till they reached their

climax in 1799-1800. With the introduction of the Permanent Settlement, the *daroga* system of police, the resumption of the *ghatwali* (*paikan*) lands under the 1793 regulations, the final blow was struck at the traditional socio-economic structure of the tribal and semi-tribal people of this region. The British authorities tried to substitute 'contract' for 'custom' overnight. Old zamindars and chiefs like the Rani Siromoni of the Midnapur estate, the Rajas of Bishnupur, Panchakot, Raipur and many others (who were all tribal chiefs, later Hinduized), suddenly found themselves surrounded by a host of unknown elements, like the Company's collectors, their officers, the mahajans, the police, who could play havoc at their will and intrigue with the status, prestige, power, custom and everything which they had been traditionally enjoying. A new class of upstart landed aristocrats was growing, mainly consisting of the Bengali Hindus and 'city capitalists' (Marx)—the banians, mutsuddis, dewans, sarkars and dalals—who were buying up the old estates in auctions. These new upstart zamindars were empowered to increase the rents of the cultivators, and rack-renting ruined the peasants. The mahajans, in this situation, began to squeeze both the insolvent old zamindars and the impoverished peasants. The peasants made common cause with the disinherited feudal chiefs at that time (the peasants were not class-conscious then), and put up united resistance to the intrusion of these disrupting elements into their society. A series of revolts broke out as a consequence, reaching a new high in the *Chuar* rebellion of 1799-1800, the Bhumji revolt of 1832-33, the Barasat revolt of Titu Mir, and the Santhal insurrection of 1855-56.

The Settlement Officer of Midnapur (J. C. Price) wrote in his report 'The *Chuar* Rebellion of 1799': "1799 A.D. is marked in the Midnapur annals as the year of the great *chuar* rebellion, ghastly with its tale of horrors and massacre; when all

the evil passions of the infuriated sirdars and paiks burst forth in a wild attempt to revenge the resumption of their jaghir lands on the Government, if not to compel it to order a complete restoration of them. All the lawless tribes of the jungle mehals made common cause with the paiks, and carried slaughter and flames to the very doors of the Magistrate's cutchery. The ordinary police and the military stationed at Midnapore were utterly unable to cope with the banditti, as they were called, and a reinforcement of troops had to be despatched to Midnapore. After a period of the greatest anxiety and suspense, after innumerable and most brutal murders, after the death of the Judge-Magistrate himself (previously Collector), who could bear the weight of his charge no longer and succumbed under the accumulation of his troubles; it was not till the close of the year that the district was restored to a state of only partial tranquillity."

It would appear from a careful perusal of the old district records that in the immediate vicinity of Midnapur town, there were three places where the *chuar* rebels had concentrated their force: Bahadurpur (about 6 miles to the west of Midnapur town), Salbani (on the Garbeta road, about 24 miles to the north of the town), and Karnagarh, where Rani Siromoni's *killa* (fort) was located (about 6 miles to the north of the town). From these three places the rebels started on their various raids in different directions, and to these places they returned after exploits. Several battalions of regular troops, under British officers, faced the rebels in several encounters, but the rebellion could not be easily quelled. By March 1799, Imhoff, the Midnapur Collector, was emphasising the need to restore *paikan* lands. If that was not done without delay, he strongly argued, the country would become a desert and a den of bandits and beasts. No troops were able to act with any effect, more particularly as they were

not acquainted "with the roads, or haunts of the chowars (*chuars*)". The Board of Revenue accepted Imhoff's advice. The *paikan* lands and the *ghatwali* police were restored under the zamindars. The Magistrate was advised to tour the district to ensure close contact with people and to give presents of horses etc. to the faithful chiefs and zamindars. That was done, and the tribal chiefs, the rajas and the zamindars, the sardar ghatwals, and the paiks betrayed the poor peasants. The rebellion collapsed. The entire area was ultimately de-regulationized in 1833-34.

### The Santhal Rebellion: 1855-56

With minor variations the Santhal rebellion followed the same pattern. Summarising its causes, E. G. Man wrote in 1867: "1st—The grasping and rapacious spirit influencing the mahajans or money-lenders in their transactions with the tribe. 2nd—The increasing misery caused by the iniquitous system of allowing personal and hereditary bondage for debt. 3rd—The unparalleled corruption and extortion of the police in aiding and abetting the mahajans. 4th—The impossibility of the Santhals obtaining redress from the Courts.... All these combined were, in my opinion, the primary causes of the rebellion." The summary is good as far as it goes, and the emphasis on the extortion of the money-lenders and their abettors the police, is also just. But Man should have mentioned the important factor that all these evils accompanied the establishment of British rule.

The district known as *Damin-i-Koh* (which means 'land by the side of the hills') was formed in the year 1832, to the north-east of the present Santhal Parganas, where the immigration of the Santhals from Birbhum, Bankura, Manbhum, Hazaribagh and other places, had been going on for about fifty years. This area was strategically important for the defence of the plains of Bengal, and the main purpose behind the British policy of settlement of the

Santhals was to exploit their cheap labour for developing the place, in their own economic interest. That is, for increasing their revenue and commerce. Traders and money-lenders from Bengal and Bihar began to flock to the place and fleece the Santhals, who were little accustomed to a money-economy. "We did not know the use of money as a medium of exchange. We exchanged goods for goods, for instance, goats for buffaloes, pigs for goats etc. We produced everything we needed, and exchanging our products, we satisfied our needs. We lived quite peacefully and happily then. When 'money' came, and with it the traders and mahajans, we started borrowing money. There was no lender or borrower among us before. We could never repay our loan or its interest, and became slaves and serfs for generations. The mahajans began to grind our bones with their teeth." (*Mare Hapram Ko Reak Kaiha*).

Their endurance reached the breaking point. Only a spark was needed to kindle a conflagration. The spark was released by two Santhal brothers, Sido and Kanhu, living at Bhagnadihi, a few miles south of Barhait. They were later joined by their other two younger brothers, Chandu and Bhairab, and many other *manjhis* and *parganaitis* (heads of the Santhal village communities). A story ran that Thakur Bonga, the Divine Spirit, had appeared before the leaders and they had obtained a command from Thakur to prepare for the great event to come (the rebellion) and to lead the *Har Hapans* (the Santhals), by which all wrongs will be righted and they would become once more a free people. The call to rebellion (*Hul* in Santhali) was given by the leaders, the Suba Thakurs, on 30 June 1855, before an assembly of about 30,000 Santhals in Bhagnadihi: "Annihilate the enemies—the mahajans, the dishonest traders, the police and the British. Liberate the land of the Santhals from the clutches of all foreign ele-

ments, including the Bengalis, the Biharis and others (called *diku* or *deko* in Santhali)."

The rebellion broke out in such fury that within a month the British authorities had to mobilise all available troops from Hazaribagh, Berhampur, Barrackpore and other stations, to crush it. It soon spread to the western districts of Bengal, in Birbhum, Bankura and Burdwan. The rich zamindars, merchants and mahajans of Burdwan were burying their treasures in holes and wells, posting sepoy at their gates and screaming to the British authorities for security and protection (*Sambad Bhaskar*, 1856). Breaking through Rampurhat, the rebels moved further south and overran the country from G. T. Road in Burdwan to Sainthia. Suri was threatened. An officer wrote: "At Suri we found things worse. One officer kept his horse saddled day and night, the jail seemed to have been hastily fortified, and the bulk of the coin from the treasury was said... to be hid in a well." On the western borders several regiments of sepoy were engaged in combats with the rebels at various places. By the end of September 1855, the Magistrate of Birbhum reported that the whole country from four miles west of Nagar up to Deoghar was in the hands of the rebels, and a large body of Santhals, five to seven thousand, was encamped at Tilabuni, six miles west of Suri, where they had dug tanks, fortified their position by earthworks and made preparations for attack. In November 1855 Martial Law was proclaimed, and a massive offensive was launched against the rebels. They were pushed back from the open country to the hills and forests, and were dispersed and defeated in fierce encounters. The rebels lost the battle. The rebellion failed. Sido was killed in action. Kanhu and many other leaders were hanged or killed. Hundreds of rebels, handcuffed and chained, were dragged along the rugged road to Suri jail in Girbhum. A harrowing description of their torture was pub-

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lished only in a few Bengali papers. The Bengali press, in general, condemned the rebels as bandits and beasts, and often in its hysterical outbursts of condemnation surpassed the English press (compare *The Englishman* and *Sambad Prabhakar*, 1855-56). After the rebellion failed, a kind of 'roving banditry' continued for some time in 1856, till another rebellion, the Sepoy Mutiny, overshadowed it in 1857.

#### Character of the Rebellions

The Santhal insurrection and such other rebellions have been characterised by some social anthropologists and sociologists as 'Messianic' and 'Millenarian' movements, which is only partly true. When 'religion', in the pre-political age, was "the expression of real misery and protest against real misery", when it was "the sigh of the oppressed people, the sentiment of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions" (Karl Marx), it was but natural that the leaders of people's (peasants') rebellions should exploit that religious sentiment, consciously and in a planned manner, to rouse the followers and strengthen the spirit of revolt among them. This is not to say that the rebel leaders, being backward themselves, were not religious-minded. But the way the Suba Thakurs began to appear in different villages, after Sido and Kanhu obtained their Divine command for leading the revolt, is interesting. It suggests a sort of conscious planning of the revolt, under group-leaders in different areas. Moreover, the Santhal Suba Thakurs were not like the religious *gurus* and *babas* of our middle-class educated gentlemen, simply preaching sermons and indulging in all kinds of pleasures and luxuries at the cost of their devotees. Sido, Kanhu and other leaders were not just Suba Thakurs, but excellent fighters, and they fought valiantly with their followers against the enemy. Many were killed in action.

For more than fifty years Chuar rebellions broke out at intervals but, during this long period, there was har-

dly any possibility of its diversion to messianic and millenarian movement, led by any prophet or messiah. But the *Chuars* or the *Bhumijes* were as much religious and backward as the *Santhals* were. Why then we did not find any Suba Thakur among the *Chuars*? The answer is, in the Chuar rebellions the leadership was provided by the tribal chiefs (the *rajas* and *zamindars*) themselves, and there was, therefore, no need of any Divine inspiration.

As we look into the various forms of such rebellions, from the second half of the 18th to the close of the 19th century, certain other interesting characteristics are also revealed. The rebellions, beginning from that of the *Chuars* till the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857, were less religious and messianic in form than those in the later period. Among the movements in the later period may be mentioned the Santhal messiah *Bhagrit* (*Bhagirath*) *babaji's* movement (1871-72), the *Birsait* movement of the *Mundis* led by *Birsa Munda* (*Bhagaban* or god), the *Tana Bhagat* movement of the *Oraons* and many others. The rebellious movements of 'pre-political' age appear to be more militant and social, and armed struggle is one of their distinguishing features, but the more modern movements of 'political' age seem to be more religious and less militant. Why is this so?

It appears to be an intriguing question, but it is really not that. Politics and religion were strangely interwoven into a pattern in Bengal in the second half of the 19th century, under the leadership of the educated elite. There was the movement of the Christian missionaries, especially among the backward people. Above all, the Hindu revivalists became the principal actors on the social and political stage of Bengal in the last quarter of the 19th century. These religio-political movements of the modern 'political' age exerted deep influence on the common people, both tribal and non-tribal. They became victims of

various cults of *guru* and *babaji*, prophet and messiah, and these cults emasculated them to the bone. The role of Vaishnavism in particular, with its cult of surrender without resistance, love without hatred, unlimited tolerance, non-violence and non-enmity, is very significant in this context. It is interesting to note that many tribal and semi-tribal chiefs of old *Jungle Mahals* became devout Vaishnavas when they were Hinduized (rather Rajputized). Another interesting fact is that most of the new *zamindars* and the rural aristocrats became Vaishnavas and installed Vaishnava deities in their palatial *thakurbatis*. Even the majority of the new 'city aristocrats' in Calcutta became Vaishnavas. *Saktism*, which has a little bias for violence and manliness, was quietly relegated to the background. Even *Sakta* festivals were swamped with Vaishnava traits. It was a revival of a kind of national Krishna-Radha-cult consciousness, into which our political consciousness merged. With the Vaishnavisation of the middle-class educated elite's politics in Bengal, with the process of emasculation and 'effemination' of the people going on, it is not surprising that the people's movements and revolts of the late and early 20th centuries will put on a messianic garb more and more, and break away from their earlier militant forms.

The rebellions, discussed before, failed, in spite of the fact that the rebels were brave fighters, their cause was just, and even their traditional weapons like bows and arrows, spears and battle-axes, were good enough at that time to overcome and defeat the enemy. The hills and woods were also favourable for their traditional guerilla warfare. In fact, they were so familiar with their hills and woods that at night they could move freely through their endless ups and downs with the help of the stars and by feeling the barks of trees. At times, the elements of class struggle also began to enter into the rebellions. It was reported in the press that the

blacksmiths (mainly Hindus) started making guns for the Santhals at one stage. Still the rebellions failed, because they did not grow out of any political and ideological consciousness. Tribal or semi-tribal solidarity, narrow community-consciousness, spontaneity and a vague sense of social justice, could not hold the rebels together and keep up their militant morale for long. After their defeat, they were fragmented into roving groups of bandits. Although all of them were not bandits of the classical Robin Hood type, "who took from the rich to give to the poor and never killed but in self-defence or just revenge", there were many who conformed to the Robin Hood stereotype. They are all dead and forgotten now, but their memories live in the ballads, songs and anecdotes of our village people, as a part of our rural folklore.

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## The Lessons Of Birbhum

FROM A CORRESPONDENT

A document is circulating in Birbhum, issued in the name of the West Bengal-Bihar Border Region Committee of the CPI (ML). It states that revolutionary cadres, following Charu Mazumdar's slogan of solving problems through the campaign of annihilating class enemies, carried out about 200 annihilations in Birbhum and the neighbouring areas and collected about 200 guns and a few rifles. In most of the thanas, the revolutionary cadres depended to varying extents on poor peasant and landless labour guerillas. It was possible in all to have about 30 poor peasants and landless labourers as organisers. In some areas, when the guerillas took over the property of the class enemies, they earned the active support of the general run of poor peasants and landless labourers. In these areas the people spontaneously took initiatives at the time of police and military repression. But not having any well-worked-out action plan for attacking the police and military, instead of involving the people in the struggle for robbing the jotedars of their social and economic power, the revolutionaries went ahead, following the Party Congress line, with the programme of annihilation. As a result the peasant masses could not be activated. This isolation of the cadres facilitated the attack of the armed forces of the government. About 50 revolutionaries got killed; most of the guns and rifles were recovered by the police. The jotedars and money-lenders who had left their villages

could return to their homes with the help of the police. A very large number of revolutionary workers got arrested. Those who were not, had to leave their areas of operation. In short the movement suffered a total setback.

The report that Charu Mazumdar placed at the Party Congress on the question of annihilations had for its main theme "class struggle, that is, annihilation of class enemies". This meant that nothing else was considered as class struggle. Every problem would be solved through this campaign; a new man would be born; there would be a new consciousness and new faith among the poor peasants and landless labourers; rural areas would be liberated, new red spots would appear on the map of the country and eventually conditions would become ripe for a countrywide mass uprising. The peasants with new consciousness and new faith would snatch arms from the enemy and would provide the armed defence of the revolutionary power. Annihilation of class enemies was regarded as a higher form of class struggle and the beginning of guerilla warfare.

This line was adopted unanimously in the Party Congress and the party journals began to highlight activities in different areas according to the number of annihilations carried out. This became the sole criterion. In Birbhum, as in other regions, little discrimination was made between the big, small and medium among the jotedars. Anybody who

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expressed any differences about the annihilation programme was immediately branded as revisionist.

In these areas where the line was applied to the letter, a very small number of youths from the poor and landless peasantry came to the fore for taking active part in the annihilation programme. Among the rest there were various reactions observable. One of the typical reactions was to say, "Not bad. Let this begin. We shall join later". A second would say, "The rich would remain rich, the poor poor. There would never be power in the hands of the peasantry". About annihilations, some said, "Well served. They will now be taught a lesson". Another section said, "Could they be eliminated by this method? What then is the good?" The peasants did not accept the line that the annihilations were meant to liquidate the social and economic power of the jotedars. They did not take it as their own fight. They took it as a line of action of the Party. Thanks to the initiative of the handful of activists from among the peasantry, a large number of peasants gave shelter and food. But when the enemy returned they said, "You better go elsewhere for your fight". The relation between guerillas and the peasants never took the form of fish in water. In certain other areas the revolutionary workers unconsciously deviated from Charu Mazumdar's line and did not confine themselves to the annihilation programme. In these areas, along with annihilations, the guerillas carried out such activities as expropriation of the jotedars, burning of documents, liquidation of scripts, forceful occupation of land, fixation of minimum wage rates etc. It turned out that in these areas the peasant masses became relatively active; they identified themselves somewhat more with the struggle and even in some cases simultaneously confronted the armed forces. However these activities could not be carried very far because the Party did not have any line in the matter.

The lesson that is to be drawn is: the line of equating class struggle with annihilation of class enemies is but a line of terrorism, not of peasant revolutionary war. There has always been, there would always be, annihilation of class enemies in any revolutionary struggle, but annihilation of class enemies cannot be acceptable as the main political line of any communist party.

#### The Main Task

What ought to be the main task of the party in the village? Obviously, organising peasants for the revolution. The Party units should be formed, composed of vanguard elements of the poor and landless peasants. These units should carry out the work of educating the peasantry with Mao Tse-tung thought—organise them for revolution. They should form revolutionary peasant committees led by poor and landless peasants. Simultaneously the party units should form armed squads composed of peasant youths which will in course of time provide the basis for the formation of guerilla units. The reason for not calling these squads "guerilla units" is that it has been seen that such units take time to acquire the character and the competence that a guerilla unit should have. This leads to overestimation of the armed struggle of the party. After this stage is over the peasant committee under the leadership of the Party unit should take steps for starting struggle against the jotedars that would be aimed at taking away from them their social and economic power. The slogan should be to make the peasant committee the ultimate authority in all village-level matters.

This of course would invite attacks from the class enemies and the State apparatus. It would then be the task of the armed squads to thwart and defeat these attacks and it is through this practice that they would gain in strength. Depending on differences in the circumstances and the level of political consciousness among the people, there would be an alternative

approach, that would consist in the armed squads meting out punishment (which may involve annihilations) according to the desires of the local peasant masses which are to be known on thoroughgoing investigations—all these things being a means of entry among the peasant masses, so that such steps should be immediately followed by the formation of the party unit and the revolutionary peasant committee. In all cases however the central focus of all the activities should be on the elimination of the landlord class as a class (which is not to be understood as their physical liquidation). If this is not done, if one follows the party line of mere annihilation of class enemies, the revolutionary cadres would be isolated from the peasant masses. This is what happened in Srikakulam, this is what happened in Midnapore, this is also the experience in Birbhum.

