

frontier

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THE TUNNEL IS LONG

AT the time of writing, there are rumours again from Paris that an agreement is in sight. The Paris talks provide a respite to Nixon in a gruesome war. When tension begins to rise and the world gets critical of his rampage in Vietnam, the super-mastan gives out the impression that he is relenting; he sends Kissinger back to Paris. The tension subsides, doves of peace begin to flutter. That way the Paris talks have always given Nixon a propaganda advantage. His crimes are open, naked; but Paris provides the naked ape with a figleaf. But for this figleaf public opinion in America, for whatever that is worth, and outside might have resulted in at least some sort of deterrent action, whatever the degree of that deterrence.

There were indications of pressures building up. The Australian dock workers decided to boycott American ships and an attempt was being made by the trade union movement of Australia to impose sanctions on American enterprises throughout the country; the Amalgamate Postal Workers Union was considering a call for imposition of a communications blackout on American enterprises. The Plumbers' Union banned repair work on American ships; a ban on building projects by U.S. firms was debated. Danish dock workers called for a Europe-wide boycott of American ships; the head of the Danish union federation, was planning to meet other labour leaders from around Europe to discuss a common scheme of action. There have been many demonstrating in many parts of the world. These developments are worthy of note in what was being assumed as a conscience-less world given to economism.

The Paris talks may, of course, achieve something. But it would be foolish to think that a peace agreement, in the present conditions, would solve the major problems. The U.S. is not prepared to write off South Vietnam. It has not been there for so long in a search for 'peace with honour'. To think that Nixon is loyal to Thieu for the sake of Thieu is naive. The reasons for the murderous American involvement in Vietnam do not lie in specific trade, investment, and/or raw material concerns, but in the significance of the region to the viability and stability of the global capitalist-imperialist system. Even by 1954, the year the French were expelled, South Vietnam was held by the National Security Council

to be vital for American security and it had to be defended by military action, if need be. This has remained the hard core of U.S. policy in Vietnam ever since. What distinguishes Nixon is his formula which would enable him to pursue the same old aim of maintaining a neo-colonial regime in Saigon without precipitating further political or economic crises within the United States and without having to depend on U.S. ground forces to carry on the war. This was what prompted him to start rushing huge supplies of aircraft, tanks, arms and ammunition to the South when an agreement was

in sight in late October. This is what lay behind his design to bring in the question of Thieu's sovereignty after seeming concessions. He knows, as do his generals, that left to himself Thieu would be choked in no time. That is why his shadow will always loom over Vietnam from Guam, Thailand and the Seventh Fleet; and whenever Thieu or any replacement faces mortal danger, Nixon would cook up some excuse for his B52s to go into action. There is no earthly reason whatsoever for Brezhnev and others to think that "both" the sides want peace.

The Coming Ordinances

Assuming that the CPI is not yet the Congress, it can be legitimately said that the former cannot be held responsible in any way for what the latter says. Therefore Mr S. S. Ray can be dismissed as a rank liar when he says that the four ordinances the West Bengal Government is going to promulgate have the full approval of the CPI. The CPI is against the ordinances or it claims to be so. It has arranged telegrams to be sent to the President of India asking the latter not to sign the anti-worker ordinances. It is organising protest meetings at the AITUC session in Calcutta where distinguished trade union leaders from overseas will see for themselves that the AITUC cries itself hoarse against the ordinances. It has decided to take out processions in the entire spread of the country against Mr Ray's ordinances. Therefore, how could Mr Ray say that he got the green signal from the CPI in promulgating his evil intentions?

The CPI protest, we must confess, is something pleasingly different from the monotone it has been producing lately. It has seen so much good in the Congress that, not a fortnight ago, the need for stronger Congress-CPI ties was stressed and that to the extent of forming a joint party committee. The bonhomie did not take

any crack even though the CPI workers had been getting severe drubbing, psychological and physical, at various offices and industries, during the whole of December and even in January. Such self-demolishing entente should enable the CPI—the only communist party on an all-India level in circulation—to go down in history as a unique party whose leaders rely more on the progressiveness of the rulers than on the strength of its own workers. We pray that the Dadhichi in the Congress die soon so that the CPI can have its thunder.

It is rather uncharitable to think that Mr S. S. Ray has poor knowledge of socialism in that he could think of putting a ban on strikes. He is in very good company. Mr V. V. Giri, the trade-union leader now President of India, contemplated not so long ago of putting a moratorium on strikes. From hearsay we learn that in that great AICC debate in Bidhan Nagar, our former Railway Minister, Mr Hanumanthaiya, proposed one such ban. The purpose of all these gentlemen was impeccably pious—to maintain public order, supplies, services and, that most sought after thing, optimum production. If one put the maximum premium on production, why

can't one throw overboard old ideas like protection of workers? Increase of production will help the worker in so many ways, won't it? The same logic helped Mr S. S. Ray to throw overboard all inhibitions against monopoly practices. He is out to create 50 thousand, lakh, crore, or what is it, jobs in no time and shouldn't he be given the freest scope in this noble task? We expected that the CPI would be generous in accepting Mr Ray's terms and see if revolution cannot be made in his way. After all, the CPI is not dogmatic, rigid, doctrinaire but a daring practitioner of living Marxism. Let it hasten slowly in denouncing the ordinances; the reactionary ordinances may have something progressive in them! Meanwhile let us all join in congratulating the State Cabinet on its wonderful, effortless sweep that has sent the working class beyond the ropes of security. Good cricket that was; an instinctive stroke-play that had nothing to do with trade union bodies or the State Labour Advisory Board.

Surrender In Oil

Consistency has never been a feature of India's oil policy, or whatever goes in its name. From a craze for autarky to abject surrender to foreign interests, it has swung from one extreme to another. No wonder all this has hardly taken the country anywhere. Imports which already account for two-thirds of the crude requirements, are likely to swell further in the coming years, and considering the rapid changes in the profile of international oil politics, they are bound to become both more expensive and scarce. The situation is steadily getting out of hand and New Delhi, not for the first time though, has overreacted to the gathering crisis. After spending the better part of the sixties over a fruitless debate on whether, and if so how far, to

allow foreign collaboration in exploration, the government has now woken up to the indispensability of seeking such assistance for the offshore areas. Evidently the confidence that our oil experts have been exuding about going it alone has been badly jolted and the authorities have been left with no option but to seek large-scale foreign collaboration. The weakness has now been exposed, and it remains to be seen how far New Delhi can resist the pressure for more and more concessions which is likely to be brought upon it.

Still it must be said to the credit of the Petroleum Ministry that even though the odds are so very much against it and its bargaining position is so very weak, the terms offered to foreign parties have been sought to be made as strict as possible. The point that New Delhi appears keen to put across to the investors from abroad is that they are welcome so long as they abide by the rules of the game. Closely modelled on the guidelines already in force in Indonesia, the new policy says that in case the exploration proves a flop, the entire cost will be borne by the foreign party. If on the other hand, oil is struck, the prospector's expenses would be treated as loan and repaid either in cash or through sale of part of the crude. The foreigners would not be allowed to hold any part of the equity capital nor can they enter into a joint venture with the government. Thirteen parties from countries like Japan, Canada, Britain and France have already shown interest in the offer. But the unfortunate part of it all is that the country has been forced to seek foreign assistance for the all-important and promising offshore areas, and however much the government might try to make the overseas parties keep to the ground rules, they would willy-nilly have the leverage. All the talk of teaching the foreign oil companies like Burmah-Shell and Esso how to behave will now become a matter of historical curiosity. And ritualistically the country will be told in so many

words that if foreign capitalists are being allowed to exploit us, it is only in the larger and long-term interests of us all.

Marking Papers

Authorities having to do with education in West Bengal seem well pleased with the results of the Calcutta University B.A. and B.Sc. Part One Examinations of last year. The large percentage of those who have failed is sought to be explained as a consequence of penalising all suspected cases of infringement of examination rules. This indicates that large numbers of candidates are believed to have used unfair means. Apparently, cases of examination offences which could not be prevented or punished by invigilators on the spot were left to the examiners to find out from internal evidence in the scripts and make allowance for awarding marks on them. Even apart from the fact that such evidence can often be misleading and heavily dependent on the individual examiner's hunch or penchant for detecting it, the very need for such devious methods to check malpractice draws attention to the hardly ideal conditions under which examinations are held. There is little sense in conniving at copying during the examinations and then setting the examiners to trace instances of such transgression between the lines of the answer scripts and award marks accordingly. The process is not only devious but dubious too, for the resulting assessment is apt to be highly distorted and unfair in respect of the candidates who resort to copying under pressure or temptation, and perhaps also unduly fair to those who copy intelligently and get away with it by covering up all traces of the misdemeanour. In many cases, even the best students have been known to copy under compulsion in the prevailing disorder at the examination centres. More often than not, a whole centre involving good and bad students

alike comes under stigma on the basis of reports from "flying invigilators" and all scripts from this centre are subjected to the same cheat-proof examination method. It is easy to see that when individual offenders cannot be caught in the act and brought to book instantly for fear of life or limb, all candidates at a centre under suspicion must receive the blanket charge and pay for the authorities' impotence to bring order during the examinations.

The university authorities do not seem to realise that failing 75% of the candidates reflects little credit on their own performance. If most of the unsuccessful candidates are deemed unfit for higher education, they ought not to have been admitted to the course in the first place, let alone to the final examinations later on. If, on the other hand, most of them resort to unfair means because they have not been properly taught during the preceding terms, the responsibility is that of the authorities rather than of the students themselves. It will not do to blame the teachers alone. Classes in most colleges are so enormous in size and teachers so few that individual attention to the progress of each student is just impossible. Long vacations and too frequent holidays interfere with the pursuit of studies during a term, which is further shortened by long periods of university examinations. Internal or periodical tests of shorter duration are either not held or given no importance in the final evaluation of a student. Something must be seriously wrong with the system which allows only a small minority of the students to get through at one go without having to do any class work or periodical tests held internally. It is this system of examination with lack of proper teaching and general decay of academic discipline which encourages large-scale malpractice. Without curing these inherent ills of the system the universities can hardly be discharging their appropriate functions by simply punishing the students for examination offences.

Of The Same Family

ALAIN BOUC

THE words exchanged in Peking between Madame Binh and the Chinese leaders seem to mark a turning point in Sino-Vietnamese relations. The strengthening alliance has been consecrated by the cordial reception reserved for her by Chairman Mao. Yet the partners of the alliance admit their differences.

As the joint communique issued on January 1, 1973 by the Chinese Government and the PRG states, "the Chinese and Vietnamese people are of the same family". Not "one family" but "of the same family" which also embraces the people of Indochina and North Korea. What is this family? Brothers of the same race? No, because Thailand does not have a place in it. A family with similar history? Perhaps, because the expression is vague, but above all a political and military family—"brothers in combat". Moscow still not being its member, the new Far Eastern "family" might well irritate the Kremlin.

At the beginning of the communiqué both the sides lavish praise on each other and exchange certificates of a good revolutionary. The Vietnamese people provide "a splendid example to the people of the world struggling against imperialism". The Chinese people "radiate their glorious revolutionary tradition" and "energetically encourage" the people of the world in their struggle for peace, independence and progress.

The two sides seem to have found a common language. On December 27 the New China News Agency affirmed that the DRV has "made the fullest use of the immense superiority of people's war." The NCNA hailed the North Vietnamese effort to maintain, even to raise the level, of cereal production under the bombs. The figures cited by the Agency, moreover, seem quasi-miraculous; the sale of cereals in the State is two, three, four times higher

than that of last year. The surplus of Hai Hong province is fourteen times larger than that of 1970! In the Vinh Linh region, according to NCNA, the local industrial production has registered 46 per cent increase over that of last year.

The accent on economic success underlines a political fact. According to Peking, people's war differs from traditional war in that it does not take into consideration "purely military point of view" but leads to production and resistance at the same time; as long as the people persist and rely on their own strength they can achieve victory, despite "the thousand difficulties" and "enormous sacrifices", referred to by the Chinese Foreign Minister, Chi Peng-fei.

China acclaimed the "great success obtained in construction in the liberated zones" of South Vietnam, where it seems to find a bit of its own history. The NCNA described the creation of "vast and solid liberated zones after twelve years of relentless fight". One finds here structures similar to those put up once by the Chinese communists: "a broad front, assemblage of population from different strata, religion and nationality"; mutual-aid teams, provisional or more than half of which are already permanent. The PRG distributes the land to refugees. In short South Vietnam is on the way to cooperatives and socialism. The demands of Saigon would not change anything in this course of development.

On December 21 Mr Brezhnev asserted that "the extinction of the flames of war" was one of the central tasks of the Soviet Government. The Chinese leaders, however, talk less about peace than victory. Moscow helps to make peace; China helps to win. The nuance is significant. China "will not hesitate to make the greatest national sacrifice"

to support the resistance. Once again China uses the term it uses when it finds itself menaced (the Laos invasion in the spring of 1971) or when it wants to warn Washington. She will support her friends till "total" victory. On November 29 Chi Peng-fei declared at a reception on the anniversary of Albanian independence: "We will give, as in the past, all support necessary to fight to the end and till the Americans sign the cease-fire agreement".

Madame Binh spoke of the "enormous, multiform and effective" Chinese aid to South Vietnam "without discontinuation" (joint communiqué) and of "grandiose, precious, multilateral and effective" support (speech on December 28). China, Madame Binh said, has not stopped aiding Vietnam. And this is an important point.

Behind the Bombing

The object of the resumption of American bombing on December 18 was officially to stop the arrival of massive aid sent by China. After the stoppage of bombing on October 23 the road and railway traffic between the two countries at the frontier trebled. Everyday a hundred wagons and several hundreds of trucks loaded with military hardware arrived in Vietnam to be funnelled down south. The American intelligence services have noticed hundreds of tanks and ground-to-air missiles entering Vietnam. A large part of this, of course, is of Soviet origin.

Moscow and Peking seem to have arrived at a compromise on the transshipment of Soviet aid. According to American intelligence reports, since September China has opened some of her ports in the south to Soviet ships. Despite the mining of the North Vietnamese coast there has continued some traffic through junks and sampans. According to the same source, some floating packets were being delivered ashore by the tide. Taiwanese publications have recently reported that China has sent afresh contingents of workers

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to help restore roads and bridges. They set the number of these workers at 20,000. These rumours, however, are not confirmed.

The Vietnam war cannot continue without Soviet aid. Yet it is becoming more and more "asianized". North Korea, which is a member of the "family" celebrated in the communiqué, imitates China in this domain. The trip of the Chinese Foreign Minister, Chi Peng-fei, to Pyongyang ended with the (December 22-25) signature of a communiqué in which both the parties commit themselves "with an increased determination" to provide aid and support to the "just struggle" of the three peoples of Indochina. Three months after the lightning visit of Kim II Sung to Peking Sino-Korean relations today are almost as close as those between Peking and Tirana. They are now officially based on "Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism" and not, as in the past, on the simple desire of fighting together the "Japanese militarism".

The North Korean leaders note in the Christmas communiqué that the Cultural Revolution has "reinforced the dictatorship of the proletariat". They, in turn, have received Chinese approval for the policy of rapprochement with South Korea and of autonomy within the socialist movement.

The great Asian family celebrated in Peking is united but not unanimous. Madame Binh has taken care to dot the i's. On December 28 she repeated that "the chief of the imperialist gang is American imperialism". Thus without any aggressiveness, but clearly, she has marked her distance from the Chinese who have officially declared on October 1, that "the Soviet Union is the craftiest enemy and thus most dangerous". Peking, however, has thought it opportune not to use this formula since the resumption of bombing. Thus China seems to be admitting that like others, it too was tricked by the American gestures. The list of friends of the PRG cited by Madame Binh does not tally either with the Chinese: Cuba takes an important

place after Laos, Cambodia and North Korea. The GDR, Chile and the Japanese Left have got special mention. It is however true that the socialist countries ("revisionists" for Peking) were only briefly mentioned in her speech of December 28.

In receiving Madame Binh who was coming from Moscow with solemn ceremony China hoped to do better than the Kremlin. And it has succeeded without any problem. Madame Binh showed herself very sensitive to the enthusiasm of the masses in Peking. In China she met the highest personalities, whereas in the Soviet Union she was received only by Mr Gromyko. The international prestige of the Vietnamese resistance makes the friendship of the PRG precious. It is clear that the choice Vietnamese leaders would have to make sooner or later will affect the international position of

the two countries. If Peking becomes the preferred ally, Moscow will be seen having measured its aid to Vietnam and failed in its internationalist duty. Then Prince Sihanouk will not be alone in declaring from the housetop that the Soviets do not sincerely support people's resistance. On the other hand if the Vietnamese persist in their middle course the USSR will continue to appear as an anti-imperialist power. But when one compares the reception given to Madame Binh by the two countries one wonders if the Soviet Union is fully conscious of the stakes involved or if it is already despairing about the new Asian revolutionary "family".

Mr Alain Bouc, the China specialist of *Le Monde*, has recently been to China. The article is reproduced by courtesy of *La Nouvelle Chine*, Paris.

A Document In Perspective

SARAD SENAPATI

A sympathizer of the Indian revolutionary struggles often wonders why a man who is called 'the respected leader and teacher' today is branded as a devoted 'left-adventurist' tomorrow. This feeling gets even stronger when one finds a letter¹ bearing the names of Kanu Sanyal and other well-known leaders criticising Charu Mazumdar and his line bitterly, when Sanyal², as late as February 1971, gave a warning against all who challenged the revolutionary authority of Mazumdar. Anyone who is familiar with the Chinese style of polemics can easily see that the alleged criticisms made by the Communist Party of China as they are 'reproduced' in the letter by Sanyal and others can, at best, be a description of the 'charges' in their own language but never even an 'excerpt' from the original document, if any. The CPC is never so careless as to write about India as 'this

country' in one point and then address the Indian comrades as 'you' in the next! Also one, even when he has all respect about the 'great glorious and correct' CPC, will hesitate to accept these 'suggestions' 'without reservation', as recommended by Sanyal and others. A revolutionary also has his 'whys and wherefore's', although for reasons entirely different from those of a reactionary. Even then the charges made by other dissidents in the discussed at their face value, because almost similar charges were made by other dissidents in the CP (ML) starting from Satya Narayan Sinha, Shiv Kumar Misra, a group in Punjab and Haryana, and Ashim Chatterjee up to the latest Birbhum thesis.