In the Party Congress report there is no line laid down about confrontation with armed forces. In Birbhum in many areas the poor peasant and landless labourer population expected such armed confrontations. But except for a few such cases, no line was adopted in a general way about confronting the armed forces. The guns and rifles that had been seized were not put to any use based on any systematic programme. The line that was given by the party was to spread the annihilation campaign far and wide with a view to defeating the enemy strategy of "encirclement and repression". Even after red areas were established in Srikakulam, Charu Mazumdar did not ask for a concentration of all the forces against the repressive armed forces of the State, did not give direction for the adoption of a military programme. In his article, "Guerilla warfare" Charu Mazumdar did not give the slightest idea about what the armed forces of the State could do to the revolutionaries, and how the latter could fight back. In Birbhum it was seen that the armed forces of the State, instead of being weakened,

selected one area after another and cleared them up. In Birbhum wherever the cadres took courage to challenge the police and the military, they got the enthusiastic support of the people. The lesson of Birbhum in this respect would seem to be that Charu Mazumdar was wrong to think that the new man would be born through annihilation of class enemies; his slogan that "one who has not made his hand red with the blood of the enemy is not a communist" was also wrong. The new man is born in the fire of class struggle in which one acts according to Marxism-Leninism and Mao Tse-tung thought. It is also not true that guerilla warfare can start only through the process of annihilation of class enemies. It can start in many other ways. Comrade Babulal who gave his life in an armed encounter with the police—did he not contribute to the beginning of guerilla warfare?

It is true that lately Charu Mazumdar himself criticised the line of annihilation as "militant economism". But this criticism was made most casually without any adequate analysis or investigation.

#### Mass Movements

In one article Charu Mazumdar wrote that open mass organisation work was an obstacle to the genesis and spread of guerilla warfare. In an inner-party document it has been claimed that this line had been acclaimed as correct by Peking Radio. It is however not true that Peking Radio ever made any reference to this article and it was irresponsible to involve the Chinese party in this fashion. It was arising out of this erroneous line that Charu Mazumdar criticised those workers who participated in a struggle over the paddy harvests.

There is no question about it that guerilla warfare will necessarily have to be linked with mass movements. Of course such movements will not have anything to do with bourgeois legalistic movements and the party's

responsibility in the matter does not exhaust itself in just giving the call for such movements. The Party's duty is to organise them.

In certain areas of Birbhum peasant masses wanted to go forward with the struggle over harvests but according to the directions of Charu Mazumdar they were told that the party or the guerillas had nothing to do about the matter. But last October a call was given to launch such movements all over West Bengal—but as there was no preparation and as the Party did not take any responsibility for organising the movement, the slogan remained just a slogan.

The question of the working class and struggle in urban areas is one that in practice the Party has neglected most, so that the movement has remained isolated from the vast industrial working class of the country. It appeared from Charu Mazumdar's writings that the only task of the working class front was to organise guerilla units among them to carry out the campaign of annihilation. Following that lead the Calcutta Committee adopted the programme of annihilating businessmen, usurers, blackmarketeers, etc. From there on began a spate of annihilations of so-called class enemies in all urban areas; and there was left no difference in nature between the movement in urban and rural areas. No distinction was drawn between the various small and big left parties. As a result, from ordinary workers of such parties to major leaders became targets of the annihilation programme and these activities were hailed in the pages of *Deshabrati* and *Liberation*. Some party workers got so enthusiastic that they announced such a programme as one of annihilating any voter.

The Committee thinks that the party requires to get involved in all kinds of working class struggles with a view to making them more militant, to organise armed resistance to all repression and if necessary to organise clandestine trade unions,

(Let us recall the example of clandestine trade union activity in China between 1928-1948). It is also necessary to criticise the emphasis that has been laid on the Party being a party of the poor peasant and landless labourers, and on the alleged hold of revisionism on the working class. The industrial working class has to become the vanguard of the revolution and for that the Party has to work primarily among the vast majority of the truly pauperised working class, leaving aside the relatively affluent sections of a class that provides the basis for the operations of the revisionist trade unions. Guerilla warfare is admissible in urban areas only when there would be a mass upsurge of the working class and toiling peoples, as it was in 1966 for some time in Durgapur. In all other situations that should be regarded as adventurism.

#### On Base Areas

The question of base area comes from the recognition of the uneven development of the semi-feudal semi-colonial countries. But for this uneven development, the question that would have been relevant is that of armed uprising on a countrywide scale. In a recent document of the State Committee of West Bengal it has been stated that there is not much unevenness of development in the country. It is this understanding that has led to the line of scattered guerilla fights and it is this that gave rise to the idea of quick victory, of the country being liberated in 1975. However, base areas are necessary and indispensable as refuge in the face of white terror. Charu Mazumdar has rightly observed, the necessary precondition for the establishment of base areas is the formation of revolutionary committees headed by poor peasants and landless labourers and under their guidance involvement of the entire peasant masses in struggles. But it appeared from his writings that he considered any rural area suitable for becoming a base area. But that it is not even think-

able to have base areas in the proximity of cities should be clear from the fact that even after five years of the beginning of armed struggle in the Naxalbari area it has not been possible to form any red bases anywhere. Some such areas did exist for brief periods but they were all smashed up by the enemy. The utmost that there has been may be called guerilla zones. There was some success only in the Srikakulam area but the reason why even that failed is primarily the absence of any political and military programme regarding base areas and the liberation army. It would appear that one would have to put greater emphasis on remote areas and take fresh account of the conditions of terrain.

There has not been any people's army; there have only been some groups of guerillas. Even in this respect there has been a great deal of exaggeration. Quite often one has described as guerillas people who have not even left their homes and come under the discipline of any unit, just by virtue of their having been members of strictly temporary groups that were formed for carrying out annihilations.

Charu Mazumdar was of course quite right that the people's liberation army has to be mainly composed of peasants. But his line that in every case the command of a guerilla unit has to be a poor or landless peasant appears to be mistaken. It is mechanistic to think that if the commanders are of peasant class

background that would by itself bring about leadership of that class. It is the revolutionary peasant committees that would give leadership to the peasants' struggles. For this reason the party units have to be composed of poor and landless peasants and the peasant committees have to be under the leadership of such peasants and this makes irrelevant the question of leadership of the army commanders. It has been the experience in Birbhum that as more and more peasants join the struggle, there develops an increasing urge among the youths from working class and petty bourgeois backgrounds to join with them. While the liberation army has necessarily to be composed mainly of peasants, these elements could also be included in the ranks of the army, while strengthening the work of political education within the army. It was seen in Birbhum that these non-peasant elements were quite capable of fighting; if they were properly treated it should have been possible to form quite a strong army in Birbhum. But this human resource was allowed to go waste because of the line that the army must be composed exclusively of peasants.

The undivided Central Committee of the Party has never met even once since the meeting that took place immediately after the Party Congress in 1970. In reply to the State Committee of Bihar, Charu Mazumdar gave the explanation (and this was repeated in a West Bengal State

Committee document) that this was done on grounds of security. But the problem of security will always be there with every revolutionary movement in any country. That never meant, that ought not to mean, the stoppage of functioning of the Central Committee. At least five members of the Central Committee have been expelled for their differences with Charu Mazumdar without any meeting taking place. The atmosphere for inner-party struggle has been totally vitiated by the attitude of branding any difference with Charu Mazumdar as revisionism. The documents issued by the Bihar State Committee and by the West Bengal-Bihar-Orissa Border Regional Committee were condemned without their being even discussed in the Central Committee. This made inner-party discussion impossible and endangered the very existence of the Party.

The Party suffers from extreme dogmatism, rigidity and left deviation. These get expressed in regarding as equally reactionary all the other left parties, failing to exploit the contradictions within the ruling class, failing to work on the contradictions between different regional components of the armed forces as well as the contradictions between the officer class and the lower ranks, in not recognising the existence of a national bourgeoisie. All this boils down to antagonisms with all and alliance with none.

## Economic Planning In China

JOAN ROBINSON

ON a tour in the Spring of 1972 I was privileged to be given some information about economic management in China. These notes recount what I was able to make out about the framing of an annual plan of production and distribution.

### Administration

There are several phrases always used in connection with the system of economic planning—"Two initiatives, of the top and of the bottom"; "From the bottom up and from the top down"; and "Leaving leeway". The

last means allowing room for adjustments as work proceeds.

The most important link in the chain of administration is the Province. As well as the old historical Provinces, there are three cities and three Autonomous Regions (including Tibet) which

rank as Provinces. Provinces are divided into Administrative districts. Under Districts are Counties, Communes divided into Brigades and teams. In the large towns are Urban Districts and neighbourhoods, under which are Street Committees, at the same level as teams in agriculture.

Proposals and demands from each level pass up to the Province. Once a year the representatives of all the Provinces meet with the Planning Commission in Peking. Balances for production and distribution of all the main commodities and for flows of finance are made and agreed. Each Province comes back with commitments and guarantees which are then distributed down from level to level as firm undertakings.

#### Agriculture

In the Communes, in August and September, after the harvest, each team is called upon to review last year's work and to outline proposals for next year's production. No plan, of course, ever starts on a blank sheet; usually proposals are for the same as last year and as much more as possible. However, there may have been some important change in productive capacity, say, control of water has spread over a new area, or there may have been some change in policy from above, say, a request for more sugar or more cotton. In the light of all the conditions, the teams produce a statement of proposed output and of how much to consume for their own needs. Specialist teams put in their requirements of grain to purchase.

The proposals of teams are discussed with the Commune and passed up to the County. The principle of leaving leeway means that plans are not too tight; there should be room for over-fulfilment, with a bit of effort. A

higher authority will sometimes suggest a reduction rather than an increase in proposed output.

The County, after discussion with the Communes, passes up the totals for each crop, through the District to the Province.

Contracts for the supply of vegetables, fruit and so on to the cities are outside the plan and so are sales through the free market. The industrial investment of the Communes and Brigades, and the five small industries at County and district level are outside the plan, for these go down to foster agricultural development, not up to supply the industrial market. They may, however, involve requests, say, for a purchase of tractors, which must go into the Province's demands on the centre.

All main crops, grain, vegetable oil, sugar, tobacco and cotton are dealt with under the national plan. Each Province is given an allocation for its own consumption. Surpluses from some are allocated to those which have deficits. In principle, a particular Province has no more claim on the production within its territory than has any other. At the annual meeting, each Province must "combat egoism" and take the needs of others into account. At the same time, deficit Provinces are strongly urged to increase production. (The area north of the Yellow River, formerly dependent on imports from the south, now claims to be self-sufficient in grain). Exports and foreign aid of agricultural products come out of the surplus of production over the total planned consumption of the country as a whole.

After the meeting, at each level demands are shared out to the level below: the Province plan comes down again from level to level; there is a second round of meetings to discuss

how each team is to produce its allotted share.

As the year goes by, successes are balanced against failures at each level, Commune, County and District. The leeway in one plan can be used to offset a deficit in the fulfilment of another. Apart from very severe natural calamities, the Province as a whole is expected to fulfil its plan. The surplus it has agreed to hand over is the first priority; a short-fall has to be met by economising on consumption; excess production may be utilised within the Province, added to stock or put at the disposal of the Centre.

#### Lines and Areas

The Centre is directly responsible for the armed forces, the central administration, transport and foreign trade. In respect to industry, there has been an important change. Formerly all the important enterprises were directly controlled by Ministries at the centre. The enterprise received its plan of production and its allocation of materials from the Ministry concerned. At an early stage, this may have been necessary, but as the industrial enterprises gained experience, it became a great nuisance. The familiar tales about over-centralisation in the Soviet Union are repeated in China. An enterprise wanting an extra hundred tons of cement, that could be supplied in the next County, had to write to Peking and wait months for permission to get it. In two adjacent provinces, an enterprise in one was given a plan for producing the mechanism of watches and one in the other, the supply of cases, so that if either overfulfilled its plan the other held it up. One enterprise was given small-sized ball bearings to produce and another large ones, so that a machine-maker had to apply for supplies from both. Presumably

under the excuse of economies of specialisation, this was a method of keeping power in the hands of the Ministries, for no good purpose.

This is now called the "tyranny of the line". Now production plans are made in terms of areas. The enterprises formerly under central control have been given to the provinces where they are situated. Their output and requirements are now included in the local and provincial plan, so that neighbouring enterprises can concert their programmes and help each other out. Some specialisation is necessary but wherever possible all components are produced within a locality, partly for convenience and partly to promote self-sufficiency in case of war. Above-plan production is put at the disposal of the Province or the city where an enterprise is situated.

Similarly, some enterprises formerly in the Province's sphere have been put under District or County planning, and these are allowed to hand over a proportion of their output for local use.

When a new installation is to be set up, the locality organises a "war of annihilation". Neighbouring enterprises send some of their workers, and everyone, from the army to the Red Guards in the local schools, rallies round. By this means, a blast furnace at the Wuhan iron and steel complex was put up in four-and-a-half months, and a larger one at Anshan in ten months.

The line, that is the branch of industry in the country as a whole, still has an important part to play in the planning system. An enterprise, like a Commune, begins in the fourth quarter of the year to review its work and make proposals for next year. It is in touch with the appropriate Ministry and with the provincial planners, so that it has a general idea of what its

aim should be. The year's plan is discussed with representatives of the workers in each shop and a draft plan put to the Province. The Province carries the proposals of all its enterprises to the centre. Important commodities are given in quantities and the rest as a sum of money. The Province brings back an agreed plan and parcels it out. When the targets and requirements of an enterprise have been settled at the area level, it is called to a meeting of the line, that is, the industry—iron and steel, machine tools, electrical equipment, textiles, or any one of several hundred branches. Representatives of enterprises in one line, from all over the country, come to the meeting and work out a fit of their plans. They then enter into contracts stipulating quantities, quality and delivery dates of each product. The enterprises concerned with investment goods enter into contracts with other enterprises, both for supplies and deliveries; in the consumption goods sector, final deliveries are arranged with the Commerce Departments of the regions to which supplies are directed.

The national meeting is held at the end of December or beginning of January but the final details may not come down to the enterprises for two or three months. They therefore make provisional contracts at the beginning of the year and carry on with production. In the middle of the year there is another round, at which firm contracts are made in accordance with the plan.

There are price lists for all standard products. For a new item, the producer proposes a price, based on costs, and negotiates with the buyer.

An enterprise which is exceeding its planned output over the year requires further supplies of raw materials. This

is dealt with in three ways. The enterprise may apply to the appropriate bureau of the Provincial government for addition to its plan. In this case the bureau is responsible for providing the necessary supplies. Or the enterprise may be able to organise some supplies locally or it may carry on with economy of materials or using substitutes. Major enterprises carry stocks of materials for two or three months' work so as to provide themselves with room to manoeuvre. The bureau arranges for the disposal of the extra output, which may be required to meet a deficiency elsewhere. Meetings are held between enterprises to work out arrangements.

The national plan, as well as the main crops, covers production and distribution of all other raw materials and all the main items of industrial equipment; it also covers a large range of consumption goods—textile-yarn, piece-goods and knitwear, rubber boots, thermos flasks, bicycles, sewing machines. Other industrial products such as towels, china, leather shoes, are controlled by the Provinces, and minor items such as small tools, buttons and baskets, are at the local level. At one time matches were included in the national plan, now they are supplied locally. Vehicles and tractors are under the national plan; other farm machinery is at the Provincial or County level. All commodities under the national plan are distributed nationally. A contract to purchase can be made only in accordance with an allocation that has been granted. Under the plan, as with grain, no province has a prescriptive right to goods produced within it, but this rule is evidently not pushed too hard. Shanghai, which is the main industrial centre, keeps enough of its own production to make its department stores the envy of Asia.

### Prices

All those commodities that come into the national plan have nationally fixed prices. Those controlled by the Provinces have prices fixed in agreement with each other, so that there will not be different price levels on two sides of a boundary. Prices for small collectives are agreed with the factories to which they sell.

When the purchase price of grain was raised, to encourage production during the bad years, the retail selling price was kept unchanged, thus avoiding the vicious circle of inflation. Till today, grain is sold in town at prices that do not cover the full cost of transport and handling. (In Shanghai the subsidy is said to be about 10 per cent of total sales value).

The whole industrial price level is built up on the price of grain, for this determines the cost of living, and so the lowest wage rate. Higher grades of wages are erected on that base, which thus determines the whole wage and salary bill for industry, commerce and administration.

The cost of production of each commodity is made up of cost of materials (which depends on costs at an earlier stage or on purchase prices in agriculture), cost of power, the wage and salary bill, and amortisation. Amortisation of buildings and plant is at a flat rate of so much per year of its estimated life time. The cost of particular items of production are calculated individually; I did not try to find out how overheads and amortisation are allocated between items—a tiresome question which is not at all important, as evidently they are allocated somehow.

There is then a tax (except for goods which are to be sold at or below cost) and a planned profit, each expressed as a percentage of the value of output at ex-factory prices. Together they

make up what corresponds to the net profit margin in capitalist industry.

The tax rate most often quoted was 7 per cent of ex-factory prices. The profit for particular commodities is set according to their uses. For chemical fertiliser it is very low, since this is an input for agriculture. For wine and cigarettes it is highest, though by no means high by our standards — 60 per cent of selling prices. Bicycles, watches, woollen cloth are high-priced luxuries. (A bicycle costs three times the average monthly wage).

Means of production are not exempted from contributing to the national revenue. Steel, as well as a tax of 7 per cent of ex-factory prices, carries a profit rate of 15 per cent. Machine tools carry 20 per cent. Small collectives producing components for equipment also pay 7 per cent tax and earn 20 per cent profit (of which they keep half for an accumulation fund).

According to the Soviet view, it is irrational to include profit in the prices of investment goods since the state both gets the profit and pays for investment. However, the argument tells just as well the other way—since the state is going to get the profit back it does not matter that it pays it. Moreover, machinery is sold to the Communes and other collectives, and some items, such as sewing machines, are sold both to industry and to households; the element of profit in these sales is contributing to national revenue. However that may be, the price system has evolved by a historical process, adjusted from time to time by common sense, not by any doctrinal theory of value.

For goods controlled by the national plan a standard is chosen of a good average production (not the very best) and the output of other enterprises is priced in relation to it. Thus, bicycles produced in Wuhan have a higher cost than in

Shanghai, but they are considered to be not of such good quality; they are sold at a lower price and consequently carry a lower profit. The enterprise is called upon to increase efficiency and catch up with Shanghai. A low-cost chemical fertiliser plant has a profit of 10 per cent, to even up its price with others who are getting 5 per cent. Over and above ex-factory prices, there is a general business tax of 3 per cent on turnover paid by the Commerce Department. There is a wholesale margin varying around 10 per cent for different commodities and a retail margin around 12 per cent. Services such as hotels, laundries, buses, etc. pay a tax on the basis of receipts from 3 to 15 per cent.

The economic principle of planning retail prices is to ensure an overall value of sales that will absorb the overall flow of purchasing power coming from the total money income of the community. The money income of the community consists of the wage and salary bill that enters into the costs of these goods to be sold, including welfare funds. Over and above this are incomes earned in administration, the armed forces, investment and free social services.

The element of surplus in prices has to be sufficient to cover the expenditure from these incomes.

The Chinese have been remarkably successful in maintaining this balance through good times and bad.

Subject to overall balance, social policy requires that the pattern of prices is such as to catch purchasing power from relative luxuries, while making it possible for the lowest income to provide the necessities of life. In this respect also, Chinese policy seems to succeed pretty well.

Besides keeping down the cost of living, subsidies are used to steer de-

mand in particular directions; for instance, a kind of detergent, a by-product of a petro-chemical process, is sold very much below cost, while soap made from soyabean oil is priced high.

So far, production has kept a step ahead of the growth of population; average consumption, by all accounts, seems to have been rising markedly in the last three years.

### Investment

In the countryside a great deal of investment is organised by consumers, using labour in the slack season to carry out works of land reclamation and water control. Counties and Provinces also organise such schemes. Minor ones they merely report but major ones, say a reservoir of more than 100 million cubic metres of capacity, has to be sanctioned in the national plan. For industry, the investment plan "takes the whole country as the chess board". All major construction of new installations or enlargement of existing ones is allotted to particular places. The Five Year Plan lays out a general scheme of development and this is implemented year by year. At the annual national meeting, every Province has put in schemes of investment and the centre has to ration them out. Major schemes are conceived in terms of the line—the need to increase productive capacity of particular types—and carried out in terms of areas—put into the plan of a particular Province to be developed at a particular site.

To economise investible resources, established enterprises must aim to increase productivity. The Anshan iron and steel complex is proud of increasing output between 1970 and 1971 by 10 per cent without requiring any additional equipment or man-power. (This is offered as an example of the

superiority of the area over the line in the organisation of production). In Shanghai small iron foundry, employing 200 workers and staff, offered to raise its planned output from 3,100 to 3,500 tons. The city asked them if they could not do better. They thought it over and found that they were working "4 days hot and 3 days cold" in a week, for to give the workers one day off in seven, they let the furnace out the day before and took a day to get it going again afterwards. They arranged to stagger their holidays, and so kept the furnaces going continuously. Their planned output for 1972 is 5,000 tons. A capitalist employer, of course, would insist on efficiency, but then he might have a strike on his hands. "Raising the political consciousness of the workers" is much more economical.

Every enterprise, even in light industry, has a machine shop and is continually improving its equipment and gradually mechanising labour-intensive processes for itself.

In some provinces enterprises at the District level are allowed to keep part of their profits for accumulation. Collectives at the County or neighbourhood level generally keep half their profits. The large enterprises are free to use their amortisation allowances to expand capacity.

Thus in industry as well as in the Communes there is a large amount of investment, in small packets all round the country, over and above the large schemes promoted in the national plan.

There is still a great deal of transport by mule or by human being—the stock of trucks is slowly increasing and motor boats (of cement instead of timber) gradually displacing oars and sails on the rivers.

"Self-reliance and hard work" is the watchword now. It is gradually nibbling away at the huge mass of accu-

mulation that is needed to make work a little less hard for everyone.

### Employment

In China there is no problem of unemployment. Each Commune finds jobs for its children as they grow up and a proportion of school-leavers from the cities are sent into the country. Any labour not required for cultivation is put onto construction or production in small factories, at first "with bare hands" and then gradually mechanised.

Each industrial enterprise has its complement of workers, technicians and cadres. Wastage is made good by applying to the provincial or municipal Labour Bureau for replacements, but any increase in numbers has to be put into the national plan and sanctioned by the centre. The same applies to commerce, administration and social services. When an increase in personnel is permitted, the enterprise or office is instructed where to go for recruits. Many will be young people originally from the city who have served their two years on a Commune; others are drawn from the peasantry. There is an unlimited pool of labour in the countryside to supply industry and plenty of young people who are eager to come.

The Counties can recruit for their small industries outside the national plan provided that they do not take more than 5 per cent of the agricultural labour force.

Housewives in cities are encouraged to work in small collectives or in the neighbourhood services that support them.

There is a strong propaganda campaign for late marriage and small families. Every kind of birth control facility is available in town and country. The official aim is to get the rate of growth of population down to 1 per

cent per annum. The recent announcement that told numbers (including Taiwan) have not yet reached 700 million seems to indicate that population policy is being more effective than most foreign observers believed.

### Finance

Along with the national plan expressed in physical terms, there is a plan in terms of finance.

The centre gets about 20 per cent of its revenue from transport, foreign trade and customs. The rest comes from those Provinces which have an excess of revenue over expenditure. The expenditure from the central budget, besides the cost of defence, administration, higher education and foreign aid, consists of subventions to deficit areas—particularly the Autonomous Regions—and the finance of major investment projects.

The aim of financial policy is to ensure that the central budget is balanced, with a small surplus; this keeps the whole national income in balance. Revenue grows from year to year with the growth of value of output, but it does not grow smoothly. With the spread of water control, violent fluctuations in agricultural output have been eliminated, but output still varies from year to year. The pattern of prices is such that agriculture is reckoned to contribute only 20 per cent of national income; but it is still the key to growth. When the harvest has been good and the revenue correspondingly buoyant, more schemes of investment can be started in next year's plan, and when the growth has been small, new plans of next year will be restrained.

The secret of carrying out development without inflation is to keep the flow of output of consumption goods in step with the growth of money-wage

bill. By tailoring the growth of investment to the growth of agricultural surplus and by keeping a judicious mixture of quick-yielding investments in light industry with large long-term projects, the Chinese planners seem to have succeeded in maintaining "balanced, proportional growth" remarkably well.

For a Province, under the system now in force, there is no conception of balancing the budget or of raising revenue to provide for expenditure. Each Province has a planned revenue and a planned expenditure which have no connection with each other.

Shanghai, the richest unit, has planned expenditure, including centrally financed investment, within its boundaries of 10 per cent of its revenue. A province in the old industrial North East has an expenditure of 17 per cent of revenue, excluding central investment; a province in the Central region, 30 per cent, and so on. By this means, the centre is taxing the relatively richer part of the population to cover its own outlay and to even up development for the poorest.

The revenue of a province comes from the agricultural tax, the taxes and profits of state enterprises in industry, commerce and services, and taxes and half the profits from collective factories. Planned expenditure, apart from investment, consists of salaries and miscellaneous expenses for administration (down to the level of communes and neighbourhoods), education, the health service and some urban housing (much of housing is provided by enterprises for the workers and counts as part of initial investment).

The province is also allowed some contingency funds for extra expenditure in case of need. Any saving which a province makes out of its planned

expenditure, it is allowed to keep. Formerly an excess over planned revenue was passed to the central budget; after the Cultural Revolution, to encourage initiative, the Province was allowed to keep it, but for 1972 it has been decided to set a ceiling to the excess revenue, above which any further excess is divided half and half with the centre.

The province allocates planned revenue and planned expenditure to Districts and Counties, and applies the same or similar rules to them.

The financial relations of the centre with the Provinces are regulated by "three uniformities and three privileges".

The uniformities are (i) the rule that national financial policy is determined by the centre; (ii) allocations of investment and expenditure are made by the centre; no change can be made without approval from the centre; and (iii) the financial system is uniform over the whole country—tax rates, wage and salary rates and the prices of the main products are determined centrally.

The privileges are (i) the right to make adjustments between localities and enterprises. Once the totals of revenue and expenditure have been set, the Province can allocate them as it finds convenient; (ii) the Province is free to dispose of the surplus arising from under-planned expenditure and over-planned revenue (subject to the rule concerning a ceiling) and its contingency allowances, with the restriction that it may not use these funds to increase personnel employed or to raise wages; and (iii) the Province has the right to implement the plan that has been given to it in its own way, subject to the principles of government policy.

The Provinces and under them Districts, Counties, Neighbourhoods,

OCTOBER 14, 1972

Communes, state enterprises and collectives are all expected to preserve strict financial discipline, though no individual or corporate income is in any way dependent on it.

The secret of operating such a system evidently lies in the extremely high standard of civic morality that every

one expects of everyone else and in the great openness which has been established particularly since the Cultural Revolution. Everyone has to live up, not only to the expectations of his superiors but still more to the standards that the masses below require of him.

## Mao Against Marx ?

ROSSANA ROSANDA

A number of leading cadres of the Italian Communist Party, including the authoress, left the party to form the *Il Manifesto* group with overtly Maoist leanings. It is already a very substantial force to reckon with in Italian politics. *Il Manifesto* is the name of the group's journal as also the title of a book edited by Rossana Rosanda and published in Paris by Les Editions du Seuil, which sets out the views and analyses of members of the group. The article below is a slightly abridged translation of one contained in the latter, providing an insight into Maoism in the light of the Cultural Revolution. A full translation is available in the *Socialist Register 1971* which, however, differs substantially, especially in some key passages, from the present endeavour.

Rossana Rosanda's essay actually begins with a longish introduction which is left out so that attention can be focused on the four main aspects that differentiate Maoism from the Soviet model.

Translated by N. K. CHANDRA

### I. Structure and Superstructure

An important assumption implicit in the practice of the communist movement has been that the seizure of State power and the abolition of private property in the means of production will almost automatically ensure the necessary transformation of the structural base. Further development of the transitional society will take place at the level of the superstructure alone.

This idea recurs in some of the formulations made during the cultural

revolution (CR) as well as in writings of some sympathetic outsiders. Identifying capitalism with "private property in the means of production which yields rentier income to the owners and gives private enterprise control over economic development", Joan Robinson rightly affirms that such private property does not exist in the USSR. But she defends the Chinese viewpoint, according to which, "a capitalist type of superstructure can develop on a socialist structure." She refers to the famous passage in Marx's Preface to the *Critique of the Political Economy* where the autonomy of the superstructure is recognized and paraphrases Mao on "the action on reverse... the reaction of consciousness upon social existence." "Once the view that ideas arise out of material circumstances is accepted," she writes, there is no sense in denying that causation runs both ways." (J. Robinson, *The Cultural Revolution in China*, pp. 11-12.)

A more or less similar analysis is made by the communist parties after the XX Congress. Hence those on the right see in liberalization an answer to the ills of the Soviet society; for those on the left the answer lies in egalitarianism, a call for more sacrifice, greater devotion, etc. Revisionism and CR are thus both transferred to the realm of consciousness.

How far is this separation between the structure and the superstructure

justified? Neither in Lenin nor in the debates that followed immediately after his death, does one find such a simple equation that 'structure' = 'private property'. Lenin was quite aware of the limited extent to which structural changes could be brought about in his lifetime; this inadequacy was attributed above all to the persistence of the old relations of production, in particular, old forms of property (especially in agriculture) that could not yet be socialized.

With Stalin the whole theory of the class struggle is reduced to the theory that the class struggle is intensified as the revolution gathers momentum; the resistance of groups and strata, essentially belonging to the old order, becomes increasingly vigorous. In his report on the project for the 1936 Constitution Stalin could claim that since these classes had already been liquidated, the structural basis for socialism was guaranteed. In the *Economic Problems of Socialism in the U.S.S.R.* written in 1952 the same idea persists: the contradictions of the transitional phase are attributed to the fact that the production relations established at the time of the seizure of State power had become dated. Hence even if the developments within the USSR still show some contradictions these do not amount to a class conflict in the traditional sense. The Khrushchevian concept of a "State of the Whole People" certainly goes much further, but it is still on the same logical plane.

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In the documents of the CR, the 'ideological' aspect is often so strongly underlined that it may lead one to believe that the struggle is about a revolution in the superstructure alone. Yet on several occasions it is asserted that the enemy is not merely an ideology, but "capitalism already established in the USSR" or the "capitalist road" envisaged for China by Liu Shao-chi. Is the word 'capitalism' here to be understood in a very broad manner as a system of ideas, attitudes and even relations between men, but divorced from its structural basis, the underlying relations of production? This is precisely what many of the moderate communist critics of the CR do and they have no difficulty in showing how unmarxist the approach is. Some supporters of the CR are happy to do the same for they can show that Mao has gone beyond Marx and has an affinity with one type of modern sociology. Thus we get, *Mao against Marx*.

#### False Interpretation

However, this is a false interpretation. The Chinese Revolution does raise anew the problem of the structure in all its complexity and rejects the dichotomy between structure and superstructure underlying the theoretical schema of both Stalin and modern revisionism. This schema, as has been noted above, reduces the structure to private property alone. That this reduction is arbitrary comes out clearly from this often-quoted passage of Marx: "In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness." (Preface by Marx to his *A Contribution to the Critique of Political*

*Economy*.) This classic passage does not lend substance either to the revisionist thesis of the *autonomy*, or to Stalin's notion of the *subordination*, of the superstructure but rather to its specific coexistence, projection and form of the relations of production as the 'self-perception' (*Conscience de soi*) of the society. The passage indicates, moreover, that the concept of the structure has a complex and organic development and is the 'totality of relations', i.e., relations between men (in which work relations in the sphere of material production have a pivotal role), a system that also expresses itself as, without reducing itself to, the form taken by property. Of course, private property is not a secondary element; it is the product and the expression of the capitalist mode of production, its distinguishing mark, the terminal point in the long process of the alienation of human labour. But it is only the totality of the conditions (development of productive forces, division of labour, loss and reconquest of the 'individuality', affirmation of the self, negation and negation of negation in the relation between man and nature, man and his instrument of production, man and man) that determines this supreme form of the alienation of labour—the capitalist mode of production.

The connexion among these diverse elements is so narrow that one cannot speak of a rupture, a veritable crisis of the capitalist mode, unless there is a total destruction; a partial fulfilment of one of the many conditions would be inadequate. In other words, capitalism dies only when there comes an end to the process described in the celebrated passage of the *Grundriss*, entitled "*Forms of Precapitalist Production*", which gives a sketch of all human development. Capitalism ends when man is able to reappropriate totally his social being at the high level to which human labour was raised by the capitalist mode of production. At that high level, because, prior to it man cannot regain his liberty and

individuality which are only possible in a highly developed and complex type of social and productive organization; moreover, the form must be *total*, since the purpose of destruction is precisely this reappropriation, this new "common" nature of the social being.

That is why Marx speaks not of 'public', but of 'common' property. One may, indeed, think (as it was done until recently in all the communist revolutions) that in spite of the abolition—first in industry and later in agriculture—of all forms of "private" property, the role played by *non-common* property in the means of production may remain unaltered; that the sale of labour power with all its alienating effects may continue, that the division of social labour may perpetuate, etc.; that, in brief, one does not initiate a radical change in the *sphere of the relations of production*, but only outside and beyond it, by a different, and no more private, distribution of the produce of labour. However, there is no case for confounding this new distribution with the process of reappropriation described by Marx.

It then follows that the seizure of political power and the abolition of private property constitute only necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for a structural transformation in a socialist sense. It follows too that in the so-called 'transitional' society a good part of the capitalist mode of production persists, not as a residue of the past, but as an intrinsic form of the present; it is a society where inequality between men is based on the material possession of the instruments of production (not juridical, but managerial, profession) and on the sale of labour power as the sole means of survival.

This point brings us to the CR with its anti-capitalist struggles; for, the object of the CR is to bring about a revolution both of the structure and in the structure. It is essential to take literally the phrase "bourgeois relations". These are not just "ideological" relations, projections devoid of material content; rather, these are

projections of material relations that are still concrete and real.

### Step Forward

It is in this sense that the CR (as always in the very heat of social conflict) marks an indubitable step forward as against the earlier texts of Mao considered to be the classics on the theme of class struggle in a transitional society: 'On Contradictions' of 1937 and 'On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People' of 1957. Indeed the former is very much tainted with Hegelianism. (It is no accident that it has become the main point of reference for Sinophiles who rightly insist on the "Mao against Marx" aspect). In the second, more complex, text, Mao still makes a distinction between the contradictions "with the enemy" and the contradictions "among the people"; that the former are antagonistic while the latter are not, permits a purely anti-stalinist interpretation as was evidenced in the post-1956 polemics. By going much further, the CR rediscovers the material roots (and hence antagonistic) of the contradiction, calls them by their name—capitalism—and builds thereon the class struggle and the necessity of proletarian dictatorship.

This point can be established by referring to the debate, initiated in 1964, on dialectics, or more specifically, on its interpretation as given by Yang Hsien-chi and which came to be known by the two formulae—"One divides into two", "Two unite in one". The controversy was about how to combat a gradualist, evolutionary, ("conciliatory", according to Yang Hsien-chi) conception of contradiction by an antagonistic conception of contradiction; it was clearly based on the premise that every contradiction expresses not a positional equilibrium (where each of the positions is imperfect in itself) but a moment of irreducible antagonism, a motor of the historical process to the extent that a solution can only be found outside the

terms in which the contradiction appears.

But how can one of the terms in the contradiction be irreducible if it is not rooted in some material facts? If such material roots are present, no purely ideological synthesis is possible. More easily than from the theoretical writings of Mao, it is from the popular documents of the CR narrating how various practical difficulties were surmounted by recourse to the Thought of Mao Tse-tung, that one arrives at a better understanding of the material character of "the principal contradiction" which is confronted by a revolutionary consciousness born out of needs that are equally material; in short, here one has Hegelian dialectic with its feet on the ground.

Thus the CR poses once again the question of the overthrow of the capitalist mode of production, suppresses the false dichotomy of the current schema, "structure-superstructure", and re-evaluates the significance of a political revolution that does not move forward to an all-embracing social revolution. Or, it rediscovers the Marxian thematics of total upheaval as represented by socialism. It sees in the transitional society the arena for the new phase of the class struggle in the strongest sense of the term.

### The Model of Accumulation

The second aspect of the model of socialist construction under discussion is the problem of accumulation. Since the seizure of power took place in backward countries, a rapid construction of the material bases of development was necessary for the passage to socialism, and a fortiori to communism; such a rapid pace also constituted a guarantee for the survival of the new order as also a defence against foreign aggression. The motor of this "accumulation" in the USSR was the process of industrialization and more specifically, the priority to heavy industry, which was financed by surpluses extracted from agriculture.

The historic reasons for this choice

can be found in the Soviet debates of the immediate post-Lenin era. In fact, as Bettelheim has pointed out and as it is also evident from the debates within the Soviet Party (from the vacillations of Khrushchev to the more recent declarations of Brezhnev), the gulf that the choice created between industry and agriculture is yet to be bridged. The growth rates in the two sectors remain different; the condition of the peasantry is inferior to that of the workers; society is still divided and within the industrial sector the distinction between manual and intellectual labour is getting sharper and sharper; the wage-scales and skill-formation (i.e., the educational system) reflect a division of labour that is not only technical but social in character. Between Stalinism and Khrushchevism there is hardly a substantial change in the model except that the latter legitimizes and reasserts a system which might earlier have appeared to be transitory.

Neither the internal opponents nor the communist critics, e.g., the CP of Italy, challenge the model; its shortcomings are attributed to the 'backwardness' of the Soviet society. This approach originates in a non-dialectical interpretation of what Marx said of the relation between "historic development" and "revolution", in particular the thesis that man liberates and regains himself thanks to a total change intervening at the very height of the development of the capitalist mode of production, it is only at that stage that the collective character of production manifests itself.