When Mazumdar gave the slogan 'China's Chairman is our Chairman, China's path our path' in February 1970, the first part of it did not

sound very pleasant to many sympathizers, and even to a few intellectual cadres of the party. Mazumdar and his comrades argued as follows: A communist revolutionary must be an internationalist, a communist movement must be international in nature. Our masses have been constantly fed with slogans of narrow national chauvinism, especially after the China war of 1962. So what grew up is, to use Chairman Mao's words, a "patriotism of the Japanese aggressors and of Hitler". It was absolutely necessary to defeat this idea and to inculcate the sense of internationalism. Also, when modern revisionism headed by Soviet social-imperialism is busy sabotaging revolutions from inside, the immense importance of the world centre of revolution, the CPC and its leader, Chairman Mao, had to be emphasized. This argument in favour of the slogan appeared acceptable to almost everyone at that time. How can one talk about hurting the national sentiment of the working class, which (national sentiment) is not even anti-imperialist in nature, and therefore a weed in the liberation movement that has to be wiped out? It is also worth mentioning that the East Pakistan Communist Party (ML), working under similar conditions, adopted this slogan given by Mazumdar.

The role of the national bourgeoisie in the united front of revolution is well known after the Chinese revolution. The CP (ML) never bunched the whole of the bourgeoisie as comprador but recognized the role of the small and middle bourgeoisie, who are anti-imperialist and support the new democratic revolution (see point nos. 29, 31 of the programme adopted at the first congress). But one practical problem remains. How do we judge whether a bourgeois really is in favour of the revolution and hence our ally or not? A situation favourable for this judgment is one in which the contradiction between imperialism and the people of a particular country is the principal one. For us, this is not

the case because the one between feudalism and the peasantry is the principal contradiction. Mazumdar has aptly pointed out³ that in a semi-colonial country like ours, the national bourgeoisie is tied up with the comprador bourgeoisie and is too weak to take a decision independently and execute it. Indeed a united front brings together the 'exploiter and the exploited' but only after the latter ceases to exploit the former. Unfortunately, no section of our bourgeoisie has showed this intention of theirs so as to be considered as a moderately reliable ally. One, of course, cannot deny the possibility of their joining the united front, especially when the revolutionary struggle is in a more advanced phase. But if one is too impatient in the search of such wavering ally, there is a possibility of ending up in the discovery of the same in another Yahya Khan and Co., as was the case with Ashim Chatterjee and his regional committee.

Working under the present Indian conditions, the ICP (ML) had, no doubt, certain reservations about open mass organizations (e.g. kisan sabhas and trade unions) and open mass movements. There was no doubt that mass organizations and mass movements must be there but the theory that these mass movements are absolutely necessary to prepare for armed struggle was repudiated. Mazumdar said that the whole history of our so-called communist parties is one of making these open movements which were mainly aimed at obtaining some concessions from the ruling class. Because of the open nature of these movements, the ruling classes and their armed forces could easily smash them whenever these proved to be uncomfortable for them. Moreover, under the present Indian conditions, these movements, instead of arousing the revolutionary hatred against the State machine, produce the illusion in the minds of the basic masses that some reforms in the socio-economic structure can give them some concessions. Thus, under the prevailing revolu-

tionary conditions in this country, the open mass movements become a deterrent to the armed struggle. Mazumdar and his followers, however, were never against those mass movements which support and serve the armed struggle. But they could be organized only after armed struggle has produced the ground for such movements by creating rudimentary people's power in some region. In "A few words on guerilla actions"⁴ Mazumdar describes how the armed struggle which started in the secret form, takes the shape of vast mass movements according to the dialectical laws of development.

Annihilation Policy

The line of annihilation of class enemies and of enemy's armed effectives has faced continuous attacks from different corners. Mazumdar said that the movement of annihilation of class enemies is a higher form of class struggle and the beginning of guerilla warfare. Such a proposition would have been accepted as a self-evident truth in countries where revolutions have been successful, but here it appeared as a grave danger to the 'sacred scriptures of Marxism-Leninism' and their sole defenders, the Marxist 'pundits'. At a time when the idea of a 'bloodless revolution' of the Khrushchevite model was gaining ground in our country, Mazumdar pointed out that the annihilation of class enemies intensifies the already existing class struggles in the rural areas, destroys the political, social, economic and military powers of the feudal lords, helps in establishing areas of embryonic red power and extending them. He also said that the most important yield of this movement is the 'new man' who is aroused in class-hatred, who does not fear death or any other sacrifice, who fights not for his own narrow interests but for a new society free of all exploitation and thus the man who will constitute the vanguard of soldiers of our People's Liberation Army.

The military aspect of the annihilation programme also deserves at-

tention. It is agreed that the feudal lords and the armed forces protecting their interests are the most hated enemies of the peasants. Chairman Mao points out:

A battle in which the enemy is routed is not basically decisive in a contest with a foe of great strength. A battle of annihilation, on the other hand, produces a great and immediate impact on the enemy. Injuring all of a man's ten fingers is not as effective as chopping off one, and routing ten enemy divisions is not as effective as annihilating one of them.⁵

If we follow the principle of attacking dispersed and isolated enemies first, the line of annihilation of class enemies follows as an immediate consequence. Thus one cannot see a Chinese wall separating the 'battle of annihilation' theory of Mao and the annihilation programme proposed by Mazumdar, because both of them produce the desired rapid demoralization and disintegration of the enemy ranks.

Lin Piao's line on the special importance of guerilla warfare in mobilizing the masses faces an attack in this document, the line of argument being very similar to that in Chatterjee's document.⁶ To say that Lin Piao's thesis is only a 'military theory' and has 'no relation with political and organizational question' is a vulgar interpretation of his article.⁷ Since revolutionary politics is the life-blood of all revolutionary activities including the military ones, without it one cannot think of arousing the masses for military actions and applying their whole strength against the enemy. Thus, Lin Piao could not have erected a huge baffle separating political work and military work. An attempt has been made to show that Lin's line was applicable only in a special condition and has no general significance in our struggle. But one has to remember that Lin had written these under a subheading 'Carry Out the Strategy and Tactics of People's War' where he pointed out how Chairman Mao had raised guerilla warfare to

the level of strategy. If we claim to follow the Chinese path, can we just define this as a mere tactical method used under special historic circumstances?

Mazumdar in his article on guerilla actions⁴ said that a time will come when a popular slogan amongst the guerillas will be "one who has not drenched his hand red with the blood of class enemies is no communist at all". It was obvious from the content that the slogan was meant for the guerilla annihilation squads and not for the party as a whole. Sanyal once quoted² a Chinese saying, "A good soldier is one whose bayonet is red in the blood of the enemy". If our guerillas are the vanguard fighters of our People's Liberation Army, then what prevents them from using a similar slogan?

The charge that the CP (ML) had no agrarian programme is entirely baseless. But it was never under such illusion that agrarian reforms can be made in areas in which enemy's political power exists. The futile attempts by many pseudo-left parties in the last few years have amply shown the hollowness of such a line of 'agrarian revolution'. Evidently, to have any agrarian revolution at all, one has to establish red political power, even in an embryonic form. This was pointed out by Mazumdar as early as February 1970. The Birbhum report⁸ of September 1971 describes the activities carried along this line by the revolutionary peasant committees.

The opinion of the CP (ML) led by Mazumdar about the relationship of mass struggles and mass organizations, and armed struggle has been pointed out earlier. Furthermore the party held that under present conditions armed struggle is the main form of struggle and it will give rise to all other auxiliary and complementary struggles of the people.

Seizure of Power

It is well known that the CPC supported the Naxalbari movement because it was not merely a struggle

for land reforms but also the beginning of the struggle for seizure of state power, and obviously the second aspect of the movement attracted their attention much more than the first. Sanyal also stressed this aspect after the movement. One really wonders how the stress suddenly goes on the secondary aspect, leaving aside the primary one.

The 10th and 11th points in the new document need a brief mention. The authority and prestige of Mazumdar was for his contribution to the line for Indian revolution and because of his devotion to this line. These could not have been 'created' by a bunch of flatterers, who flocked around him at times but 'grew and developed' in the course of the last five years after the Naxalbari movement. The words 'general orientation' and 'policy' as used in the 11th point are highly confusing. What does 'general orientation' mean, strategy or tactics? This line might remind one of Epimenedes, the ancient Cretan who once said that all Cretans were liars; probably he too had to use similar arguments for futile face-saving attempts.