Such an interpretation introduces into the capitalist mode of production a separation between a *form* (historic, social, which will be the object of political variations, which will affect precisely property in the means of production and property relations in general) and a *kernel* that will not be subject to variations in the social order. The kernel will have a linear growth and will present all the characteristics acquired by the productive forces through the de-

velopment of industrial machinism. This machinism, in its turn, is considered to be positive on the whole, uncontaminated by history and hence worthy of conservation. Hence comes the thesis of the neutrality of science and technique, while their character is considered to be "good in itself".

Hence, too, the certainty that socialist construction can take place only on the basis of a technical and productive model somewhat similar to that of the "industrial revolution"—except in so far as the "human relations", property in the instruments of labour and the social distribution of the produce are concerned. Hence, too, the acceptance of "competitiveness" which cannot be justified unless the most advanced capitalist societies are considered to be the model. On this question there is no basic difference between the points of view of the U.S.S.R. and the socialist opposition in Western Europe, Cuba or other developing countries. (The Cuban decision to concentrate on sugar should not mislead us. For, sugar is not produced by the peasants; it is Cuba's "heavy industry" in as much as it is an industrial product although the raw material comes from the countryside).

Such a model has been rejected by China, first in her practice and later, during the CR, in theory. The reason is obvious: it would lead to a restoration of capitalism à la U.S.S.R. Further, it allows zones of equal development to be established within the society thereby strengthening social roots of inequality. Consequently, what this model reproduces from capitalism is not the "rationality"; as the protagonists claim, but the wastage and destruction of enormous potentials of the productive forces. Many partisans of the CR miss this last point who in good faith support the positive side of an "ideological" revolution even at the cost of economic efficiency, rationality and "realism" supposed to be the hall-marks of the capitalist mode.

### Irrationalities

Mao, however, denounced the irrationality and inefficiency of a growth characterised by the development of a few privileged sectors. "Surely," he said in a speech in 1956, "industry must have priority, but if one really wants to develop industry, one must develop agriculture. Surely, one must give priority to heavy industry, but if one really wants to develop heavy industry, light industry must be developed, etc." He thus brings into focus the irrationalities, from the viewpoint of underdeveloped countries, of the priorities (themselves reproducing the "technical objectivities" of capitalism) or the Soviet model of accumulation. This critique was pressed to its limits during the CR with the slogan: "One must walk on one's own legs." Even earlier during the commune movement and the phase of the Great Leap Forward, there were attempts (with many dangerous attempts at an acceleration, which were later rectified) to bridge the gap between industry and agriculture, to utilise to the utmost all the forces of production, each at its highest level, but without any one of these hamstringing the others.

It is argued that Mao rejected the Soviet model of accumulation with its "levy on agriculture" because of the specific conditions in China, because of the weight of the peasant masses who were the protagonists of the revolution. This is not valid. For, these factors should have led Mao to make the inverse decision (in harmony with the traditional aspiration of the peasant) to encourage the formation of small ownership holdings. Such is indeed the remedy currently in vogue in the "Soviet" mode in order to heal the tensions created by forced collectivization. Mao is opposed to this path, this Bukharinist line to "advance at the pace of a tortoise". He aims at a unification, theoretical and practical, of the process of "proletarianization" in China. Thus he never renounced the thesis of proletarian leadership of the revolution. Instead of underlining the

specificity of the peasant problem, he tends to resolve it by an uninterrupted radicalization of class struggles in the countryside, by an implacable struggle against property, by a hazardous attempt at turning communes into industrial-cum-agricultural organizations. His efforts 'to bring about a fundamental social change in the population flowing back from towns to villages is only the sociological aspect. But above all there remains the goal of a global development which, while making the whole society go forward, destroys the very roots of social inequality arising out of a conception of growth based on priorities to a few sectors and on the division of labour.

Hence the charges against the techniques, science, culture, and the "bourgeois" schools can be substantiated. All these, Mao clearly shows, not only lack neutrality and fulfil their original tasks—the reproduction and dissimulation of an unequal development, but are also highly circumscribed and wasteful in nature.

A superficial interpretation of the CR may satisfy the aspirations of a "revolutionary" aristocracy in Europe; but they will find little solace either in Mao or in the texts of the CR. The episodes reported by the *Hsinhua*, *China Reconstructs* or the *Peking Review*, narrating how a group of workers succeeded in manufacturing bottles of oxygen when the technicians had failed, or how a certain village successfully got rid of caterpillars infesting forest by unleashing bumblebees on them may scandalize the West since they challenge the "objectivity of science". However, these stories do not show that common sense prevails over science, but that it is possible to have a different social use of the technique and thus improve it.

Here again Mao's dialectic is rigorously Marxist. If Marx considered capitalism to be the apex of man's prehistory and socialism as the child, it is equally true that this filiation is established by a destructive delivery—a destruction from which nothing escapes, not even the

level of techniques. In a parallel way, Lenin makes the same point while he speaks of continuity and rupture apropos the bourgeois cultural heritages and the "transmitted patrimony". For Mao and the CR this destruction, this "unwahrung" is but the harbinger of a new order, of an effective rationality. This conception is quite close to that of Marx who wrote in *German Ideology*: "In all the revolutions upto the present the very form of activity has never been touched. Attempts were made only towards a different distribution of activities...while in the communist revolution the existing mode of activity is taken to task." And in the *Grundrisse*: "But, in fact, once the restrictive bourgeois form is rejected, what is wealth, if not the universality of needs, capacities, consumption, productive forces, etc. of individuals as these were created in universal exchange? What, if not the full development of the domination of man over nature?...What, if not the absolute development of his creative abilities without any other constraint apart from the preceding historical development?... In bourgeois political economy and the stage of production to which it corresponds, this complete liberation of man from nature appears as a total annihilation, the process of objectification appears as a total alienation and the elimination of unilaterally determined goals, as the sacrifice of an autonomous goal for the sake of one that is completely extraneous."

[Translator's Note: This translation is from the French edition of the *Grundrisse* as quoted in the source. However, the last sentence of the same passage reads somewhat differently in the available English translation as follows: "In the bourgeois political economy and the epoch of production to which it corresponds this complete elaboration of what lies within man appears as the total alienation and destruction of all fixed, one-sided purposes, as sacrifices of the end in itself to a wholly external compulsion." (*Pre-capitalist Economic Formations*, London, 1964,

pp. 84-85). Indeed, the French edition has been attacked in some quarters as being "untrue to the original by wishing systematically to exclude or minimise the Hegelian cast of Marx's work." (David McLellan, *Marx's Grundrisse*, London, 1971, p. 3). As I have no knowledge of German I cannot say which translation is more authentic; as I don't read Italian either I can't say which version would be preferable to Rosana Rosanda.]

### 3. *Economic and Political "Priorities"*

This *destructive* element as the condition of liberation, of the "redemption" of the "nature of men", lends a profound significance to revolutionary action so that one cannot separate it from the "construction of the material bases" of socialism. It is the third point on which Mao rejects the traditional model and its order of priorities envisaging first of all the construction of the material bases and then the changes in the "superstructure"—i.e. the destruction of old relations between men, the establishment of "true" socialism, the "passage to communism", the abolition of the State.

These distinctions are rigorously maintained in the socialist construction of the Soviet type. An accelerated growth in industry based on such a model that it can compete with capitalist growth implies a leadership pattern that is both "all-embracing" and exceedingly vertical; for, that kind of growth imposes certain choices in the same way as the development of a capitalist type of technique necessarily brings in its wake a hierarchical division of labour, a type of selection, a kind of hierarchical and parcellized preparation for "social roles". It leads, in the end, almost fatally (the word "almost" is added, because the Cuban attempt has been somewhat different) to the choice of a promotional system (with social or material incentives) that aggravates social stratification. Thus even in a self-designated socialist society the division of labour and of roles is established and along with it,

a plurality not only of functions but also of effective power. The vertical and repressive character of the State is accentuated while there is a permanent delegation of power to those who represent the State.

Here again the problem is approached in a complex manner in the CR and the solution appears paradoxical. Since inequality cannot be liquidated without destroying its material roots, Mao chose a *different* model of material development, based on a simultaneous acceleration and intermingling of the productive forces. But the condition for such a transformation of the material base is a change in the relations between men and not vice-versa. Priority is accorded to a subjective, revolutionary choice even if it meant going against the natural tendencies of development. It finds its expression in the slogan: "Politics in command".

"As much for the massive development of communist consciousness as for the auspicious success of the social transformation it is necessary to change masses of human beings, which can only be done through a practice-oriented movement, through a *révolution*... Revolution is then necessary not because the ruling class cannot be vanquished in any other way but also because the (new) conquering class cannot get rid of all the old dross or build a society on the new bases except through a revolution." (*The German Ideology*).

In Mao as in this passage from Marx, this priority of politics is due to an accent on practice as the sole moment (factor) of destruction (of the adversary and all that has been passed by him on to us) and construction of a new order.

This practice does not try and provoke "ideological" changes, but rather aims at promoting *material* changes, veritable changes in the objective relation of labour and authority. Hence follow the refusal to separate the two moments (construction of the material bases and establishment of the superstructure),

the rejection of economism à la Lieu Shao-chi, of Peng Teh-huai's purely technological approach to the problem of defence, and the questioning of the hierarchy. In "politics" and "economics" Mao makes a symbolic distinction between two moments which, in practice, he tries constantly to fuse together in the classical Marxist way by denying the autonomy and the so-called objectivity of a meta-historical *economics* separated from its social context and in restoring to *politics* its role as the agent of structural transformation.

That is why the CR as an act of the masses, started off from the University considered to be the locus of selection and reproduction of a hierarchical and inegalitarian society. The educational system is attacked because it perpetuated the division of labour inherited from the mode of production and the techniques of capitalism. Several months later in Shanghai the organization of labour in the factory is taken to task. The ranks within the army had already been suppressed; in the sixties all workers and students in the towns had to go to work in the communes; administrators and managers had to perform a certain amount of manual labour. In the thrust of the CR (still essential on the realm of education and consciousness) there is an element of rupture in so far as it questions not simply the distribution of functions but functions themselves. Not just the social composition, but the very nature, of the University is criticized. It is no more a question of the number of hours that the director must spend as a machine operator (here again experience shows that in the absence of permanent social tension he would hardly devote any time at all), but of the totality of the management of the enterprise, of the fragmentation of labour in the factory. It is no more a matter of discussing "democratization" of the vertical relation of leadership of the State, the economy, the enterprise and educational system, but of discussing the very nature of these things. It is this that one may call,

perhaps improperly, the introduction of the moments of communism even before the communist phase. More correctly, it is the refusal to submit to any objectivity other than that of revolutionary growth.

#### 4. *The Proletariat and the Party*

Finally, the choice of another model presumes other types of relation between the Party and the masses, a different concept of proletarian dictatorship. It is generally admitted that in European models of socialist construction this relationship became fixed rather early with the result that 'proletarian dictatorship' appeared to be the political dictatorship of the avant-garde in the name of the proletariat. It is certain that given the conditions under which the October Revolution took place (all the difficulties during the last years of Lenin, the vicissitudes of the Soviets, and lastly, the rapid crisis in the unity of the Soviet leadership provide enough evidence), the Party assumed the totality of management and even of the *political moment*; its relationship with the masses, especially in the "hard days", was one of profound consensus without receiving from the latter any delegation of authority. At no stage, however, did the Party receive any delegation of power from the masses; nor was such power ever restored to the latter. Whatever control there was from below, was in the nature of an internal dialectics which itself was abandoned in the Stalinist phase.

The kind of material transformation attempted in the Soviet society—the passage from War Communism to NEP, from NEP to industrialization and on to collectivization accentuated the authoritarian character of the Party-mass relationship.

Take the most visible phenomenon: the levy on the peasants for the sake of accumulation could not by its very nature be imposed in such a manner that one might discriminate between various agrarian classes. For it was not merely a question of a stubborn fight against agricultural property (as in China), but one of general subordination of

the whole of agriculture to the needs of accumulation for industrialization. And it was already shown above how the power-relations between men are affected once one accepts the productive organization as it was historically developed by industrial machinism. This productive organization inevitably led to verticalism in the political leadership, which in turn had the tendency to provoke a tension between two equally vertical structures—those of the economy and of the Party. (These tensions are one of the themes in the current Soviet debate on economic 'reforms'.)

Mao's answer, after 1957, to the political crisis of the Stalinist society, lay in a coherent attempt to re-establish a rapport between the Party and the masses—not by means of a democratization within the Party but by a marked change in the locus of *real* power. The launching of the Communes (organs that are simultaneously productive, administrative and political) is an attempt at a general redistribution of power within the society inasmuch as the Communes helped to fuse together the social status of workers and peasants.

The CR is even more radical on this point: the base must become the protagonist of the political struggle. "In the great proletarian cultural revolution the masses alone can liberate themselves and no one must act on their behalf", says Point 4 of the August 1966 decision of the Central Committee that marks the victory of the Maoist trend. Lastly, this phase of the CR comes to a close with a Congress which re-makes the Party: the delegates to it were selected at open meetings of the masses. During the whole of the CR old cadres and structures of the Party were reduced to nought, to be replaced by a new avant garde baptised in the very fire of the struggle.

The Maoist strategy of "going to the masses" has little to do with "spontaneism" as it is currently understood; indeed, it is a very essential characteristic of CR differentiating it from the earlier struggles

launched by Mao. When he decided to take the struggle outside the confines of the Party and raised slogans like "Rebel!" and "Fire on the headquarters!" Mao knew perfectly well that the place of the Party in the society is radically modified irrespective of the outcome of the struggle. Even if the Party still had the synthesizing and leadership roles (the "Little Red Book" begins with it), the Party has no more the right to obtain its legitimacy from itself, to constitute an autonomous political world in relation to society, or to rule all by itself. The moment the masses are called upon not only to judge but also to combat the Party, Mao reintroduces the political subject into the heart of society. Once more the Party is turned into an "instrument" of the proletariat and not an entity that is at least in some respects extraneous to it. He reaffirms clearly the existence and the importance of a dialectic between the masses and the political representation in which the former constitute the essential element.

This endeavour is fundamentally Marxist as it presupposes a *permanent material remoulding of political consciousness*. The process of the CR could not be resolved within the Party because both in structure and in self-awareness it performed a role borrowed from the Soviet model. Lieu Shao-chi is attacked for his gra-

dualist conception of class struggle and an authoritarian view of the Party which in effect hamstrung the same interlocutor, i.e., the proletariat as the protagonist of the social struggle.

However, social upheavals in the later stages can only be engendered by the social agents most directly interested in such a change. Not that the poor peasant is the purest and the least corrupted but he is the most destitute and the most reliable of them; the moment he sees himself in the real conditions he takes a political stand.

As Mao re-establishes the dialectics of Party-mass and *avant garde* base, a more complex issue comes to the fore—that of the "immaturity" of the revolution. For a long time the necessity of a vanguard outside the proletariat has been justified because the consciousness of the exploited has not sufficiently "ripened". This theme is put in the background, if not liquidated, by Mao who sees in the dispossessed, conscious of being dispossessed or exploited irrespective of the degree of development of the productive forces, an element that is objectively antagonistic and a protagonist of the revolution. It is from here that the whole process of social development must start: not simply, as it has earlier been noted, for preventing a division of the society into developed and backward areas but also because the backward

zone alone enables the advanced sector to comprehend fully its own mechanism and function just as the advanced sector alone can appreciate the mechanism of the backward sector.

This analysis also sheds light on the divergence between the international outlook of China and that of the "Third-World-ists". By emphasizing the "unitary" nature of the capitalist process in the imperialist phase Mao departs from the hypothesis of Marx that capitalism will unify the world by making it homogeneous. But for Mao imperialism unifies in creating and maintaining underdevelopment, i.e., non-homogeneity. This non-homogeneity is not simply a matter of time-lag (in development). It did not really exist "before" world-wide capitalist accumulation nor can it exist "outside" the latter; the former is a direct component of the latter. Proletarianization is proceeding on a world scale leading to increasingly antagonistic tensions. The front gets united in a single struggle where the "countryside" is no more left with the small mercies of a factor of growth, of mediation or of a passage into the bourgeois democratic phase. It is already the expression of the world proletariat. No proletariat, urban or peasant, can be excluded any more; to carry out a mass-based revolution is not only necessary but possible.

## Tolstoi And The Liberation Of Art

HIREN GOHAIN

I fear it sounds like a pompous radical catch-phrase—"liberation of art". But let us pause for a minute and think. The other great bourgeois categories like "reason" and "liberty" have been caught up in the contradictions of bourgeois society within the last century or so, and have really split up. Philosophy, the social and

the political sciences use these terms in our time with hesitation and with heavy qualifications. The crisis and decay of bourgeois society force apart experience and the words describing it. Should not this be true of terms like "art" and "beauty" also? Not only the practical achievement of beauty, but its definition in thought, have been

the self-imposed task of bourgeois artists and theoreticians for ages. But with the overcoming of the bourgeois societies, these ideas too will be transformed. The past experience they embody will not indeed be cancelled, but it will certainly undergo critical transformation.

The arts today are dominated by

aesthetes who claim for art a complete autonomy of existence, insulated against all claims society makes upon it. The result is that beauty has become almost an experience confined to an esoteric cult. When returning from her shrine we are expected to change from formal robes into our work-a-day clothes! We are not supposed to use this privileged experience in improving or enriching our everyday existence. This is a powerfully established dogma — indeed a widespread prejudice. Tolstoi on the other hand thought that unless we were clear in our minds as to the nature and value of life, we could not hope to understand the nature and value of art. Art and life were inseparable. True intellectual that he was, he used his great intelligence and reflective powers to feel out and express the contradictions within the bourgeois idea of art and beauty.

This is not to say that we should allow ourselves to be guided by the poor, bare notion of human life popular among certain dogmatic political circles, which predictably seek to reduce art to a kind of cheap circus for the masses to keep them deceived and contented. But that will have to be considered elsewhere.

I think Keats is a good starting-point, not only because he is the favourite of aesthetes who would like to put the arts into a hermetically sealed house. Keats, unlike his professed followers, suffered intensely while desperately clinging to his philosophy of beauty. Actually, his views on beauty and poetry are moments in a life-long struggle of thought and imagination. Unlike so many aesthetes, he did not find his devotion to beauty at all easy or comfortable, being a most human and sensitive man. The sufferings and miseries of life haunted

him and the beauty he pursued steadfastly proved an elusive thing.

Keats was aware of a deep division in his soul, of a gulf between his ideal of beauty and its possibilities in the real world:

Beauty that must die  
And joy, whose hand is ever at  
his lip  
Bidding adieu. (Ode on  
Melancholy)

This overpowering sense of transience of beauty came from his actual experience of life, full of bitter hardships and disappointments. He devotedly nursed a brother who died of a wasting disease, and he himself did not live to see the fulfilment of his hopes and ambitions. That is why we are awe-struck when he affirms with heartfelt sincerity, "I've loved the principle of beauty in all things". But it is idle to pretend that "beauty" dissolved the pain of life of which he was to be so frequent a victim and witness.

Yet, it is evident even from his letters, that few have faced inconsolable pain with such fortitude and courage. Not for him any of the cheap popular anodynes, the distractions and illusions that most of us cannot afford to reject. Neither the utopian solution of rational Reform, nor the consolations of traditional Religion find favour with him. This proud integrity gives a distinction to his letters that we feel compelled to respect.

On the other hand he tried all his life to find a perspective within which the unbearable pain of life had a place. He came to the conclusion that accepting suffering with complete, heroic passivity, and yet with one's eyes wide open, was the way out of the cruel dilemma. The dashing of hopes, the loss of ardent joy and beauty, were all to be steps in the education of the soul. Along with that

there was to be a resolute "curbing of magnanimity," a refusal to interfere with another life in its travail, even in order to help.

But is that possible? Such a passive acceptance of the pain of life, such a stubborn refusal to join in the struggle of the multitudes for a happier life, seem to belong to the most insipid liberal creed. How can such a notion of beauty, aware of the heartache in millions of lives but unwilling to lift a finger to help — not indeed out of indifference, but out of too delicate a sense of the dignity of others—how can such a notion be truly noble? It seems so arrogant and disdainful. Suffering, after all, cannot be a purely private phenomenon. We suffer only because we love — and where there is no trace of love, there is only dull despair. But Keats seems to identify it with the fate of the individual. At the same time we are compelled to notice Keats's responsiveness to the dignity of all individual creatures, and his praise of their separate destinies. If he distrusted schemes of reform, that was because he knew how they sprang from romantic egotism rather than from an honest confrontation with life. In fact Keats had reached the tragic dilemma at the very heart of European liberalism.

His poetry offers a more complex and adequate record of his spiritual progress. (I hope what follows does not sound like a routine analysis of the poems). In the two famous odes (*To a Nightingale*, *Ode on a Grecian urn*) we find him trying to face the pain and cruelty of life from the magic casement of art. The pain here is of course not the dull ache of denial, but the reverse of an intense capacity for enjoyment — anxiety and distress at the transience of the very blessings of life—youth and beauty and hope. It is rarely



people—the peasantry—were uprooted from one oppressive way of life and consigned to another of unparalleled exploitation and oppression. This may have been the force that gave such urgency to Tolstoi's thought about death and nothingness. Those thoughts hung like a dark cloud over his mind, in spite of his great physical vigour and enterprise. Again and again, down to *The Death of Ivan Illych*, he returned to this profound and disturbing theme. The novels read like mighty spiritual struggles to overcome the fear of death. It is not simply the extinction of individual life, or its helplessness before the eventual and inexorable end, that trouble him. Life *must* have meaning and direction beyond the narrow interests of the individual. Without such spiritual purpose and direction man is lost—he is wretched and irresponsible. This too is death. How is one to escape this death?

In the great novels this is the implicit question mark behind the life of the parasitic upper class, who embroider the emptiness of their existence with leisure and culture. The sensitive members of the upper classes are aware of this yawning chasm. The deathly pallor of Prince Andrei's face looms up from the vast panoramas of *War and Peace*. How close he is to death! Already in life he walks like a shadow. His wife dies in child birth. He is wounded and nearly dies on the battlefield, and when he returns he still has his air of quiet desperation. Then there is the rush of inexplicable new life with the brief idyll of his love for Natasha, which is soon over. Before he finally dies, he has a mystic vision in death-bed, showing him how close life is to death, fulfilment to nothingness.

The same shadow overcasts the life of his friend Pierre, whose father dies in

pain, whose marriage is a wreck, and who drifts through life like driftwood. But he learns from the peasant Platon the lesson of "roundedness", the need for a supple surrender to the hidden forces of life. The final vision with Natasha against the background of the renewal of life in nature is an affirmation of this new-found hope.

The lesson Pierre learns from Platon is of a piece with the condemnation of Napoleon, of the inflation of the human ego. All the same, that peasant has an unearthly air about him — not too convincing. The forces that were in tension in Tolstoi's heart, in his consciousness, come into stark and violent conflict in *Anna Karenina*.

One thing not often noticed is that Anna's personality is a direct and forceful challenge to the bias and the view of life that Levin (and through him Tolstoi) comes to adopt. Her magnetic vitality, passionate character, warmth of heart, grace and intelligence not only mark her out as an unusually alive and gifted person, but also as a symbol of basic human potentialities he cannot ignore. In fact when they meet Levin is spell-bound. "And he, who had hitherto judged her so severely now by some strange chain of reasoning thought only how to exonerate her". (*Anna Karenina*, Rosemary Edmonds, Penguin Books, p. 733). The reader too has already come to contrast Anna's "beautiful, mobile face" against Karenin's "lifeless, eyes and bloodless, white hands", and share Anna's feeling of revulsion.

Yet from the first she is like a magnificent wild animal moving towards certain death. And it is not society that is stalking her, however petty the scandals about her may be. When she first meets Vronsky in the station, someone is killed in a railway accident.

And just before her suicide, Anna suddenly remembers the man run down by the train (p. 801). Kitty's naive remark actually catches the aura of her personality like an unclouded mirror:

"How beautiful she is! But there is something pitiful about her, terribly pitiful!"

In fact, from the moment she escapes from the prison of her life with Karenin (a living death!) she is marked by death. She pursues an illusion. For Vronsky is handsome but empty, a man whose emotions have found no stable direction. Unlike Levin he does not reject his parasitic existence as a member of the upper class. His affair with Anna is one of those triumphs a man in his position dreams of. But he is hardly the person to meet her passionate demand for a fulfilled life. It all comes out in the tragic incongruity of their attitudes. "...Anna felt unpardonably happy. The more she got to know Vronsky, the more she loved him. She loved him for himself, and for his love for her. To have him entirely to herself was a continual joy, his presence always a delight" (p. 490). Yet this joyous love had nothing firm to hold on to. For Vronsky has been brought up in an environment that fosters only egotism and irresponsibility. His love is *romantic*, it lacks the commitment of serious passion. "Vronsky, meanwhile notwithstanding the complete fulfilment of what he had so long desired, was not entirely happy. He soon began to feel that the realization of his desires brought him no more than a grain of sand out of the mountain of bliss he had expected" (p. 490). He began to sink back into a feeling of 'ennui'. (p. 491).

The relationship thus carried within itself, not seeds of constant renewal, but of destruction. Vronsky could not

offer Anna a life that satisfied all her pent-up dreams and desires. They began hurting each other cruelly—disappointed in their search for true fulfilment. And before she chose a violent death, Anna realised the futile vanity that motivated Vronsky's love for her (pp. 795-798). Anna's suicide is not only an escape from an intolerable situation, it is also a heart-breaking revenge on Vronsky for his failure. After her death Vronsky also sees the nullity of his life. He joins the campaign against the Turks in an obviously suicidal urge: "As a man I have the merit that my life is of no value to me.... I am glad there is something for which I can lay down the life which is not simply useless, but loathsome to me" (p. 814).

Not only Anna and Vronsky, the happily married Levin also feels estranged from the sustaining sources of life. Though he condemns and avoids upper-class pursuits like dilettantism and self-indulgence his own life does not seem to him fully justified. We see that he remains a landowner—fair-minded, but a landowner nevertheless. In this position his search for the true goal of life brings him up against a blank wall. Specially after his brother's death his despair becomes grim: "Then, for the first time, realizing that for every man and himself too, there was nothing ahead but suffering, death, eternal oblivion" (p. 820, p. 831). Philosophers only provided *distractions* that could not completely stifle his doubt. (p. 822).

True, the cares and burden of his family absorb much of his time, and Kitty's unselfconscious love for him evokes in him a grateful and moving response, and frees him from fear (p. 848). But he remains uneasy about exploiting other men's labour for his own comfort (pp. 825-826). He is

often suicidal: "But Levin did not shoot himself; and he went on living" (p. 823). Deeply in love with his wife he yet withholds from her his secret of agonising anxiety in the very last page of the novel.

The answer to death is not physical immortality. Nor is physical survival always a sign of life. Life thus means to Tolstoi something fundamental and inclusive. In this novel we find a member of the gentry slowly turning his back upon a privileged existence and taking a few halting steps towards the life of which the common people are the guardian. The peasantry are more prominent here than in the earlier novel. To call it "populism" is merely to betray spiritual grossness. To talk in terms of "life" without qualification, as Dr. Leavis does in his mystical moments, is to be guilty of laziness. What Tolstoi obviously discovers with wonder and joy is *the life of labouring men*.

Because Tolstoi's life and work, his intellectual and artistic activities, have not been seen together, his theory of art is often dismissed as trivial and narrow. That is because bourgeois scholars fail to realize the extravagance and irresponsibility of their own existence. No doubt Tolstoi's theory contains elements of obscurantism and simplification. But his simplicity forces our attention upon a simple, neglected but profoundly important truth.

In his "*What Then Must We Do*" Tolstoi shows that the doctrine of "art for art's sake" is closely allied to the soulless positivism of so-called "scientific" bourgeois ideology. Positivism is also a shameless and irrational apology for the *status quo*. It defends the isolation of art and science from common life in the name of "division of labour". The artists and the scientists claim exemption from the common burden

and joy of working for one's bread, and in return they profess to produce "spiritual food" for society. Should the common people ever protest that unless they receive "spiritual food" from them, they won't be able to produce bodily food—the artists would have nothing to say. For they have so forgotten the common man, whose labour supports them, that they are unable to give him the spiritual nourishment he has every right to ask for in return. Art and science in society today share the responsibility for exploiting the common man along with the ruling class and the church. Living a parasitic life they are unable to provide their fellowmen with spiritual nourishment.

We need not conclude from this that artists and scientists should give up their vocation. But they must really share the life of their fellowmen and be aware of their needs. Out of all the excesses of the Cultural Revolution in China—indeed out of all those expressions of blind hatred and anger—I think this truth has once again emerged. Let us hope the Chinese will preserve it like a treasure.

As for the artist today in bourgeois society, his freedom will not come through compromise with the "autonomy" (or rather apathy to common human life) that his masters seek to impose upon him. To quote Tolstoi again,

"Self-sacrifice and suffering will be the lot of a thinker and artist because their aim is the welfare of man. People are unhappy, they suffer and perish. There is no time to wait and refresh oneself.

"The thinker and artist will never sit on Olympian heights as we are apt to imagine; he will always be in a state of anxiety and agitation. Not that man will be a thinker and artist

who is educated in an institution where they profess to produce learned men and scientists...but...he...who cannot help doing what he is impelled to by two irresistible forces—an inner necessity and the demands of men.

(*What Then Must We Do*, 299-300)

Ever since the formation of class-society there have been numerous attempts to define suffering and explain it. Even today we find philosophers and theologians assuming that the problem exists as a part of "human destiny". Very often the cure is worse than the disease. The Buddha for instance counselled extinction of the self.

Though a profoundly religious man, Tolstoi had a healthy mistrust of metaphysical problems and solutions. In this matter as indeed on a great many other topics—Tolstoi's insight and experience brought him very close to Marx. In his novels and tracts he seems to hold that the parasitic upper classes suffer from their "world-sorrow" because of their separation from social labour, which is true human intercourse, and the working classes suffer because the parasitic class robs them of the fruits of their labour and deforms their labour in its own narrow interest. The discussion reminds one very strangely of Marx's notion of *alienation*. Marx also saw alienation as the fundamental disease of man in class-society. He too thought that it dehumanized capitalist and worker alike.

Outside this social context, the problem of suffering seems to me an illusion, at least a wrongly posed question, however tormenting. In particular the existentialist definition seems very much like a puppy chasing its own tail with greater and greater gloom. The *wholeness* of Tolstoi's view puts the problem in its true perspective ultimately as a problem *among men*.

## A Dying Culture

HITEN GHOSH

**B**ENGALIS are still deluded about their cultural superiority in India. But never has this pride looked more pathetic than at the present moment when their claim is ignored by all outsiders. The psychological interest of the phenomenon lies in the Bengali *bhadrolok's* persistent refusal to face the reality of his situation. The reverses in real life are made up by fantasy and day-dream. As every paranoiac has his own particular form of delusion, the Bengali mind has its intellectual pretensions for discharging an injured vanity.

Their claim has so far rested on a fairly impressive achievement of the Bengali language and literature, notably in the nineteenth century and, perhaps, also in the first few decades of the twentieth. But even long before the end of these early decades, it had been quite evident that this literary culture was very much a thing of the past. In our time it has exhausted itself and little survives of the early glory. The chief fount of its inspiration seems to have gone dry. The suddenness with which the Bengali middle-class culture developed a new profundity and dimension can be scarcely more astounding than its equally sudden and swift extinction within the course of a few decades.

There is no doubt that the new literary and artistic culture of Bengal had, from the very beginning, serious limitations both in its intellectual and emotional content, which not only affected its form in an adverse way but also caused it to fall into premature decay from a sudden lapse of vitality.

But before going into the causes of this rise and decline of a people's culture energy, it is useful to throw some light on a peculiar negative trait which characterizes the Bengali mind, and offers a curious pendant to his extraordinary linguistic pride. We have become independent for twenty-five years now, but got no

nearer to conducting even plain worldly affairs in our natural tongue. As for employing Bengali in the higher flights of thinking, the intellectuals and the literate have proved themselves either incapable of the task, or are simply shying away from it. The failure becomes all the more remarkable in view of the Bengalis' obvious pride in their language and loudly proclaimed faith in its capacities as a vehicle for modern thoughts and feelings. Thus while the demand for establishing Bengali both as the language of culture and work-a-day world grows strident, neither the government nor any of the academic and cultural bodies does anything to achieve the objective. Indeed, so far from setting out to impart all instruction and training in the language in which Tagore wrote, the universities in the State continue to conduct even routine business in English.

It is just wonderful that the Bengali intelligentsia, whose overweening intellectual self-conceit is entirely based on a fifty odd years' literary output, should remain so blind, even complacent, about the glaring poverty of the language in intellectual content. For the present inadequacy of Bengali for higher learning and research, in any meaningful sort, is the direct consequence of this poverty. It is admitted by all educationists that even today no serious study of any subject in the higher stages is possible without an effective knowledge of English. Our intellectuals have so far done little to make it possible.

The one convincing reason for this curious phenomenon is that the Bengali mind has been incapable of the intellectual effort necessary to accomplish such objectives. Herein lies the fatal flaw of the new Bengali middle-class culture. But at first this incapacity could possibly have no serious bearing on purely aesthetic creations. True, the new

literature and artistic culture of Bengali betray, even at their best, a certain lack of intensity and breadth of appeal when compared with the best products of modern European literature. And not a little of this deficiency is due to a failure of intellectual awareness and emotional capacity on the part of the Bengali intelligentsia. This twin failure of intellect and sensibility is directly traceable to their reluctance to face the reality of their social, political and economic situation. But of this, later Suffice it to note that the intellectual deficiency of which we have spoken, though detracting from the durability and universality of the imaginative works, did not, for all that, preclude these works from attaining a certain richness and significance which they were soon to lose. Even at the beginning, the new Bengali culture betrayed its fundamental flaw, but this was nothing as compared with the degeneration that was to plague it later. The intellectual debility could work out to its full consequence only after the first flush of creative vitality had spent itself out.

#### English-educated Minority

The early and by far the best products of modern Bengali literature have been the work of the English-educated minority, who addressed themselves, in effect, to intelligent members of their own class. This new literature at its best is comparable to the eighteenth century court literature of England. In both instances, the writers and their audience were a group of people sharing a common sensibility and intellectual background with certain basic assumptions as to values and obligations also held in common. There was a corresponding stability in the social, political and economic order: in England, under the constitutional monarchy after the Glorious Revolution; in Bengal, under the benevolent British Empire after the suppression of the Mutiny. For the Bengali middle class of the nineteenth century, both England and the

English language formed an essential part of its social and cultural milieu, as has been pointed out by Nirod C. Chaudhuri in his *Autobiography*. It had grown to look upon the British Empire as something come to stay, a part of the Newtonian scheme of things as it were. To this it owed its existence, its sense of purpose and even its creative energy.

Little wonder, then, that the creator of the new imaginative literature in Bengali did not feel any urge to develop the intellectual potentialities of the language. Nor could this neglect possibly affect their work in any adverse way or detract from its quality, as it most certainly would if there had been no common cultural milieu between the writers and their public. English being the language of the new dispensation, a basic ingredient of culture and education and an indispensable prerequisite to good living and social importance, the necessary intellectual background for enjoyment of a *Meghnadbadh Kavya*, for example, was taken for granted. No Bengali without a knowledge of Milton or Homer was expected to read it. This assumption has continued well on into our times, for no reader of Pramatha Chaudhuri or Sudhindranath Datta can enjoy the full nuances of their meaning without this same background of thought and sensibility. Nor is Tagore an exception. Indeed one wonders what the modern Bengali author is. You cannot open a single critical work on any important Bengali writer without running up against long excerpts from European critics, poets, philosophers and the like. This proves both of my contentions, namely, that Bengali literature contains little intellectual matter of quotable worth and also that much modern Bengali writing of any merit presupposes a sound English education for its full enjoyment and appreciation.

So long as the literati and their patrons were a closed, well-knit group of highly educated individuals and so long as they shared a common background of thought and sensibi-

lity derived from a genuine assimilation of English literature, the intellectual deficiency of the Bengali language could not have any harmful bearing on the aesthetic products of the new Bengali culture. Any such deficiency was more than made up by the still living communion with the English language and literature, which even a clerk-producing education could provide. But with the growth of so-called mass education and a basic change in the concept and content of education, this superior intellectual background in writers and the reading public can no longer be taken for granted. The circle has widened and now includes the half-literate masses who can lay no claim to this intellectual superiority. Both from personal inadequacy and social disabilities this new literate population is excluded from the old values and mental equipment. In their case the intellectual deficiency of the Bengali language has borne its bitter fruits of evil. Cut off from the rich heritage of the English language and literature, the thought and sensibility of the new generation of educated public remain crude and barbaric, since they have little native resources to fall back on. And these literate and sometimes learned barbarians are the new arbiters of taste in art and letters in our country.

For all the narrowness of their thinking and sensibility a deep impregnation of their minds with the spirit of English literature and European history and philosophy had given the best products of English education in Bengal a certain quality of mind which rescued the new Bengali literature from vulgarity. It is a fact that nearly all Bengali intellectuals of the pre-independence days, who contributed to this cultural milieu, were soaked in English literature and European history and philosophy. Their university education had consisted of specialization in one of these traditionally noble Muses. But this old class of intellectuals and literati was bound to be eclipsed by a new gene-

ration of educated middle class with a different orientation and cast of mind. Since independence, it is their progenies who have held the ground. They are not intellectuals and do not have the all-round development of mind and sensibility their predecessors had.