Kanu Sanyal and others are very critical of the method followed inside the CP (ML) in resolving ideological problems. But a new doubt about their method in circulating the so-called 'Chinese suggestions' comes out. If these 'suggestions' had been sent in November 1970, what prevented them from circulating them earlier? Chatterjee, in his document⁹ of August 1971 probably mentions the same 'suggestions' from the fraternal party but it appears that till then he did not know them. He also accused the central leadership of 'concealing' the 'suggestions' and raised the same debates as those in this new document, of his own. When these contradictions in the party were exposed at that time, why did Sanyal and others remain silent for almost a year? Furthermore, one always expects that the Chinese suggestions, if any, should be circulated in the original form and not in the form of so-called 'excerpts'.

There is one marked difference between the new document by Sanyal and others and the one by Chatterjee and his Committee.⁹ While the latter took a purely military viewpoint about the Peoples' Liberation Army and red base areas, this one does not consider it to be a problem at all worth considering. The Magurjan incident and the formation of the PLA following that had always been matters of great significance in the party since early 1971. Because of the inner-party debate with Chatterjee and others quite a number of articles were written on the role of the PLA and the methodology for forming the red bases. All this stemmed from the fact that the PLA and the red bases are the two preconditions for the success of our revolution. How this fact escapes the attention of Sanyal and others will astonish many.

Mazumdar is no longer physically present among the Indian revolutionaries but his lines remain. To what extent these are correct or wrong will be shown by the struggles of the coming years. It also appears that some of his close comrades-in-arms of one time no longer see eye to eye with him and are even busy blaming him for everything. About the nature of class struggles Chairman Mao says, "The wind will not cease even if the trees want to rest". Are our revolutionaries prepared to give proper leadership to these revolutionary class struggles? The answer to this question will differentiate the genuine revolutionaries from the sham ones, whatever phraseology they may use.

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The Press In The Third World

KALYAN CHAUDHURI

THE editor of a Calcutta daily refused to publish a report on various malpractices like theft and smuggling by some high officials in Calcutta Port. It is not that he doubted the veracity of the report; the substance of it was incontrovertible. His refusal sprang from another, to him a more important consideration; he did not want to annoy the Port authorities. Since they were among his more regular advertisers, the news had to be sacrificed to prudence.

This is by no means an isolated case. Pressure works well with the Indian newspapers. The capitalists, monopolists and influence-peddlers have all to be listened to, as also the bureaucrats who prop them up, and novel schemes have to be devised to beguile the public every time pressure mounts to curb these elements.

In Indian newspapers not only is news slanted to suit the interests of these patrons, even downright falsehood is not considered too much to ensure the patronage of the powerful. This link goes on to the coverage of international events as well, because some of the "deshi" capitalists have, in their turn, their patrons sitting across the seas, and these latter have ensnared in their nets the economics of various Asian and African countries and have to meddle in their national and international affairs to keep their own commercial and political interests intact. The Indian press

plays readily to their tune in this orchestra as well. Perhaps this is the reason why coverage of Indochina in Indian newspapers is so scrappy and one-sided. Owned by big industrialists and controlled to a greater extent by their foreign backers, Indian newspapers are for this reason completely indifferent to the tremendous repression practised on the communist prisoners in Indonesia or unconcerned over the severe torture of thousands of young men who have been kept without trial in special jails in the country. Similar reports about the 1971 armed upsurge in Ceylon found little space in Indian newspapers and events in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos are reported as the powerful western news agencies, particularly American, want them reported. The Indian reader, always misinformed, depends for his information on the self-same press, and is relied upon to swallow whatever these newspapers choose to serve them. So this deep infiltration into the thinking of a vital section of the people in this part of the world continues unabated.

Throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America newspapers have had to depend for international news solely and for domestic news largely on foreign news agencies, mostly American and British. Attempts are being made now by the Western news agencies to Asianize their staff so that they can claim that their coverage of Asian

events is no longer "coloured". But a careful analysis of news supplied by these agencies shows that where the national interests of their own countries are concerned, they are totally partisan. During the Suez crisis, Reuter lamentably failed to supply news about the Anglo-Egyptian confrontation and most of the newspapers in India had to depend on the Associated Press of America and the United Press International. The Indian newspapers using their material were not sure whether they were getting the right kind of news because American involvement in West Asia and the oil interests there overshadowed other considerations, including objectivity. Similarly news on the Vietnam war used in Indian newspapers from American sources are far from the truth.

Conditions in Africa are worse. There, not only are the news agencies and television network completely dominated by the former colonial interests but the means of communication—cable facilities, radio channels, telephone and telegraph—are mostly controlled by them. Before the laying of the Trans-Pacific submarine cable in 1965, all news from Asia were edited at and distributed from London, Paris and New York. Not more than 10 per cent of news originating from Asia would come as feedback to Asian newspapers. Since the newly independent African countries do not have direct inter-African telephone and telegraph lines and since these are still controlled by their former rulers, communication with their neighbours has to be routed through Europe. Accra, Nairobi, Pretoria and Johannesburg are linked with London by radio circuit, North African capitals with Paris, Kinshasa (former Leopoldville) with Brussels.

Asian newspapers regularly subscribe to news services of American papers like the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times* and also share news with *The Times*, London. Thus, they are open to the influence of foreign lobbies, the news presented by them being linked with their "national interests". Naturally, the national in-

terest of the USA cannot be the national interest of Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia or India. In Afghanistan where the press is not so developed and is government-owned, the newspapers are under pressure from either the Soviet or the American lobby.

In Thailand, only 15 to 20 per cent of the total news coverage is devoted to Asian news. Some of the newspaper-men in Asia believe that Thai involvement in the Vietnam war might be the result of press propaganda made possible through one-sided news supplied by U.S. news agencies. An editor in Ceylon said in 1968 that his paper used to depend on an American news agency whose coverage was always one-sided and inadequate in respect of Asian events. When the Ceylonese delegate had spoken at the UN for one hour, the agency sent to his paper a report of only one sentence. Even a UNESCO report points out that "where important national considerations are involved world news agencies tend to reflect the attitudes of their own countries."

An analysis done at the UNESCO conference in Bangkok in 1969 revealed that main stories from foreign news agencies on Asia were sensational and dealt with riots rather than communal harmony, crop failure rather than better production, ministerial crises rather than smooth functioning of governments, violence, clashes and political disturbances rather than actual developments in the political sphere, particularly trends in the leftist movement. In the case of Asia and, for that matter, Africa and Latin America, news agencies based in Europe and America tended to dilate on angles which people living in the Third World have every right to consider motivated. During the Malaysia-Indonesia confrontation coverage by these news agencies was responsible for aggravating the hostility between the people of these two countries.

Conditions in South American countries are severe. Though they are not colonies as the Asian and African countries were, U.S. control over

their mass media is hundred per cent. Speaking about North American control over the press and other media of information in South American countries, Mr Hernan Uribe, a Chilean intellectual and Vice-President of the International Journalists Organisation, says: "Whereas in Africa and Asia imperialism has resorted to blocking out information, in Latin America it generally prefers the technique of using one-sided information, produced and directed from the heart of imperialism. Taking the figures put out by the international organisations; some 15 million copies of 1200 daily newspapers are printed in Latin America. In addition there are 2400 broadcasting stations and in 17 out of 34 countries and territories of the sub-continent, at least one television channel. All this technical apparatus forms part of the ideological machinery of the foreign rulers and their local allies, the governing classes. Since the triumph of its Revolution, Cuba is the single oasis in this geography alienated and alienating information to which Latin America is daily subjected."

Faithful Copy

The press of South American countries is a faithful copy of the corrupt U.S. press. For the North American press, the major source of information of most of the newspapers published from Asian, African and Latin America countries, the sentences written years ago by Upton Sinclair, in his famous work, *The Brass Check*, remain completely relevant: "The object of this book will not be understood if it is not clearly perceived that the perversion of the news and treachery to public opinion are not casual nor accidental occurrences. For 25 years—this is from the days of Mark Hanna—it has been something deliberately planned and carried out, a science and a technique. Highly touted experts dedicate their lives to doing it, sitting in the joint councils of the lords of industry and telling them how to present this or how to suppress that.

They create a public psychology, a force in whose claws the reader, who is the victim, is as defenseless as a moth in front of a beam of light. The purpose pursued is just one: that the salaried slaves of the United States continue believing in, and supporting the system that crushes their bones."

The industry of information—better to describe it as an industry of misinformation—in India, like all other underdeveloped countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, is in the hands of a few industrialists serving the interests of the ruling class and their foreign backers. Under their control there are press, television, radio and entertainment films—the means of circulating distorted "stories" or spreading one-sided and confused views. A close analysis of the Indian press and other mass media will show how the capitalist system calls on every modern resource of science and technology in order to confuse the people with its ideology and thus spread an unhealthy cultural influence and contribute to the maintenance of its system of exploitation.

About 8 million copies of daily newspapers in India contain information from the United Press International and the Associated Press and Reuter. The Indian news agencies like the Press Trust of India and the UNI work in close collaboration with them. If one considers that each copy of Indian newspaper is read by at least five people, there are 40 million readers who are daily subjected to an alienating vision of events. A study will show that on any selected day all the so-called major Indian newspapers take about 70 per cent of their news from the UPI, AP and Reuter. Their readers are thus obliged to see the world through this single window. The study will further prove that the majority of news published in Indian dailies refers to and proceeds from the United States. News relating to Asia, Africa and Latin America is in the clear minority. An analysis of a big English daily of Bombay during one week

showed 150 cables from agencies of capitalist countries—and of these, 120 of U.S. origin—and five news articles from socialist agencies.