The growing importance of science and technology in view of their greater material advantages, and the craze for new-fangled branches of humanities, which do not call for a complex cultural background or superior linguistic ability, have brought on a certain deterioration in the cultural equipment of the greater number of university-educated Bengalis. As they owe their entire education to the university and cannot privately offset its deficiency from vernacular sources, most of them must remain uneducated for the rest of their lives, outside their narrow field of specialization. The best products of modern Bengali literature must remain a closed book to them. As their own knowledge of English is uncertain, the subjects they have learnt and a mere knowledge of Bengali do not suffice and give them little taste for the poetry of a Bishnu De or Buddhadev Bose. They look upon all imaginative works as a source of light, instant pleasure, day-dreaming and erotic fantasy. Hence they take to the putrid stuff churned out by the popular media.

#### Standard of Education

This state of affairs has become worse still with the general falling-off in the standard of education. This a consequence of the popular explosion in the educational institutions with no corresponding improvement in the content of education through a development of the vernacular resources. The new swollen ranks of the educated have no education at all, and can hardly be blamed for being un-receptive to the highbrow products of a decadent literary elite. Popular rejection, even hostility, is not too high a price to pay for the latter's

failure to make Bengali an instrument for serious and noble thoughts. They had assumed the continuance of English and the rigorous standard of an intellectual education through English, its overwhelming importance in a society of illiterate mobs ruled and exploited by the foreign power and its native agents. And thus they indulged in a kind of imitative and derivative culture which could, at its best, only beautify the life of sophisticated aesthetes.

At any rate the dependence of their aesthetic creations on a foreign language and its cultural milieu for the general context of their thought and sensibility could not rob their works of creative vigour. There are many different manifestations of this loss of verve. For one thing, the intellectual awareness of the Bengali mind remained far too long confined within a mid-Victorian world outlook. It was only among the younger generation of poets and writers who broke with the tradition of Tagore—who remained an idealist—that the full impact of the thought currents of modern Europe, with their dark eddies and fierce convulsions, made itself felt. To the older generations no such awareness of pain, conflict and anguish came naturally. Their own position of privilege was due to their exclusive cultural opportunities, which they were confident of retaining for all time to come. No encroachment from the vulgar masses threatened it. This aristocratic self-complacency may have inhibited them from developing the intellectual potential of their own language.

But there must have been a real failure of creativity at the intellectual level. Psychologically, the failure was part of their flight from self-awareness. Creative thinking on a rational plane could have given them no refuge from despair and anguish at the absurdity of their social situation both in relation to their alien masters and native slaves. Their aesthetic creations posed no such direct threat to their peace of mind and could easily be an elabo-

rate exercise in bad faith and yet remain effective as works of art. But here, too, the element of bad faith makes the greater part of their works insipid. Again, it is the new generation of the artists and men of letters who succeeded Tagore who honestly faced their situation and became, for the first time in Bengali literature, conscious of inner anguish and despair resulting from an honest recognition of their position in society and the universe. For them the revolt of the masses was a reality and even an opportunity for a vicarious act of expiation and overcoming their sense of guilt. They had no use for the old illusions-certainties which lay shattered all around them in a heap of broken images. For them the British Empire was not a broken promise, as it was with Tagore, but a cold cruel law of economic history. With this new generation of writers and thinkers Bengali intellect was at last coming of age and the new creative literature also reflects this maturity.

#### Contrary Forces

But the process had hardly started when it was swiftly smothered in a more powerful movement of contrary forces. The sins of the fathers were visited upon their sons. The younger representatives of the upper-Bengali culture had no time to expiate their fathers' sins. The consequences of those sins were already working themselves out. The new Bengali culture of the nineteenth century was soon swept away by a flood of vulgarity which the aristocratic exclusiveness of that culture had brought on. The new literate and even educated multitude, who constitute the main bulk of the inheritors of the old middle-class culture of Bengal, are incapable of responding to the nuances of its aristocratic heritage. They have become the creators and patrons of the latter-day vulgarities into which the same tradition has degenerated by a process of historical nemesis. The responsibility for this state of affairs rests squarely on the shoulders of the

older generations, who had done nothing to prepare their successors for better aesthetic and intellectual responses through a proper development of the Bengali language. The task would have involved a moral and intellectual integrity which the new middle class was bound to evade, for that would undermine its privileged position in the new society. The privilege had its counterpart in subservience to the British Empire and its cultural benefits. By clinging to its privilege the new class was of necessity restricting its moral, aesthetic and intellectual capacities. Hence the singular limitations of the new Bengali culture and its subsequent degeneration.

The pity, however, is that even the better educated representatives of this class are today succumbing to this vulgar drift in our cultural life. Satyajit Ray, who had very definitely started with not only a high artistic power but also a certain moral and intellectual capacity to turn contemporary Bengali life into satisfying forms of art, is fast petrifying into a mere box-office idol. His superior talents show up more pitifully against the inanities of his recent creations. This is another facet of the same futility which has always afflicted even the superior expressions of our modern culture. At the more vulgar level, the works are an odd mixture of shallow romance and crude eroticism. This goes for everything from fiction to film fare. They have their learned apologists though. The *Mahabharata*, *Decameron*, Works of Chaucer, Shakespeare and Rabelais are cited with cool aplomb in defence of an odd work of pornography. But the learned professors betray their lack of literary perception even as they bring these invocations to bear. What reader of Chaucer, Rabelais, Shakespeare, *Mahabharata* or *Arabian Nights* has found sex a drab and dreary monotony as it is made out to be in these modern works of pornography? The tales of Eros in the Myths and these great works are an affirmation of life, its mystery and glory, its tragic beauty

and bitter-sweet fun. There are tales of perversion and bestiality, but these are always presented in a tragic or ludicrous light, never as something to glory in or gloat over. The pornography of the modern West, which our best-selling novelists are copying, is both written by and addressed to people who have lost this sense of glory and despair, the ecstasy and agony of living—the true meaning of Eros and Thanatos.

At the highbrow level, the decadence makes itself felt in quite another way. The works display verbosity, intellectual pretensions, wooliness, and a sterile passion or pathos. All this passes for superior expressions of our cultural heritage. Here we find the most disgusting aspect of modern Bengali culture. The pretensions are clearly seen through, though that does not prevent the half-educated journalists and high literary bodies from conferring great merit on these works. Thus an Akademi award winning Bengali playwright, who is credited with pioneering the absurd in Bengali theatre, once babbled in the course of a radio talk that the war in Vietnam and the massacre of the East Bengalis by the Pakistani army were instances of the absurd in modern life! What will the author of *Being and Nothingness* make of such drivel?

These exponents of the absurd in Bengali may, however, be reminded that when Sartre says that all human values are absurd he means that these have no extra-human sanctions, no validity beyond what man in society and nature chooses to accord them. They define the purpose which man freely chooses for himself. All invocations of divine, historical or natural necessity in behalf of human values are an act of bad faith, a flight from freedom and its accompanying *angst*.

The meaning of the statement that man makes himself what he is, is that man must create values in the consciousness of his freedom against the background of a non-human nature that does not care for his human interests. Man makes himself in

history through co-operation with other human beings, who share the same solitude and anguish, the same hopes and despair and face the same indifference of the external world. Human life has therefore no significance beyond that with which man chooses to invest it. This is the basis of man's creativity. He creates meaning and significance for himself, he makes his own history. The possibilities of creation are, of course, limited by man's situation in the universe and in society, but apart from certain inherent necessities of all human situation, man's creativity is defined by his own free choice and called forth by the same situation etching out his absurdity. There is no point in creating an absurd theatre if man cannot revolt against the condition of absurdity which his position in nature and history brings to his consciousness. For Camus, the absurdity stems from man's search for meaning and the absence of meaning in the univers apart from this all too human quest. Neither the quest for meaning nor its absence in the non-human world constitutes, by itself, the absurdity in question. It is the confrontation between the two poles of human existence that points up the futility of all human endeavour. The act of rebellion against the purposelessness of the universe is the true function of the human spirit. For Camus, the sense of absurdity is only the starting point from which man must go on to purposive living, creation and revolt. This is the full implication of man's awareness of his absurd condition.

#### Act of Choice

Thus it is possible to show by analysis of even the 'superior' products of our culture how utterly barren and incompetent it has become. The rendering of Ibsen can shed all the deeper overtones of the original, and yet cause no stir among its learned audience. The intense psychological conflict in a *A Doll's House* is reduced at the hands of a well-known Calcutta troupe to an ill-treated wife's plea for divorce. It is 'forgotten' that Ibsen

called his play a domestic tragedy, and a tragedy, according to Bradley, must induce a sense of loss and waste. Ibsen's Nora does not quit her home in triumph, but in anguish such as every individual in modern society must feel once his old certainties are lost. Nora's disillusionment with the male-dominated society does not lead her to take refuge in bad faith but go out in the dark to seek new values, which is her first conscious act of choice. But she does this with a crushing sense of her freedom and responsibility. She takes a leap into the unknown and uncertain, which marks the process of her growing up in the only real sense. Indeed she has always been a free and responsible individual, but the consciousness of her freedom was forced on her by Torvald's treatment of her individuality. At first this induces despair and death-wish, a desire for flight from freedom, but then she overcomes this feeling and is rudely shocked into accepting her freedom. And freedom involves anguish, which is one of the modern equivalents of the sense of tragic waste. Ibsen's play seems to be a reinterpretation of the Biblical myth of lost paradise. Of course, the play fails on this and many other counts when compared with Greek or Renaissance tragedy. But the tragic dimension of Nora's character is fully revealed only by a study of such other female characters of Ibsen as Hedda Gabler or Rebecca West. Their ruthless freedom and individuality and their ultimate honesty to face the implications of their freedom give them a tragic dignity. Nora, too, is cast in the same mould and strikes a somewhat similar note. Only hers is a mere domestic tragedy. Incidentally, the actress who did Nora

in the Bengali adaptation could hardly rise to the role's challenge and possibilities, for she is cut out for a typical Saratchandra heroine. Nor could the production as a whole do more justice to the theme of the original. One could cite countless examples, from more recent performances, of such failure of interpretation by more than one troupe in Calcutta. But that would not stop these productions drawing large crowds and rapturous applause from stupid hacks.

Even Brecht's plays, which have recently been pounced upon by our avant-garde theatre, cannot make the right impact. One looks in vain for any critical comment on the productions of Brecht in Bengali, which makes the point that Brecht in criticising the exploiting class never fails to present the exploited people in an equally unfavourable light. The stupidity and illusions of the victims of exploitation make their continued exploitation possible. The theatre of alienation is made necessary by this attitude of Brecht to his characters and their actions, since the audience must view the performance with a cold critical detachment. The presentation is a cruel parody of life in bourgeois society, and one cannot sympathise with the motives of the characters, though one must secretly perceive the truth of the caricature. In this Brecht has been a precursor of much of the absurd techniques of Beckett, Ionesco and others. The absurdity of the absurd theatre is a consequence of its being a parody and caricature. It presents life as a tragic farce, when it is lived in bad faith. It depicts the way of the self-deluded. The absurdity of life belongs to those who choose to make it absurd by their illusions. For those who take their fate in their own hands and choose to make themselves and who own their freedom to do so, are not waiting for Godot. For them the consciousness of absurdity is a cathartic process, which the audience undergoes through their detachment. True, all absurd dramas show only the negative aspects of modern life in a devastating mockery

of its bad faith. The new drama seems to re-enact the fourth book of *Gulliver's Travels*. But the negativity intends positive reaction through the techniques of alienation.

True also, perhaps, that the concept of the absurd makes all human action, thought and feeling equally futile. Even cognizance of absurdity and revolt or creation bring no relief from the overwhelming sense of insignificance of man's fears and hopes in a non-human world. But this total absurdity can only mean what Sartre calls *De trop*, unnecessary. For Sartre this lack of necessity in anything is our freedom to choose and create, though in utter anguish. Again the insignificance is the starting-point for a new creative significance, which can only follow on a recognition of non-necessity i.e. absurdity.

But (in all Bengali 'absurd' plays the audience is brought into a mood of sympathy and involvement with the passive victims of social injustice or natural calamity, people for whom life has become meaningless for no fault of their own, no failure to face up to their situation. This is the very opposite of the theatre of Beckett, Adamov, Genet and Ionesco. This new 'intellectual' theatre of Bengal is in the tradition of the old sentimental self-pity and self-delusion. It encourages a mood of passive and whining submission to the facts of life. There is no conscious recognition of reality or the possibilities that such recognition opens before us, nor of the bizarre consequences of non-recognition.

If such is the state of decline of modern Bengali culture even in its superior expressions, the cultural decay of Bengal is nearly complete.

#### CORRECTION

'Indira wave weakening' (September 30) on Page 5 column 2, fourth line from the bottom, read 'DUSU' instead of 'DUSM' and on Page 6, column 2, sixth line from the top read 'people' instead of 'police'.

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SAMIK BANDYOPADHYAY

**T**HE Mrinal Sen style, ironic and committed, takes a closer and angrier look at perhaps the most real element in the Indian reality—poverty—in his latest work *Calcutta 71*; and his work touches a relevance rarely touched in the Indian cinema which prefers most of the time to be sentimental or psychological or spectacular or sensational. Ever since *Akaashkushum*, Sen has been working within the urban middle class milieu in his Bengali films, and working as an uncompromising critic. However, his mockery of the easy success dream in *Akaashkushum* or his critique of sartorial neo-colonialism in *Interview* merely pricked middle-class complacency; but his latest work is a more radically disturbing defence of anger and its varied manifestations. While the line of mockery persists in the rather too long 'quote' from *Interview*, or the overtly theatrical court scene dominated by a blatantly theatrical Utpal Dutt or even in the sheer topsyturvydom of the skit on the capitalists of the world *Uniting to Save Their Laundries*, the disjointed, episodic nature of the work allows Sen to documentate poverty through a number of decades.

In the three illustrative stories showing different faces of poverty in the thirties, the forties and the fifties, Sen chooses a naturalistic idiom: the ruthless objectivity is most sharply evident in the first two stories, the Manik Banerjee story of tensions and petty explosions that tear apart the facade of middle-class domesticity, and the Prabodh Sanyal story of the crack-up of middle-class respectability and relationships. Sen's concentration on detail, the monotone of the continuous downpour counterpointing the angry voices and bitter silences in the former, and the sudden exposure, after a slow build-up, of a middle-class family that desperately tries to keep up a front to hide its source of living that is prostitution,

in the latter, underlines the character of middle-class existence in those early decades. One may not notice it and one may ask for socio-economic-historical padding, but there is a clear line of development from the first story to the second, from the futile self-laceration in the former to an open-eyed acknowledgement of reality in the latter, from the generality of the first situation to the more concrete period timing of the second situation with the background of the Great Bengal Famine of 1943. In both stories Sen provides an insight into a Bengali middle class devoted to keeping up forms and appearances even when economic stresses demand a redefinition of their mode of existence. Stylistically, there is a subtle distinction between the two stories; while the former has a greater sense of environment, the latter builds a drama out of the conflict between characters: the very emergence of characters out of the middle class milieu under the strains of economic oppression may be a point of social meaning.

### Smugglers

The third story—about young smugglers uprooted from middle class upbringing—is more loosely told, as Sen lapses into sentimental repetitions and the diversions on a train journey through suburban Calcutta. After the breathtaking coldness and tautness of the first two stories, I had a feeling that Mrinal Sen cannot help getting soft whenever he is in a village. Something that he seems to share with the sentimentalisers of the rural, with all those who pay short visits to the villages and are charmed. The ugliness of rural poverty is lost in the sentimental scenes of playing children, or even the mother crying in the wilderness for her smuggler son, who has not returned from the city. There is in fact enough of that sense of a precariously poised existence in that shot of the family going to sleep with an empty space between them, and that carried all the tension that the story needed at that end.

The party-at-the-hotel sequence

was the most uneven portion of the film, with the musicians in their wild movements against Tapas Sen's vibrating lights breathing the ruthlessness of affluence, out the guests and the minister-industrialist centre-of-attraction looking more like the small-town rich than like those who wield power in a city like Calcutta. These men and women could have been less gushing, could have been more capable of holding their drinks, and could have then provided more of a visual challenge to the appearance of the dead young man of twenty. Sen is however able to bring out the logic of an eruption of violent protest, stylised gestures of authority and power in expressionist techniques mingling with documentary shots of street fighting and demonstrations in Calcutta, with the easy transition to the young man pursued and killed on the Maidan by men whom he knows and yet cannot name. And yet maybe there is a sly mockery in the time signal over the radio, or suggestion as to how the most horrible facts be-

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come news to be gulped with the morning tea, an ironic fling at the urban middle-class conscience.

Calcutta 71 shares with *Samskaara* the guts to look reality in the face and throw the wish-fulfilment mystiques of the Indian cinema to the winds. Like the makers of *Samskaara*, Sen restores more of the theatrical to the cinema, and the theatrical serves to highlight the relevance in the theme statement by the young man perpetually twenty, in Madhabai Chakrabarty's face cracking into painful dis-

tortions from sculptured passivity in a single shot, in the confrontation of the dead young man and the living rich, in the contrast of the colour sequence of Suhasini as the humming dream-girl and the gunshots on the Maidan. The theatrical, in Sen's hand, seems to have more of the ruggedness that the Indian cinema has never really dared at; and his gimmickry is so theatricalised that it becomes more of an elaborately worked out pattern. While Sen's cast, drawn mainly from the ranks of the new theatre movement in the city, serve

him well in general, Madhabai Chakrabarty, Binota Roy, Anubha Ghosh, Gita Sen, Devraj Roy, Sadhana Roy Chowdhury, and Shuchita Roy touch the authentic, while Ajitesh Banerjee, Rudra Prasad Sengupta and Ashok Mukherjee are among the failures. Ananda Shankar's music is meaningful all the time that he can avoid the traditional Indian instruments, which sound so alien and remote in the conditions that Sen creates. K. K. Mahajan's camera has its characteristic mobility and understanding.

## Japan

# From Postwar Democracy To Democratic Fascism

MUTO ICHIYO

ONE wants to figure out what Mishima Yukio's (the well-known Japanese writer) final harangue at the Ground Self-Defence Force Headquarters, Tokyo, on the morning of November 25, 1970 and dramatic suicide amounted to. Weigh the idiosyncrasies of the brilliant writer; allow the super-rational, economic-animal nation its lacunae of cultural madness; put all these considerations beside "the revival of Japanese militarism"... and yet, all things considered, wasn't the whole thing somehow anachronistic?

Mishima and four followers, members of his Shield Society, had invaded the office of the commander and tied up General Mashita to his chair. Mishima then stepped out onto a balcony, hung streamers covered with slogans over the edge and began to address the more than one thousand soldiers gathered in the yard below. But before he had even opened his mouth, the crowd was responding to its would-be agitator with heckling and boos. The jeering reached a high as he got to the heart of his message. He was shouting, "Now the Self-Defence Force

must become a real national army; the Constitution has got to be changed". But even those up front could barely hear him for the catcalls. To the very group he was depending on to carry out a coup he had to scream, "Listen, listen, listen to me! You, listen to me! Be quiet. Aren't you going to listen to a *samurai* ready to die for your cause? Listen! Don't you understand? Understand? LISTEN TO ME!..." But the uproar below swelled even louder: "Go home! We hate heroes!" Raising his white-gloved fist, Mishima bellowed, "Isn't there a single man among you who will rise up with me? Won't any of you..." (He paused ten seconds waiting to hear, "Me, I will!", but the soldiers continued to shout, "Fool", "Mad man", "No, nobody.") "All right, nobody. All right, I'll die. I can see none of you have the guts to rise up with me and change the Constitution. I don't have any illusions about the Self-Defence Force. Now I'll say it: 'LONG LIVE THE EMPEROR!'"

He had planned to go on for two hours, but he stopped after only seven minutes. He disappeared from

the balcony back into the office where he and one of his followers committed suicide in exemplary *samurai* fashion.

There is a temptation to feel embarrassed for Mishima, to think of his act as a pathetic and futile anachronism, with no relevance to our lives or to the actual political situation: a curiosity. But the fact is it was not futile, and—Mishima's romantic world-view, his *samurai* heroics, and the soldiers' lack of response to him notwithstanding—Mishima's action was not anachronistic. It was not a gesture whose moment has passed.

In terms of its stated ends it was certainly premature. Mishima's counter-revolutionary ideology was ahead of the Self-Defence Force men he addressed on November 25; his appeal could not have raised a revolt in the Self-Defence Force. It was nevertheless effective. Not long after the affair, Prime Minister Sato\* came out with the statement that the Constitution should be changed. Indeed, an

\* This article was written before Sato resigned.

important function of the right wing is to act as an advance guard for the rulers, to expand the frontier of possible political actions, and at the same time to always provide a contrast against which the rulers' actions seem moderate. Simply stated, a gesture like Mishima's is effective in terms of the goals of the ruling class because it serves to raise the mean of the reactionary imperialist temperature in this country.

Not that Mishima was in the pay of the ruling party politicians, bureaucrats or industrial magnates, or manipulated, CIA-fashion, by them. He did not commit suicide to promote the interests of the Sato government. To get at the meaning of Mishima's action we need to go beyond its immediate effects and understand the situation which, on the one hand gave rise to it, and which, on the other, it augurs. It is a situation of fundamental change in the historic mode of being of the Japanese State. Mishima's life and thought focused on this problem of the essence of the Japanese State, and his final gesture has the timeliness of the classic tragedy whose message is rather about the collective dilemma of the audience than the fated demise of the play's protagonist. Ichigaya, November 25, 1970, was a moment confirming the arrival of a whole new period in which the Japanese State—its form, its ideology and its Constitution—was being called into question and three alternatives put before the people: will there be counter-revolutionary breakthrough to a new mode, a gradual transition to counter-revolution, or will there be a revolutionary breakthrough? Mishima's gesture is about the decay and crisis in the period of postwar democracy and the progress of the transition to democratic fascism.

#### Postwar Democracy

In contrast to the postwar State of "cultural emasculation" and "moral degeneration"—moral degeneration is Mishima's favourite category—he posits a myth of the prewar State that could only be created by a ro-

mantic intellectual able to ignore the concrete history of the times. This prewar State of national integrity was "represented by the irreplaceable being of *Tenno*" (the emperor). For Mishima, prewar Japan is above all characterized by the manly strength of the *samurai* perfected in death—a willed death: suicide—which achieves the identification of the individual with the national essence, the emperor. In his literary works Mishima exploits every linguistic artifice—his images positively glitter—to create an identification of death and beauty. (Perhaps "glorious" death can only be convincing if this identification with beauty can be brought off). Read his novels: at the heart of death is beauty, and at the heart of beauty is death.

Of course Mishima did not invent that identification. He was just beginning his literary career before the war ended. The heroes of his day, like the *kamikaze* pilots who perished in "glorious sacrifice for the nation", were indoctrinated with a kind of modernized *bushido* spirit, reworked to fit the needs of the bureaucratic-industrial nation-State, with which the fascist rulers extracted discipline and self-sacrifice from the people. Mishima grew up under the influence of the school of Japanese romanticism that was said to enable wartime teenagers, (well, some of them?) to die "with calmness and joy, gloriously" for the emperor. The war, with its death-beauty aesthetic for doomed intellectuals, was indeed Mishima's golden age. Never mind the vast sufferings and meaningless sacrifices of ordinary Japanese people; never mind the genocide committed against the Chinese and other Asians in the name of the emperor. That wasn't what the war was all about. For Mishima the war was an aristocratic, intellectual aesthetic field. War meant death, but glorified death, or the beauty of readiness to die, and selflessness and devotion to the supreme deity, the emperor. It was so many happy days for him who never experienced the misery

and bitterness of the conscripted soldier.

Twenty years after the war, when the literary world began to consider his works Nobel Prize material, he had this to say: "I wonder if I'll see the day when I can write in my will, 'Long live the Emperor!'" Whether or not that day comes, I recall with tremendous bliss and sense of happiness that I once lived in such an age." This was the ideological and aesthetic stance he kept to the end.

But in 1945, with the defeat of the Japanese Empire, the emperor declared himself a human. Thus, for Mishima, the postwar age was inaugurated with a betrayal, not only of those who had died in the name of the emperor, but of those too who, like Mishima, went on living aspiring to die in his name.

The structure which took the place of the prewar imperialist superstructure with *tenno* at its head, together with its ultra-nationalist ideological system, was built up according to the dictates of U.S. imperialism, but in a way which marvellously suited the needs of the Japanese ruling class as well. For a brief period after the surrender, when the occupation authorities were intent on preventing a rebirth of the militaristic State, left-wing movements were encouraged, democratic ideas flourished, and the unique Peace Constitution was handed down from on high. Moreover, in the turmoil of the early postwar years, the Japanese people created a revolutionary situation, and for a while it looked like capitalism was up against the wall for the first time in the history of this country. Early in 1947 the workers began organizing for a general strike that would have shaken the very foundations of this capitalist society. But the bubble burst (the almighty occupation forces were, after all, American imperialists): MacArthur banned the strike on its eve. The period of euphoria was doomed anyway with the coming of the cold war; counter-revolution and the red purge set in with the occupation authorities expelling all communists from government offices

and private enterprises: the Americans had launched their "reverse course" policy. Then the Korean war was unleashed and Washington was no longer concerned about crushing the war potential of its former imperialist rival, but rather wanted to strengthen Japan as the forward base from which to attack the Korean and Chinese peoples in the name of Dulles' anti-communism. (It was at this time that MacArthur called for a "police reserve force" and Japan's postwar army was born.)

Early in the 1950s three major decisions were taken by the Americans: 1) to conclude a peace treaty with Japan on the basis of which Okinawa would be separated from Japan and placed under the sovereignty of the U.S. Armed Forces to be used as the "keystone" of the U.S. anti-communist military encirclement of China and the Asian revolution; 2) to conclude a security treaty with Japan that would sanction the permanent stationing of U.S. armed forces in this country; 3) to foster the growth of Japanese capitalism in order to guarantee the development of the country into a powerful and reliable bastion of anti-communism. The Japanese ruling class easily adapted itself to this line dictated by the strategic goals of the U.S.; it dovetailed beautifully with its own imperialistic objectives.

The rulers of this country had never abandoned their dream of restoring Japan to its prewar state of military might, and in terms of their own long-range objectives they could look at the American package deal for postwar Japan with perfect satisfaction: 1) they needed "peace" at home and the fact that it was bought at the price of condemning one million Okinawans to the modern despotism of the American military was, for them, of no real consequence; 2) they welcomed the presence of U.S. troops provided for under the Security Treaty; they were doing double duty: protecting the ruling class interests from the Japanese people and from the threatening Asian revolution and, at the same time, stimulat-

ing the rapid growth of those interests by the very fact of saving Japan the expense of building its own full-blown defence system, i.e., allowing for an unbelievably rapid accumulation of economic surplus; 3) the arrangement with the U.S. enabled them to re-establish their class hegemony over the Japanese workers: the "prosperity" that followed "peace" robbed the postwar movement of its militancy, leaving a "democracy" that was about as far from popular rule as the pre-war emperor system had been. Though from a standpoint diametrically opposed to Mishima's, we too say: postwar Japan was an hypocrisy.

What peace was there? "Peace at home", because the country had a little umbrella, the Peace Constitution, which just covered it, though not Okinawa. But the real guarantee of "peace at home" (peace for the ruling class) was the big umbrella, the American "nuclear deterrent" which covered the whole "free world". If you shut your eyes to the big umbrella—there was, of course, no peace for the rest of Asia, but constant war—it was easier to live complacently under the little umbrella. There was peace for the ruling class to build its imperialist base structure.

#### The Parties

What democracy was there? There was illusion of competing political platforms, though in fact, the forces that compose the present Liberal-Democratic Party have ruled the country for all but one of the last twenty-six years. The LDP, which has more the nature of a State institution than a competing political party, has a semi-permanent "opposition"—the Communist Party (JCP), the Socialist Party (JSP) and its labour organization, SOHYO, and assorted progressives—which provides the system with a "democratic" solution for the dissatisfied. In comparison to the difference between the Republican and Democratic parties in the U.S. system, say, the antagonism in the Japanese system between

the opposition and the ruling party may have seemed at times quite deep-seated. And it was, in fact, quite sharp over the question of the Security Treaty and other foreign policy issues involving the question of war and peace. But the little umbrella of the Peace Constitution kept Japan from seeing beyond the coastline, aggravating its curious pattern of nationalism, "one-nationism". The frame of reference in the political struggle was, in the end, the same for both the conservatives and progressives: Peace and Democracy, postwar Japan's liberal consensus. As far as a revolutionary perspective based on class-consciousness goes, both sides were operating on the basic bourgeois principles, and the deep-rooted one-nationism rendered the Left's internationalism mere lip service.

And what kind of prosperity was there? From what has already been said it is clear that the "miracle" of the GNP was no pure economic phenomenon. The initial energy for Japan's recovery was sucked from the blood of the Korean people; as former Prime Minister Yoshida put it so well in his memoirs: "The Korean War was a god-send for our country." The capitalists had been trying to buy off the SOHYO-led labour movement with annual wage increases; the workers produced ammunition and war supplies which Sato shipped off to Vietnam, happy that they had peace and democracy at home and that the Prime Minister was "sincerely desirous of an early peaceful settlement" of the war in Indochina. The "economic animal" and the "transistor salesman" (De Gaulle's term) have also been merchants of death; we've got sandbags for ARVN and vinyl bags for the corpses of the American troops.

According to the division of labour on which the postwar period was based, Japan concentrated on economic prosperity while America was responsible for counter-revolutionary violence against Asian peoples. To the extent that this division was still viable, the inconsistencies were minor

and did not contradict the peace and democracy consensus at home to which everyone paid homage. Indeed, postwar Japan was a form of bourgeois state that had its own historical personality, just as the Weimer Democracy in the post-World War I period had its own. The basic relationship with the U.S. imperialist domination of Asia had the effect of blunting the class antagonisms inside the country; as a result political antagonism was put on a very vague basis—(confrontation on foreign policy issues, but within the framework of peace and democracy)—and the party claiming the revolutionary mandate, the JCP, became a party of progressives and pacifists. The progressives' fight was mostly to resist the "return" of Japan to the prewar condition and to oppose reactionary tendencies, not to build socialism. Within this situation the ruling class was in a position to move to the right, almost imperceptibly, until "peace" came to mean the status quo and "democracy" the polling booth. Not only had the GNP replaced the emperor as the symbol of devotion, but the emperor system itself was wedded to the bourgeoisie when the crown prince in 1962 took as his bride the daughter of a wealthy flour maker family. Such was the era of Postwar Democracy.

But that situation was not to continue for ever. The seeds planted in the postwar period are now coming to maturity and the whole complex of socio-political factors that shaped that age have been forced to change in the past few years. The Sato cabinet had stepped into power for the historic mission of ending this whole period of postwar democracy. Why was the change necessary? There were two major factors at work: (1) the defeat of the American counter-revolution, especially in Asia and most particularly in Vietnam: the weakened position of American imperialism in the world system of oppression and exploitation urges Japan to come to the front of counter-revolution in Asia; and (2) the pressure of the economic expansion

of Japan itself, which impels Japanese imperialists to grab for themselves the control of their markets, energy and raw material resources all over the world. The Japanese imperialists would like, in fact, to take advantage of the plight of American imperialism in Asia and elsewhere while still counting on its role as world policeman. If the change in Japan could be brought about simply by a decree abolishing the post-war democracy State and replacing it with a fanatic fascist government—(after the Weimer Democracy came the Hitler regime in German)—then Mishima's way with his storm troopers and emperor-worshipping Self-Defence Force officers would have made a lot more sense as a realistic, strategic move. This is not the case, however; the change which the Government would bring about in the domestic structure was necessarily a gradual one and had an ideological vagueness which derived from the continued sharing of counter-revolutionary tasks with the U.S.

The external relation of a country and its internal make-up are not mutually independent. If the domestic postwar democracy was the internalized form of (the postwar Japanese external relationship, the U.S.-Japan "division of labour" mentioned above, the change in the latter naturally has to call forth a corresponding change in the postwar democracy itself. The Sato cabinet wanted to do both. The first step in this direction was the signing of the Japan-South Korea "Normalization" Treaty in 1965 which inaugurated the fresh exploitation and colonization of South Korea by Japanese imperialists. The most decisive move toward this goal was the Nixon-Sato joint communique; it not only provided for the transfer of sovereignty over Okinawa in 1972 with the huge military bases intact, but also virtually placed the whole Northeast Asian area, particularly Korea, under the control of Japan. From then on Japan had to assume direct responsibility, if not total responsibility, for counter-revolution in foreign

lands. The division of labour between Japanese and American imperialists is not obsolete—it is absolutely necessary for them in revolutionary Asia—but it has taken on a different pattern: while it used to be a division with Japan as primarily the economic plunderer and the Americans as counter-revolutionary fighters, the new division of labour has Japan and America sharing both functions between them.

This was bound to change the whole political-social-ideological set-up of postwar democracy in Japan. In fact it was no longer postwar-democracy Japan when its premises were removed. The internal basis for the Japanese state must be overhauled and remade into something else that can support its direct responsibility for counter-revolution, abroad. The notorious statement by Takeshi Sakurada, a leading big businessman, that the Japanese State for the entire postwar period was "semi-State" and that the urgent task facing the Japanese leaders was to "change it into a full State", (implying a State with a full-fledged, full-status armed forces, powerful police, an anti-people judicial system, and the ideological unity of the people), eloquently, and with some political-philosophical insight, has spelled out the enormous mission the Japanese ruling class has taken upon itself in the crisis-ridden decade of the 1970s.

#### Something's got to be done

Because the transition to democratic fascism is essentially the internal transformation of the status quo, it is a gradual process, deliberately designed to be as imperceptible to the people as possible. Nevertheless, for those who are looking, there are signs everywhere, both of the crisis necessitating the change and the progress of the transition itself. If in the stable days of postwar democracy, Mishima had contented himself with cultivating his death-beauty aesthetic in his writings and private life, in recent years he began to sense the crisis and to prepare to intervene in a decisive way in the

course of events. Though he perceived that the dominant force in power was not interested in a radical transformation—(once he shrewdly remarked that it was the LDP, not the opposition, that now had the most to gain by guarding the Constitution)—there were other forces, he thought, “in” the Establishment but not “of it”, so to speak, that might be: the Self-Defence Force. Given the nature of his dreams, it is not surprising that Mishima envisaged the dramatic breakthrough to the new order based on devotion to the emperor in the form a victory won by a military élite. He looked to an alliance with the Self-Defence Force, and was encouraged to believe that his expectations for them were well founded. Some of the more ideologically “forward” spokesmen within the government were suggesting, moreover, a new image to the Self-Defence Force, an image which hardly concealed the kind of chauvinism that lay at the heart of Mishima’s world-view. While Nakasone, then the Defence Minister, was telling the men they should regard themselves as soldiers and no longer simply as civil servants, Toko Kon, an LDP Dietman (also a novelist) told them at a lecture, “Your mission is to kill; that’s not murder. You just kill them; it’s all right and it’s legal. The state takes responsibility for what you do, so never mind, you can kill with a clear conscience anyone who is not of the Japanese nation.” The time was right and Mishima approached the Ground Self-Defence Force.

Mishima was goaded to act when he did by the surge of the new left anti-imperialist struggles after 1967. In the violent and massive rising of the students and young workers in the streets and on the campuses, he

saw his adversary, revolution, before him. He saw the situation both as a crisis and as an opportunity: something *can* be done—because the climate is changing and postwar democracy is being abolished, and something *must* be done—because if I don’t do it, eventually there will be a revolution.

Mishima’s formula for the establishment of a new order involves a leap, a breakthrough from postwar democracy, through a coup d’état, to the imperialists’ ideal forms of state and society with its active chauvinism among the people, emperor-worship (with, of course, the “MacArthur-imposed Constitution abolished and the emperor restored to his position as “the head of the state”—whatever that means), a fully legitimized, indeed, idolized, military whose units can be dispatched overseas at any time, and whose soldiers take pride in their patriotic function and are willing to die for the emperor.

The formula of the mainstream ruling class is different. (We prefer to regard Mishima as complementary, rather than opposed to this formula because, as we are seeing, it can be ingeniously integrated into and utilized by way of Democratic Fascism.) It would not create an abyss between postwar democracy and the new imperialist State but would ensure a gradual transition. Fascism would gradually overhaul the postwar-democracy state. Speaking of the national structure which the Constitution imposed on Japan in terms of a mask, Mishima says:

As long as the mask was imposed by irresistible outside forces, we have accepted it gallantly as our fate; but all the while we are trying to melt it away into the flesh of our own face...by changing ourselves. We must, for instance, formulate modes of action that bind together individuals in the economy in such a way that they find themselves in a social hierarchy of value. Take work, for instance. Methods of production of course have to be refined, modernized, rationalised in any case; this

is where trade unions come in as such a basic ingredient in the democratic economic structure of Japan. Relating to one another in trade unions is a means for people to participate in the work of building (the national economy. Individuals need to find their place in the social hierarchy by virtue of reference to something super-personal; from now on the trade union movement should respond to these legitimate needs of people to relate, providing the reference for them to identify with the local enterprise, then the industry, and finally the national economy.

This is the myth of the new State, a national community concept from which the very category of class antagonism has been eliminated. This new state is distinct from the postwar democracy one in two main ways, and it is on the basis of these characteristics that we call it a democratic-fascist State.

It rests on a comparatively broad coalition of social forces composing a single right-wing bloc. But the traditional conservatives and the emaciated “peace and democracy” type progressives, (who are not only inherently un-revolutionary, but have almost lost their former vigilance against reaction) are coalesced and fused in this single bloc, though in a somewhat ambiguous fashion.