As stated earlier, in India the press directly serves the interests of the capitalists. The news industry produces abundant profits with the advantage that the companies are selling, in addition, an ideological merchandise. The economic sustenance of this industry in this country today comes from advertising by the big capitalists rather than from circulation. Since the press does not escape the general tendency of capitalism toward concentration, the monopolies control the informational services even more directly, either as direct owner or through their advertising. In the simultaneous sale of products the capitalists produce and the ideological merchandise directed to the maintenance of the system, an important role is played by public relations men, whom a U.S. journalist, Irving Ross, characterises as "dealers in images." The most powerful publishing group in India, the *Times of India* of Bombay, which prints five dailies and several weeklies including magazines on science and film, controls 20 companies whose activities are never attacked by the press. Similarly the shareholders of *The Statesman*, Calcutta, control about 30 major industries in the country and the press in India is heavily bribed by advertisements to cover up their misdeeds.

The concentration of the press in the hands of the capitalists exists in India also where, in the last two decades, huge publishing companies have developed but, at the same time, there has been a decrease in the number of daily newspapers, and a notable increase in the influence of advertising—private or/and State—on the press. Before independence Calcutta had eight big dailies; today five. Whereas 20 years ago 50 per cent of the income of the press came from circulation, this has now been reduced to 15 per cent.

The U.S. domination in all kinds of communications in Asia, Africa

and Latin America is beyond one's imagination. Between 1939 and 1948 the number of movies exported from the United States grew by 90 per cent. In 1959 it was found that almost three-fourths of all the films exhibited in the capitalist world were produced in the United States. Hollywood asserted that it occupied 56 per cent of the screen-time of Europe, 64 per cent in South America, 70 per cent in Africa and 65 per cent in Asia. Anti-communism and propaganda about the U.S. way of life form the topic of these films. The Hollywood movies, which represent the U.S. as a country of moneyed persons who travel in shiny limousines and who live in modern mansions, which exalt gangsterism and assassination; the Coca-Cola posters that disfigure the highways from Caracas to Cairo, the stories, the pornographic magazines and other publications, the radio and the advertising projected on a massive scale—these are the weapons of imperialist culture. These are the combined means used in the attempt to demoralize resistance and to win partisans in the semi-colonies, thereby obtaining huge profits for important sectors of finance capital.

The visual image has an extraordinary publicity force since it supposedly reflects reality. This is why it is used on a grand scale by the imperialist communications media which manipulate it as an instrument of the ideological and political struggle.

Aided by its stooges, imperialist ideological penetration makes massive use of the comics, the short story that some one defines as "poison in little boxes." The comic, which has been converted into a monopoly, has extended its reach to most of the countries in the Third World. The comic plays indirectly the role of spokesman for the "American way of life" and further, hammers insistently on the brains of its readers (not only children) the great slogans of the most primitive right-wing politics, racism, militarism and anti-communism. For its purposes, the

comic works with an arsenal of indispensable psycho-pathological resources to create artificial needs in its readers and to provide an outlet for the frustrations of a generation to whom more productive pastimes are foreign. Born at the end of the last century, the comics have become progressively a powerful industry. By 1954 the circulation in the United States reached 90 million and the capital invested was no less than \$500 million. In India, most of the big newspapers subscribe to these U.S. comics. The most powerful newspaper industry of Bombay, the *Times of India*, has agreement with the King Features Syndicate, which sends its originals to be translated and printed in different Indian languages. Thus this "literary" carrier of anti-culture systematically receives

the approval of the Indian Magazine Classification Commission, subordinate of the Information Department. The Commission does not hesitate in granting its approval to comic series like "Wonder Woman" or "Batman personalities with lesbian and homosexual characteristics.

In the field of mass communications, the underdeveloped world is fully dependent on economically powerful nations. In this respect, one should realise that only six countries provide three quarters of the world demand for paper and printing machinery. To the extent that the Third World depends on the manufactured products of the great powers, it is also dependent on them in the production of news and, therefore, absolutely dependent in the technical field.

A CMPO Paper

BY A CORRESPONDENT

RECENTLY, a plan document on the development of Calcutta Metropolitan District and West Bengal as a whole (A memorandum on A Perspective Plan for Calcutta Metropolitan District and West Bengal—1971-89) was circulated by the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organisation.

It is an important document in the sense that for the first time it is admitted in the paper that without modernising agriculture it is not possible to revitalise any sector of the economy of West Bengal or to extend urban facilities to more and more people. By extending the arguments put forward in it one can also say that the problem of over-population is a myth assiduously propagated by the ruling classes and that the resources available in the country can not only sustain the people but also gradually improve their standard of living.

But, in spite of all these, the document is reduced to nothing more than a futile exercise on paper, as

it fails to answer two most fundamental questions—first the question of land relation and second the question of financing the huge capital expenditure that will be necessary. For the time being one can ignore the technological problems still to be fully solved as, after all, these can be overcome by research and experimentation.

However, the document deserves careful consideration as it shows the way the economy of the state, or rather the economy of the country as a whole, can be revived if the two most fundamental problems mentioned in the previous paragraph can be solved by completing the People's Democratic Revolution in the country.

The document identifies the rising unemployment to be the paramount problem before the State today and it puts the figure of unemployed at 4.5 million, assuming that the whole of the adult male population (in the age-group of 15 to 59 years) and 40 per cent of the adult females should

be in the labour force. The percentage of workers to total population is also consistently decreasing over the years—40.1% in 1921, 34.8% in 1951, 33.2% in 1961 and 28.4% in 1971.

Then it goes to outline the framework of a policy to solve the problem.

Agriculture is still the most important sector of the economy of West Bengal and will continue to be so for a considerable time to come. Besides, it is in a most backward stage of development and so it has a great potential in creating new employment opportunities if it is modernised. Finally, modernised agriculture is the most important precondition for further industrialisation. Naturally, modernisation of agriculture has been given foremost importance in the document. The line of thinking is as follows:—West Bengal has a net cultivated area of 136 lakh acres with a gross cultivated area of 184 lakh acres. Thus the average number of crops per acre is only $184 \div 136$ for 1.35. Average labour requirement for agriculture is about 70 man-days per acre, and so optimum employment from 184 lakh acres is about 128,80 lakh man-days. In other words 184 lakh acres give full employment to 52 lakh people, assuming 250 man-days of work per year to be full employment for a person. But according to the 1971 census 72 lakh are actually employed in agriculture in West Bengal. So, they are underemployed to the extent of $(72 \cdot 52 / 72) \times 100$ or about 28 per cent. Over and above this there is that part of the rural labour force which do not have any opportunity to be employed in any productive labour, i.e., they are fully unemployed people.

Now, if the gross cultivated area can be increased by about 100 lakh acres or in other words, on an average, about two crops are raised from an acre per year, the full employment equivalent of the new employment generation will be $100 \text{ lakh} \times 70 / 250$ or 28 lakhs. The same on the basis of 2.5 crops per year will be about 43 lakhs. It may thus be seen that two crops per year cannot

only eliminate the present level of underemployment in agriculture but also can create new employment opportunities. The latter can be further enhanced when more than two crops per year become possible. It should be mentioned here that there are about 3 lakh acres in West Bengal under perennial crops. Besides, there are areas where soil or climatic conditions will not permit more than one crop. But at the same time, if irrigation and drainage can be assured, and if it is supplemented by high-yielding short-duration seeds, fertilisers and insecticides it is even possible to raise three crops per year. Hence, an immediate target of two crops per year which may subsequently be raised to 2.5 crops, is certainly not unrealistic, provided the basic prerequisites, as enumerated above, are arranged.

New power generation required for modernisation of agriculture has been calculated to be in the order of 1450 megawatt. In addition to this, the household demand and the demand for dispersed servicing and industrial towns together constitute another 750 megawatt. Thus total new power generation requirement will be about 2200 megawatt.

The demand for engineering goods will be in the order of Rs 40,000 per average village. Thus, if 4000 villages are to be supplied with pumps and tubewells per year, the total annual demand for these goods only will be Rs 16 crores. This is apart from the demand that will arise due to electrification.

The paper calculates the fertiliser needs per acre to be, on an average, Rs 120. So, for a gross cultivated area of 284 lakh acres (i.e. on an average little more than 2 crops per acre) the annual fertiliser need will be Rs 340 crores. Similarly, the need for insecticides etc. can also be calculated. As the additional income per rupee of modern inputs is approximately Rs 3, provided other infrastructure, especially water management, is assured, it will not be uneconomic to spend the amount and the paper feels that it will not be

difficult also to advance loans for applying modern inputs.

According to the document, the cost for land improvement programme, mainly generation and distribution of power for pumps and sinking tubewells will be about Rs 1.40 lakh per village or about Rs 3900 per acre provided modernisation is universally practised and all land is improved. The paper feels that universal introduction of modern practices is possible by effecting some institutional changes like land reform (by enacting laws?, provision of cheap loans and proper marketing system eliminating speculative middlemen. The paper also feels that universal acceptance of modern practices will make the development cost per unit area much lower and it will also reduce the income disparity between the top and the bottom farmers.

Again, modernisation of agriculture will not only serve the problem of our rural areas, but by providing adequate food and raw materials and by offering a huge home market for industrial goods it will also act as a development booster for manufacturing industries, the life-line of urban economy.

As has been said earlier modernised agriculture will create huge demands for engineering goods as well as for fertilisers, insecticides etc. Naturally, new investments have to be made for creating new productive capacity in these lines. Wherever possible, diversification or change in the production of existing industries can be made for creating additional productive capacity.

The greater purchasing power in the hands of the rural population will also create a demand for consumer goods and so the industries producing these goods will have a stable home market and will be saved from their dependence on a fluctuating foreign market.

On the other hand vast developed rural areas have to be girdled by a set of existing and new growth centres of service and industries which will absorb the gradually in-

creasing urban population. Thus the pressure of in-migration in the metropolitan areas will be reduced, making it possible to gradually improve the infrastructural facilities in the metropolitan areas. It is needless to say that the same strategy can be and must be followed for the development of the whole country as it is not possible to make a real development in a small portion of the country neglecting other parts.

How To Do It?

All these are fine indeed. But the question remains—how to implement it. It should have been clear by now that the starting point of agricultural modernisation is not introducing modern technology in agriculture. The experience of the last seven or eight years proves beyond doubt that under the existing socio-economic conditions, not a very significant portion of the peasantry can resort to modern methods of cultivation. That is why, despite the fanfare about the green revolution, not more than the top ten per cent of the kulaks have taken to modern methods of cultivation. Besides, wherever modern methods have been practised to a considerable extent, as in the north-western States like Punjab and Haryana, new socio-economic problems have arisen, increasing the disparity of income between the kulaks who have followed modern methods and those lower peasants, bargadars and landless labourers who could not reap the benefit of modern technology simply because of their lack of sufficient land and capital. The second category of peasants have neither the incentive nor the means to follow capital-incentive modern practices.

The starting point of any real green revolution is actually land reform. Past experience also points out that it cannot be done by simply enacting laws. At present, there is no dearth of relevant laws, but they are not enforced. And they cannot be enforced unless the state power is captured by a joint front of all the

oppressed classes after smashing the existing state machinery.

Again, the method of financing the huge capital investments that will be necessary for schemes as outlined in the paper, has not been analysed at all. To avoid piecemeal implementation, which frustrates the very objective of the plan, there is only one method and that is to find out and utilise the huge black and white money amassed by a handful of Tatas and Birlas and which is not being used for the benefit of the people.

It is understandable that a planning document prepared by the present government will not be formulated for the real benefit of the people. Actually, the only purpose of preparing this document is to extract personal favours from the ruling clique by showing them a method for successfully hoodwinking the people. It is also possible that quite a sizable amount of public money will be wasted in the name of taking a bold and novel step for the all-round economic and social development of West Bengal but really to help the top kulaks, the top capitalists and other such sharks.

Tea And Sympathy

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

NATUN *Diner Alo* (directed by Ajit Ganguly) could easily have been retitled "Some easy lessons in catering technology" and the censors should have certified the film as "predominantly educational", because half of the film is practically devoted to depicting the various stages of the restaurant business which the unemployed hero and his friend have set up and we are let into some instructive episodes detailing many tricks of the trade. The hero, though not at all lucky in getting a job, is really fortunate (as all our screen-heroes are) in having an abundance of inspiration from his fiancée who occasionally treats us with a sermon or

two on the value of honest labour or the virtues of an independent existence and what have you. There is also a tea-jerking family drama with three brothers. The first brother is a well-meaning but a rather weak person, while his wife compensates for his shortcoming by an overdose of generous charities. The second brother and his wife, a scheming pair, are the villains of the piece. The youngest one is the budding hotelier who has launched his enterprise to support an orphaned cousin who has come to stay with the family, against much opposition from the second brother. The hero weaves his dreams around his small tea-shop and we have the glimpses of his rosy future whenever he agrees to give a musical rendering of his ambitions. The second brother, however, does not take kindly to the hero's efforts and he spares no pains to thwart the venture of his brother, going even to the extent of wrecking

the marriage of the cousin who is so dear to the hero's heart. The hero sees red and nearly strangles the second brother who is finally kept alive to go through subsequent remorse. This he does and there is an instant change of heart. He keeps over the hero's shoulder, promising to make up for all his ill-deeds. Everything turns out well at the end and we have the classic finale of such films, the last shot of the family album, showing all the characters grouped together with syrupy smile flashing on their faces. The director, has tried to cash in on an alchemy of sloppy sentiments and superficial elements of social realities, punctuated with sobs and whimpers and a bundle of predictable situations and coincidences. Only discernible gap in his achievement is perhaps his failure to provide a spouse for poor Anupkumar (while others have got their girls) who is left content with catering to the wedding guests.

Book Review

The American Revolution

HITEN GHOSH

BELIEVE it or not, the new American revolution has begun. For so the author of this book,* Jean-Francois Revel contends in his elaborate rehash of old-world liberalism, now defunct in its original home and birthplace, but which, nevertheless, in its new avatar on the other side of the Atlantic, looks like conquering the world and transforming the history of mankind. This refurbished philosophy of freedom, equality and internationalism can only come out of America, and radiate through its technological sup-

remacy until the rest of the world shines in its reflected glory or shares in the generous diffusion of its benefits. This is "the only revolution that involves radical, moral, and practical opposition to the spirit of nationalism... that, to that opposition, joins culture, economic and technological power, and a total affirmation of liberty for all in place of archaic prohibitions... offers the only possible escape for mankind today." (p. 242).

Such a revolution, the author tells us, can take place only in the United States—and will. It has already begun. It may, of course, fail there, as the first world revolution of the modern era—the Liberal Revolution of the eighteenth century—failed in all but a few areas of Western Europe

* Without Marx or Jesus: The New American Revolution. By Jean Francois Revel. Translated by J. F. Bernard. Allied Publishers, India. Price Rs. 25.00.

and the United States. But the new revolution must first succeed in America before it spreads to the rest of the world, even to the democratic West. For the countries of Western Europe where liberalism had its heyday have already lost their momentum for any dynamic transformation of reality and hence cling to obsolete values and modes of being. Weighed down by a morbid sense of guilt, the civilization of Western Europe looks wistfully and desperately to the past. It shows all the symptoms of decadence and the spirit of despair that accompanied all decadent phases of history.

America offers the only hope of survival through revolution. M. Revel has a clear idea of what the future should be like: a world government with no respect for absolute national sovereignty, complete disarmament, prohibition of all wars, banning of scientific research for destructive purposes, preservation of natural resources and ecological well-being, demographic control, economic growth, scientific and technological development, cultural revolution, individual liberty, sexual freedom, economic and political equality etc., etc. America alone possesses the political and economic preconditions for initiating such radical transformation of the world. In this figment of M. Revel's revolutionary imagination the Ariel of economics or technology if you will, will be released from the evil spell of politics and made to create a paradise on earth. Politics will be reduced to an innocuous ceremony of routine observances presided over by the Nixons and Brezhnev-Kosygin of the future. The life of the majority, in such a utopia, will be lived free from interference by these useless panjandrums, in communes and on campuses in a polyglot, polyracial, and polysexual promiscuity—an eternal spring of the eternal undergraduate's dream.

But M. Revel does not allow himself to raise the question of who will perform the residual work still necessary in this society, for making

and running machinery, raising food or even children, not to speak of organising and pursuing research and cultural activities. Even writing poetry involves training and hard and intense work far removed from the world of pot and Krishna cult. And even if we could get machines to do chores for us, how to get rid of education and culture in the traditional sense with its rigour and restraint on free impulse? In any event, we should continue to need real human passion to think, read, write, discover, invent, copulate and breed. None of these things can be in the freedom of the hippies whom M. Revel seems to project as the prototype for the emancipated man of the future. And without one of these activities, the technological base of the paradise cannot last for a day. If the number of drop-outs is large enough to count for anything the material basis caves in, bringing down the edifice of plenty; if their number is insignificant the repressive order persists for the majority. Rousseau had better sense when he condemned all benefits of civilization and predicated human freedom on a total rejection of culture which drew the well known quip from Voltaire. M. Revel is a kind of less consistent Rousseau trying to get around Voltaire's objection by way of Robert Owen. But the paradox remains.

'Aborted Revolt'

The most striking thing about M. Revel's book is that he believes that American capitalism, American democracy, even American imperialism can lead straight to the heart of his utopia—through piecemeal reform and social engineering, for that is the meaning of his revolution. Apparently, he thinks nothing of such clinching remark as Mary McCarthy makes in her profoundly intelligent Afterwords to the book: "There still is such a thing as capitalism." M. Revel calls the new American Revolution a second revolution finalizing the achievements initiated by the first—the liberal re-

volution of the eighteenth century. As regards the achievements of this first revolution I can do no better than quote from Mary McCarthy's Afterwords: "One wonders... whether... that protracted spasm was not an aborted revolt, since many of its objectives have failed to this day to be realized, *not only on a world wide basis but in the countries where the whole thing started*; the Rights of Man remain in large part on paper, like the Soviet Constitution, and equality is still a dream." (Italics added).