Under postwar democracy, unions were still unions however reformist, and they had to fight militantly for specific economic demands under the leadership of SOHYO. That was needed by the ruling class, too, since the postwar-democracy state was based on a sort of social equilibrium between competing forces. But now, the ideal pattern of rule is to eliminate this equilibrium, and to replace it by a single bloc. The Federation of Steel Workers’ Unions, for instance, whose true nature you may infer from the above example, still belongs to SOHYO which claims a left-wing policy. What the ruling class hopes to do is to coalesce all these unions in a single front, irrespective of the present affiliations with different union

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centres such as SOHYO. Out of this front they would encourage the formation of a single right-wing Labour Party through a fusion of the Socialist, Democratic-Socialist and Komei parties creating an American Republican-Democrat-type bi-partisan political system. What is taking place at present within the labour movement is part of the basic pattern of the new Japanese imperialist State itself.

What about the Japanese Communist Party? Isn't it fundamentally irreconcilable with the right-wing bloc on which democratic-fascism is to be based? As far as its principles go, the JCP has for the past few years been on a long right-wing march during which it has shed the concept of violent revolution, (the expression has been erased from translations of Lenin), and the principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The following example may suffice to show to what extent the party has made its own the basic consensus on which the bloc rests and, in fact, is fast being integrated into it.

One morning shortly before the battle to prevent Sato's departure to Washington a pile of gravel for road work was found in a yard neighbouring a JCP cell near Haneda airport. This occasioned a mini-crisis for the party which it settled by calling up the police and begging them to remove the revolutionary weapons some radicals had maliciously put there; and since the police were too busy, they organised the neighbours into a self-defence group (*jikeidan* to protect themselves and violently attack the radical demonstrators! *Akahata*, the JCP paper, proudly reported, "and thus the residents are very grateful to our cell." The opposition parties, still championing "peace and democracy" are now fighting side-by-side with the government against the elements that threaten their joint stake in the status quo.

And as for the progressives who were wont in the past to parry with their pens every attempt by the government to violate the "peace and democracy" rules now keep its law and order for them too. During the stu-

dents' struggles which shook the campuses in '68-'69, the progressive professors championed the universities' solution to the radical students: calling in the riot police; and since then the pattern has been for them to arrange "treaties" with the police specifying the conditions under which they will automatically enter the campus and restore order.

Another example, this time from the local community: at a PTA meeting recently in suburban Tokyo, a Liberal Democrat, serving as chairman of the local board of education, was invited to speak to a hundred housewives. The speech was about "ways to prevent sons and daughters from becoming "violence wielding students". The audience was serious, intent, and at the end burst into applause. The funny thing is that the "sons and daughters" of the mothers were all less than ten years of age! What is frightening about all these manifestations of the social transformation taking place is that the JCP still claims to be loyal to Marxism-Leninism, the professors still consider themselves champions of "peace and democracy", and the mothers include not only LDP sympathizers, but also—and for the most part—Socialist and Communist Party sympathizers. Unconscious of any shift in their position (in fact, they haven't moved from an essentially bourgeois position, they have shifted from the "progressive camp" to the "rightwing bloc".

The second main characteristic which distinguishes democratic fascism from postwar democracy is the systematic lopping off of elements which cannot be integrated into the heterogeneity of the rightwing bloc. Democratic fascism is a more severe police State than postwar democracy used to be, and random arrests, increasing use of firearms by the police, etc. are necessary to combat the radical revolutionary elements in society. This hard side of democratic fascism makes up for the weakness inherent in the heterogeneity of the rightwing bloc.

The ruling class, which has been carrying out violent repression of ra-

dical revolutionaries for some time, has began eliminating dissident elements within the ruling system itself, specifically within the judiciary. In the months since the Mishima affair, the Sato-appointed Supreme Court along with the LDP Judge Indictment Committee of the Diet has begun to carry out a purge of the district courts that has been in the offing. (During this time the Supreme Court was trying to intimidate the judge in a case involving the construction of a SDF Nike missile base which threatens to apply a Constitutional measure to the process of remilitarisation.) Supreme Court Chief Justice Ishida served notice that only those judges who consciously pledge allegiance to the present capitalist system can expect to be re-appointed after the expiration of their current terms. One judge has already been disqualified and four judicial trainees prevented from becoming lawyers on this principle.

Just as Japan's postwar relationship with the U.S. distorted the domestic political antagonisms and made for all the hypocrisies of Postwar Democracy, so too, the ambiguous nature of Democratic Fascism with its heterogeneous rightwing bloc (as opposed to a State founded on a Hitler-type fanaticism) is still due in part to Japan's external relations. We are in a world where U.S. imperialists still are supposed to play the major role in counter-revolution. Though the postwar U.S.-Japan division of labour has been changed, yet in those early years of the '70s Japanese imperialists were not left alone at the forefront of counter-revolution. Thus we still have the Security Treaty. To the extent that the U.S. plays the main role, Japanese imperialism's mission is alleviated and the appearance of the continuation of postwar democracy is maintained.

The myth of the cult of GNP, moreover, which was so serviceable during postwar democracy, is still good today. Democratic fascism doesn't have to replace it with something new, the cult of the emperor, for instance; it can simply graft on

to it a new and aggressive political programme. The expanded and more politicized cult of the GNP still contains the economism of Postwar Democracy in Japan, but that economic chauvinism now "naturally" assumes all the attributes of great-powerism. Japan does not have to have a blatantly nationalistic, militaristic ethic. It is enough to say that Japan is a great power with the world's second largest GNP. "Naturally", it also has the world's seventh largest military force. But beneath the myth of the cult of GNP are the people and their actual values.

It should be understood that the value of the people which makes them susceptible to integration into Democratic Fascism is not materialism; it is the maintenance of the status quo. A survey taken of GSDF soldiers and officers is revealing in this regard. To the question, "What is the motivation of your daily living?", while only 6% of the soldiers (and 27% of the officers) gave an altruistic response like, "to work for society", 26%—which was the largest response group—answered, "just follow my inclinations; not ambitious either to make a lot of money or to do something great." In another survey, the question was asked, "As soldiers, what do you think it is that you're going to defend?" Sixty-nine out of seventy-seven either gave no reply or said, "I don't know." However, fiftyone stated that, if there were a war, they would be willing to die fighting in it! It is not necessary for the soldiers of the Self-Defence Force, or any other segments of society, for that matter, to be imbued with plainly chauvinistic ideals; it is sufficient that they belong to the State and are willing to die to defend the status quo: there is chauvinism enough and to spare in that.

It is this conservative tendency of people, and not the Mishima-type aesthetic-heroics, that the main-current Japanese imperialists count on as the binding power of their right-wing bloc. It is a clinging to what is understood as the status quo, a fear of change seen as coming from

outside, obedience to orders coming from above, and a conception of the government as always superior. The most extreme manifestation of this kind of conservatism was after the Great Earthquake of 1923. The police deliberately spread rumours that the reason that disease was spreading was that the Koreans were poisoning the wells, and that in addition they were planning an uprising. As a result thousands of innocent Koreans were massacred. Supporters of the status quo are inherently racist and chauvinist and the *jikeidan* groups referred to above for "defence" (read, "attack") against radical students and workers, are easily turned into groups capable of massacring Korean or other Asian people.

#### A Paper Tiger

The power with which the ruling class manipulates these tendencies for building a basis for their programme of aggression in Asia appears formidable; but when we look carefully at the right-wing bloc on which they are staking their future we see the fatal weaknesses inherent in it which can be attacked by the radical left-wing movement. On the one hand, the bloc binds together different classes with different class interests and different political groups—ranging from JCP to LDP. This causes the bloc to be heterogeneous and subject to falling apart should the manipulation fail. The danger that this will happen is increasing because the ruling class has failed to achieve a "welfare state" type of society in Japan; it has a basic commitment to boost ever more and more the interest of monopoly capital. Hence the pollution, the disruption of the environment, the sterner repression by the police, the growing gap between the rich and poor, the dissolution of rural communities—these are all factors that sharpen class antagonisms and call forth resistance.

On the other hand, the rightwing bloc State has a major weakness in the fact that it lacks a safety valve. While postwar democracy was based

more or less on social and political equilibrium of antagonistic camps, the fusion of them into a single bloc deprives the system of social and political rule of this safety valve (represented by the Socialists and Liberal Democrats.) Taking the labour movement as a case in point, when unions at steel, shipbuilding, electrical and other major industries cease to function as unions, at least capable of channelling the rank-and-file demand into a reformist and economic struggle, in what direction are the workers to look?

Despite these weaknesses, weaknesses which Mishima wanted to rectify through polarization, the right wing bloc is not going to collapse on its own. It must be attacked and split and polarized (but in such a way as to provide a mass base for the revolutionary left) if it is going to be exploded. When attacked, the rightwing bloc will produce more Mishimas at its extreme right, but on the other hand, it will crystallize a revolutionary left. This is the mission of the New Left, a task diametrically opposed to that of Mishima.

The rightwing bloc on which democratic fascism operates is a "paper tiger" in Chairman Mao's sense. If it is let alone, it is a real tiger and can eat people. Unless it is challenged and split, the rightwing bloc can grow and consolidate to the point where it can constitute a domestic political-ideological base strong enough to support aggression overseas and the cold-blooded killing of Asian brothers. But if it is fought against effectively by the people, it turns out to be a paper tiger, collapses and is thrown away. Its intrinsic weakness (and the guarantee that in this process of polarization it will not be Mishima-type ultra-rightists but the authentic left who holds the essential advantage) rests in the fact that the people share their real interests neither with the rightwing bloc nor with the aristocratic *tennoists*.

## Book Review

MUJIBBAD

By Prof Muazzam Hussain Khan,  
Barnamala Prakashani, Dacca.  
Price Rs. 6

IT is all in the day's routine that sooner or later there should be a book on the 'political thoughts' of Sheikh Mujib. With Prof Muazzam Hussain Khan however, who acts the Rosenberg to the Sheikh's Fuhrer, it is a hopeless task to glean any 'thought' from the chaff of high-sounding verbiage that really makes up 'Mujibbad'. Otherwise this is an interesting made-to-order tract which attempts to make a fetish of the Sheikh's one-time popularity and revive that euphoria of Bengali nationalism which has lately been showing signs of flagging amidst the grim struggle of a people to establish a definite political identity for themselves.

On what exactly this political identity of the people of Bangladesh is going to be as envisioned by the so-called 'Mujibbad', the author is characteristically ambiguous. He goes on a fishing trip instead, making fine distinctions between democratic socialism under welfare economy and that under socialist economy. On one point he is explicit though. 'Mujibbad', he tells us, does not aim at removing the present capi-

talist economy by any type of socialism prevailing in some foreign countries. If at all adopted, socialism in Bangladesh must bear the personal hallmark of the Sheikh. The aim of socialism Mujib-style that is, is stated by the author in highly emotive terms. It will try, for one thing, to supplant the present bureaucratic administration by a pyramidal, broad-based one, beginning with village units and rising by stages to the cabinet level. But what about centralised planning and how are the numerous local units to be coordinated? Such doubts are easily answered by the author with reference to the cheering fact that (quote) in this age of the wireless when every home has a transistor it will not be difficult for the local bodies to receive central directives on important matters (unquote). However, what 'Mujibbad' actually amounts to in terms of concrete political programme is not too difficult to divine from the occasional hints and suggestions the author lets drop in his extraordinary way. 'Mujibbad' sets out, we are informed, to check the ever increasing growth of capitalism and economic exploitation in society by effecting a more equitable and rational distribution of the national wealth. How can economic exploitation be removed without removing its cause? At this point the author meekly suggests that (quote) it is not to be entirely ruled out that at some future date the Bangladesh Government may consider

the question of collective ownership of the means of production (unquote). Lest this suggestion, even so daintily offered by the author, causes undue worry to some poor innocent souls, the author hastily adds that 'Mujibbad' by no means favours a change in the present economic structure of society through any radical measures.

So much for the 'political philosophy' that goes by the name of 'Mujibbad'. In between the lines of his unique arguments, however, the author shadow-duels with the bogey of what he calls "socialist dictatorship" which, according to him, is the greatest danger to the ideas of the Sheikh. Although it is not immediately clear what the author wants to imply by the term, everything falls into place if we read 'socialist dictatorship' as the dictatorship of the proletariat. Whatever logic there is in 'Mujibbad' can be summed up in a single sentence. It is the strongest guarantee (for those who are concerned) against the rule of the majority over a small minority (may be even less than the twenty-two families who erstwhile ruled the seventy million). No wonder therefore that this zealous disciple of the Sheikh should feel haunted by the spectre of socialist dictatorship, as all his rhetorical efforts to create a grandfather figure of the Sheikh are directed towards counterballasting any possible trend of the social

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forces to a majority rule in the real, Marxist sense of the term. In this, of course, he had no choice but to fall in with his master who cried himself hoarse to assure the military junta of undivided Pakistan that he was their last chance to resist the possible growth of communism in East Pakistan. The military rulers rose slowly but surely to the bait and, as the Sheikh's miraculous survival of their vengeance clearly proved, played him as their last trump-card against the people of East Pakistan.

G. DASS

## Letter

### "Crime" And Punishment

I was most enthused to come to know from your columns of the formation's of a Legal Aid Committee and an Association for the Protection of Democratic Rights. It is high time such committees were formed. However, in order to get wide public support it is necessary to give these formations much wider publicity. I suggest to you that you please publicise these committees at regular intervals in your advertisement space.

I would like also to point out that the account of repression and reign of terror presented by the APDR in their appeal published in your issue of September 16 is somewhat incomplete and unbalanced. It emphasises exclusively that aspect of the treatment of the prisoners that involves physical torture and physical annihilation. But our ruling class is much too sophisticated to indulge in blind torturing and slaughtering. Ours is not a fascist State; it is an enlightened capitalist State. It practises torture and killing systematically but not just to satisfy the sadistic lusts of degenerate police personnel, but strictly functionally, as an instrument meant to achieve certain defined results. It uses various other techniques, meant for use on different subjects under different circumstances but all meant

to lead to the same goal.

From available reports it would appear that the police are applying the following differentiated treatment to various categories of prisoners: (a) Summary killing. This treatment is reserved for those who are considered to have no promise of future use by the police and who do not have class and family backgrounds holding influence over the police. Among leading cadres only Saroj Dutta is suspected to have been subjected to this summary treatment. Most of the victims of this treatment seem to be of lower middle class or working class or peasant background holding leading positions within the CPI(M-L) ranks.

(b) Physical ill-treatment or torture, sometimes leading to death. This treatment is reserved for those who are considered to be potentially useful in the sense that they may be made to yield information that would lead to further arrests or who come over to join the ranks of the police or the Congress. This may be the most commonly practised treatment. Exceptions however are made for major leaders who are public figures and about whose treatment uncomfortable questions might have to be answered in Parliament; (ii) such politically mature cadres who would not easily bend under torture and who may be made to yield results by other techniques; and (iii) those having the right kind of family and class background.

(c) Psychological pressure and psychological conditioning. There are reports that some of the important leaders are being subjected to torture that is not physical, but involves modern techniques of affecting the mind and the brain. (I have heard of a particular case of the victim being subjected to, among many other things, protracted sessions of recorded music). This treatment appears to be specially meant for the politically important and mature cadres.

(d) Buying off. This is being practised just as widely as the practice of physical torture and simultaneously. This technique is applied to lumpen elements and those from the criminal

underworld whom the purely political elements allowed to get involved with them at the cost of the disaster that followed.

(e) Pure Christian charity, based on class affinity. This treatment is being reserved for the young men of upper middle class background with good family connections. With respect to such cases the top officials of the police administration take personal solicitous interest. They themselves go out of their way to contact the parents and relatives of the errant young men and suggest the conditions under which they may be let off unconditionally. Quite often the condition is that the young accused should be packed off to some foreign country, some citadel of Occidental bourgeois civilisation to get the opportunity of being re-educated. This approach has of course for aim the moral rather than physical annihilation of the victim. People who save themselves thus, leaving their comrades -in-arms with less good family connections in the lurch, cannot but become morally maimed for the rest of their lives.

One may wonder how such different treatment can be meted out by the same law enacting or law implementing process for the same offences. But such wonderment implies a faith in the lawmindedness or fairmindedness of those who wield these powers in our society. Those who accept the facts of a class divided, status-ridden society will not be surprised to see such discrimination being practised even in the onesided trials that are being quietly conducted in the courts without any fanfare (this absence once again points to the mature wisdom of our ruling class. It should not surprise anybody if it turns out that those who will be condemned to life terms will be mostly of peasant background whereas most of the middle-class accused are let off relatively lightly. That would unmistakably point to a deep and mature understanding of the ruling class as to what constitutes its real enemy.

ASHOK RUDRA

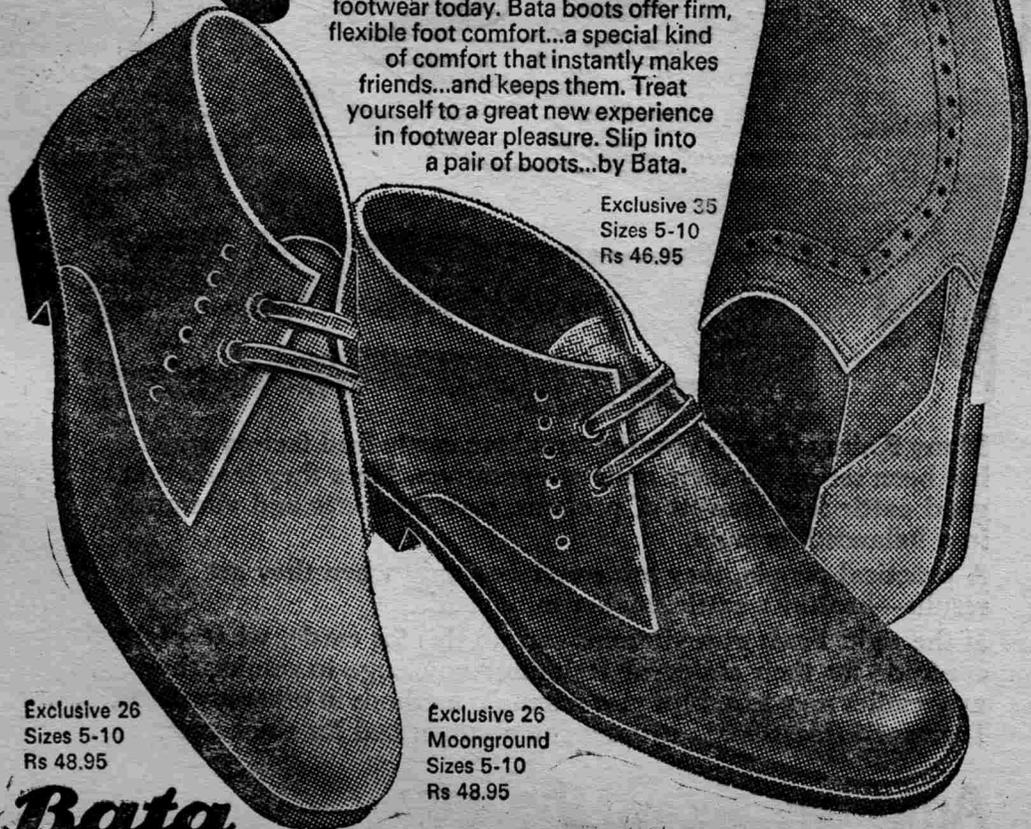
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