The Industrial Revolution has been the only successful revolution up to now, as Mary McCarthy says in her witty comment on M. Revel's definition of revolution. But in none of the countries where this revolution has been carried through, have the social and political ideals of M. Revel's first revolution been realized. So far as parts of Western Europe, the Soviet Union and her East European neighbours are concerned, he recognizes this failure. Socialism, if it means a free and equal society, was foredoomed in the Soviet Union and the East European countries since the first revolution (the liberal democratic revolution) had not taken place in those parts of the world. By the same token the Third World countries can have no socialist revolution, but only nationalist-totalitarian dictatorships with a state monopoly in industrial growth and management. Thus M. Revel lashes out at those European radicals who fall for Mao or Guevara hook, line and sinker, and look to the Third World for the first impulse of revolution.

But what about the West European democracies where the first world resolution of the modern era has succeeded by M. Revel's account? Why does he write them off as the propagator of his new revolution? The conservative France is abominably Gaullist, while the radicals of various hues are unable to assume or exercise power to the end contemplated in M. Revel's revolutionary blue-print. The non-parliamentary

rians are fanatical dreamers swearing by Mao, Marcuse and Guevara. West Germany, too, is caught in a similar political futility, Willy Brandt's very successful manoeuvres notwithstanding. But then M. Revel's book was written before these 'revolutionary' developments in European politics, for De Gaulle is consistently blamed for blocking Britain's entry into the Common Market. The author could not have foreseen Pompidou's breakthrough in the way of European unity so dear to his heart. But although Britain offers a classic example of the success of M. Revel's first revolution in that reformed capitalism is entrenched there with a two-party parliamentary system, he does not see his new revolution taking place in that country. Perhaps Britain disqualifies for her imperialist past though at present she is the most likely of the old imperialist powers to benefit from the anti-imperialist revolution of M. Revel's imagination. Lest the European liberals and radicals retort with the charge of colonial exploitation against American capitalism, M. Revel puts forward the brazen excuse that America has inherited her imperialism together with her industrial revolution and liberal democracy from her European ancestors. But the fact is that America has long suppressed the liberal tradition, indeed has never allowed it to grow on her soil, and pursued capitalism, technology and imperialism with a reckless pride and self-assertion such as Europe has never seen.

Against this charge, M. Revel's line of defence is that America has had a more peaceful development than Europe. It has seen no devastating wars, aborted revolutions, concentration camps, gas chambers, mass killing and mass deportation. It is not likely that M. Revel does not know the specific historical, geopolitical, and economic grounds responsible for this 'peaceful' career of American capitalism. But has he taken account of the depredations involved in the very act of European settlement in a land of non-white

population and its far-reaching consequences over the centuries? It is the bloody history of the colonists that has made America the most savage of all imperialist powers.

Caliban

Even so M. Revel pins his hope of the new revolution on this ugly Caliban of European civilization. He sees the signs of change within the very framework of American society. He admires this society for its technological and cultural [sic] achievements. Only certain aspects of its home policy such as racism in the southern States and its senseless aggression in Vietnam and Cambodia are slowing down the peace of radical transformation which this society is imperceptibly undergoing. But even here, America warrants more optimism than Europe. The power of student and academic dissent, the movement for the Black-White integration led by the late Martin Luther King, anti-pollution resolutions, large-scale nonconformism exemplified in the hippies and drug-addicts—all these phenomena are making themselves felt in the gradual modification of the negative aspects of American society. The European radicals have not achieved as much. But, as Mary McCarthy sharply reminds M. Revel, though the protest movement made Johnson go, it has not ended the Vietnam war. And, we may add, Nixon has not only survived his horror bombing of Vietnam but has actually been vindicated by the American public once he ensured that American boys would not get killed in any significant numbers: he has substituted electronic warfare. The anti-draft and desertion movement have, though unintentionally, led to that. There you are, M. Revel, with your blessings on American technology!

But what prompts M. Revel to castigate all forms of European radicalism at the same time that he welcomes sit-ins and protest rallies at Berkeley and other American universities? Even Black Power and Black Panther cannot unnerve him—

they are all part of American dissent, a sure sign of her capacity for self-renewal. The reason for these contradictory movements can constitute no real threat to the established order, while European radicalism can easily lead to chaos and breakdown of the order. American capitalism can reform its way to utopia but European capitalism can be blown up by internal revolution. So it is the fear of communism once again. And M. Revel's reaction to this menace is cultural. He thinks that Western Europe, though achieving economic progress, is prevented from enjoying an American-type revolution by its cultural traditionalism. America is achieving a cultural breakthrough in the form of 'pop'—not only in art and literature, but in dress, drug, hair-do and coition. European culture is still dominated by a rigour and restraint on free impulse derived from its past. M. Revel evinces a deep antipathy towards traditional European values as embodied in the assumptions and prerequisites of education, culture, family and social life. Not for nothing does he aim some of his tirades against Marx and Marcuse, for both have deep commitment to these values in their fundamental essence.

Indeed M. Revel's aversion to modern European civilization with its despair, anguish and sense of absurdity is due to the revolutionary possibility inherent in these attitudes. He fears revolution and looks to America for finding a reformist solution to the crisis. Europe is detestable, for it has given birth not only to capitalism, industry and liberal democracy, but also to the idea of communism and revolution. The basic ethical ideals of Christianity, liberal humanism, rationality and spirit of inquiry are up against the modern world bent on self-destruction. Revolution and communism are a choice in favour of these values and ideals away from this disaster threatening human civilization. The sense of absurdity results from an evasion of this choice. Both the wistful nostalgia for the past and

utopian day-dreaming for the future are by-products of this uncertainty. But M. Revel turns his back on this European phenomenon and seeks refuge in his fantasy about American capitalism redeeming the world. If as Mary McCarthy remarks in her Afterword, he is right that revolution cannot take place except in the United States, then "for an American that is too discouraging a vista". And for the world too.

Which Way Out ?

I. K. SHUKLA

REF. Mr Ramadhar's article, December 30 issue. There are three constraints inhibiting my full-fledged commentary or reply: 1. The case involving my arrest is sub judice. 2. Mostly I agree with him as far as ideals are concerned. 3. Usually, I loathe replying in such matters.

Invocation of central authority may not be 'a very happy solution'. But it is a solution all right. And given the circumstances, indispensable, imperative. To which among our horde of national problems have we had 'a very happy solution'? In 1969 when Gujarat was aflame with communal riots it was the central authority which was invoked to arrest the massacre of Muslims there, which did intervene, effectively. I plead guilty to have done so in a newspaper article then. When nearly the whole of the Gujarat Press and the two AIR stations were speaking lies and concealing facts, I did commit the crime of asking the Union Government to speedily stop the butchery of the innocents. I did not wait for academic pursuit of scriptures to deliver the goods. I recall having talked to heads of university departments and found them so reactionary, so blind to the injustice and uselessness of it all. And these heads had graduated to progressivism through Gandhism! The case of Manipur is far more woe-begone.

While it is true that 'the basic

problem of poverty breeds all kinds of parochial and narrow tendencies', it is not very precisely true in the case of Manipur which does not have any beggars, and has never known poverty as it is in East UP, Bihar, Orissa, parts of Assam and Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.

Mr Ramadhar recommends invoking 'revolution' as a solution to secessionist tendencies. I invite him to visit here and find out what revolution signifies locally. The meaning given to it by local patriots is so abysmally degrading that I would desist from commenting upon it. Again, the CID and police have already charged me as 'an agent of Naxalites, his confederates within and without Manipur'. What the police or CID understand by Naxalism or whom they call a Naxalite is altogether another matter.

I have no illusions about the parliamentary philistinism or the reactionary character of the State in India. But when 'reactionary wares' are peddled in the 'garb of radicalism' I will not keep silent, nor hedge cowardice with dialectics. Morals come first. A journalist friend of mine who was to have sued a State government for violation of freedom of the press, has withdrawn from the venture as a 'true radical'. This radicalism is not my cup of tea. One radical of this variety is too many. And, the dwarfish intelligentsia here which was cowed down by threats from the State, too, can justify as radical its spinelessness when it was only careerist and cowardly, in having refused to bail me out. Thanks to total strangers, not of the 'intellectual' class, I am out on bail. What a handle we are giving to reactionaries in packaged slogans and cant. Assam, I had hoped, would prove an eye-opener. It is a pity, it did not. There is a certain radicalism rampant in the States now, on the bandwagon of which leftists, rightists and centrists all are perched in happy company. Mulki-ism claims today an ever-increasing number of votaries in certain States. Will Mr Ramadhar believe that when I expressed my

distress at the events in Assam just two weeks ago to the head of the Assamese Department, in one of the Assam universities, the academician startled me by finding everything wrong with the Bengalis, thus indirectly justifying the massacre or minimising the grimness? I don't hold brief for the Bengali angularities or the so-called superiority complex. But I had hoped for a more enlightened kind of response and discussion from the head of a university department.

I hate the nationally mounted imposture, but would not countenance any immorality and crime or corruption under any pretext or alibi. I can't condone communalism, chauvinism, atavism, manifested currently in myriad ways. I do not thrill to the spectacle of politically conscious people being butchered by the police or adversariés; and smugglers, adulterators, criminal bureaucrats, anti-social legislators having a happy time. Neither the State has hanged one of these nor the people. The contractor using the sub-standard material in the Mysore dam which burst recently killing a dozen people, and the officials responsible for it, should have been killed, or given life-terms in jail. But... Permissiveness and lack of social concern and righteous indignation are graver threats to the national life than anything else. Evasion is becoming the national lifestyle. A slogan a day will not keep the wolf away all our lives. The pile of crime and corruption in the quarter century of our free country will prove a goldmine for researchers in sociology. Let us not confuse laxity with liberalism. Let us not encourage the politics of scapegoats and craven appeasement. Our national life is already sold out to drift and degeneracy. Traitors and tyrants in power need not be helped to undo the heritage and the future of this country.

We should not talk in the air. This habit made a mess of our leftist movement. In Nehru's time too within the Congress there was a Socialist Party. Now there is a So-

cialist Forum or Congress Forum for Socialist Action, a larger denomination than that of the parent body. That is its only satisfaction. The design is divine, besides being respectable. The communists satisfied themselves with singing the tune called by their counterparts abroad. Learned theses and debates, unmindful of the realities nearer home and in the ambience, have led us not a whit closer to revolution. Let there be some courage and candour, some non-conformism. Opportunism can be decked as radicalism. This has happened in India so frequently. I have seen Indian fanatics of Jamaat-e-Islami quoting Marx, suddenly turning leftist during the Bangladesh struggle. I find regional fanatics too doing the same.

Lastly, while I never gave a certificate of good morals or manners to the Central Government, nor would I pick bones with Mr Ramadhar on the fundamentals and values as detailed by him, nor would I doubt his friendly motives, I will quote for his benefit a line from Nazrul Islam, appealing to him to beware of it, a much more insidious and fashionable game today than many of us have cared to concede: 'Shaitān-o aaj devatar nāmē korichhe Nāndi-pāth. Even Satan is reciting Nandi today in the name of god.

Letters

Tendulkar's Play

So the young heroine insists on her right to incest, fornication and infanticide and finds herself persecuted by the crude bigotry of the taboo-bound herd. A lone rebel both terrified by and defying such sexual obscurantism. The situation, the psychology of the heroine and the crude attempt at the "outsider" theme made me dismiss the play as of no consequence. It has something unreal and shoddy about it. It is just as well that the Bengali production of the play did not make a splash. In my review I stated by the

way, the troupe which brought such stuff on the Bengali stage in its search for novelty because of its progressive pretentiousness.

In Bengal, the progressive theatre must try to place the individual's predicament in a distinct socio-economic and historical context. We are more concerned with the "infanticide" which our society causes through starvation, malnutrition, squalor and disease. Not the right to incest or adultery but opportunities for happiness in love, which wilts in poverty but sometime blooms in spite of it, should engage our artists and writers. Let the above "right" remain the prerogative of the idle rich who can buy a woman's flesh with their wealth and influence of whatever kind. If someone goes for these sexual privileges and is foiled by the vested Establishment, he or she may pose as an outsider, a victim, with his or her solitude, fright and rebellion lending to the Indian theatre a new advanced look. But to me all this seems neither Indian nor advanced in the sense I apply these terms.

H. G.

Mr Hiten Ghosh's jaundiced review of Vijay Tendulkar's Marathi play *Shantata! Court Charu Ahe!* (December 9, 1972) left one with a bad taste in the mouth.

He says that "the story is about the undoing of a young woman by a married professor", when it is obvious to the merest of novices that while this is indeed a story of the undoing of a young woman, the "undoing" is done by the Establishment; an Establishment consisting of married professors, married judges and their wives, unmarried actors, respectable lawyers and assorted pillars of society, an Establishment quick to pass malicious judgment, especially on juicy subjects like adultery and illicit motherhood. The school-teacher, whom Mr Ghosh seems to dismiss with a pedantic remark or two, is the brunt of the Establishment's sadistic acts of tor-

ture and its blind and binding morals, even as its members mouth hypocritical words of "social significance". Nowhere in Mr Ghosh's review do we see a word about this, the central plot of the play.

Did Mr Ghosh see the same play that I thought I saw in Bangalore? He says, "By way of self-defence, she (the school teacher) reveals with withering scorn that everybody lusted after her lovely flesh since she burst into youth". In Bangalore, this self-same school-teacher reveals (by way of self-defence) that it is true that she fell in love with her maternal uncle at the age of fifteen and when her relatives (including the uncle) ostracized her, she did attempt suicide. And she hardly says this with "withering scorn" or any other kind of scorn.

Mr Ghosh then goes on to say that the fact that the school-teacher "succumbed to the adulterous desire of a man", is proof of her weak spirit and covert nymphomania. In the play as I saw and understood it, the school-teacher falls in love with the married professor, Damle, believing that in him she will find

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security and the sanctified joy that her own feelings for him seem to warrant. She does not "succumb", for there is nothing to succumb to. She is in love—spiritually and bodily, only to find later that the professor lives for nothing but her bodily favours. But all this is another story—perhaps another play. In Mr Ghosh's play, at any rate, this part of the script seems to be non-existent.

Indeed the only tenable point that Mr Ghosh makes in his piece is that there was a "needless elaboration of form". But this is hardly reason enough for misunderstanding, misinterpreting and even begrudging the correct reproduction of the script. The school-teacher, for example, is tried on a charge of infanticide, not, as Mr Ghosh says, suicide. Nor does what he calls 'needless elaboration of form' give Mr Ghosh the prerogative of passing by another important aspect of the play—its humourous lines. Even if it was incontrovertibly "decadent", as Mr Ghosh declares, the humour in the play deserved his critical consideration (not necessarily acclaim). In ignoring the satire, he widens the chasm between reader and reality, besides showing up his critical incompetence and/or indifference. "Cleverness", "preoccupation with the novelties of modern theatre in its externals' may, as Mr Ghosh says, illustrate "decadence" if carried to pointless excess. But Mr Ghosh's preoccupation, if not cleverness, with his job of crying "Wolf!", has divorced him from the realities of this play and what it really evoked in its audience across India.

G. DWARAKANATH
Bangalore

Neel-Darpan

So, now it is the turn of Dinabandhu Mitra at the hands of Mr Guha! (*Frontier*, December 2 and 9).

Conveniently omitting (or is he unaware of them?) a number of patriotic poems on the theme of In-

dian independence that Dinabandhu wrote, Mr Guha has quoted from his "Loyalty Lotus" written on the occasion of the Prince of Wales' visit in 1869. A year earlier, thanks to the pressure of public opinion in England mainly worked up by the English translation of his *Neel-darpan* the obnoxious Act XI (Indigo Contracts Act) had been repealed. Could Dinabandhu not afford to present a 'Loyalty Lotus' to the British Prince? Obviously, it was high tact on his part. In fact, Mr Guha might not know it, the British rulers of India never took the outward avowal of loyalty by the 19th century educated Bengalis at its face value but suspected it to be only lip-deep. And in reality it was so. *Neel-darpan* was a sort of loaded literary missile, or, to use a term in cricket parlance, a literary 'googly' that tricked the British in India into fighting amongst themselves. Neither the padres nor the civilians, who took so much pains in having the drama translated into English and distributed in England, did really want the repeal of Act XI but only to put a sort of curb on the greedy and rampaging indigo planters so that they could go on preaching the gospel with ease and their young empire was not burnt out untimely by the fire of frequent mutinies and rebellions. But the thrust of *Neel-darpan* went beyond, the sugar-coat of praise of Queen Victoria (for which only the shortsighted would dub its author pro-British or anti-national) notwithstanding. After the repeal of Act XI (1868) and when the depredations by indigo planters had ceased the *Neel-darpan* villains, Messrs Wood and Rogue, were, so to say, transformed overnight into symbols of British exploitation and its frequent representation on the stage since 1872, the year Bengali public theatre was born with the staging of *Neel-darpan*, had continued to whip up so much anti-British feeling that the British authorities in Bengal took alarm and banned the staging of the drama in 1908. Even a 60-year-long, forced oblivion

could not diminish *Neel-darpan's* appeal as an eternal present against exploitation whenever and wherever it exists.

Dinabandhu's patriotism was not of the emotional type that fritters itself away in rash exuberance with or without achieving its objective. It was astute and practically oriented for maximum effect. Would his literary projectile have gone its round without the tactical praise for good points in the British raj that it contained? By the way, does it take away from one's patriotism if one genuinely praises the good points in the British rule over India or condemns the debauchery and autocratic misrule of Nawab Sirajuddowlah or the slaughter of innocent British women and children by the rebellious Indian sepoys led by Tantia Topi? Could we have become a united Indian nation or the largest bastion of democracy based on the British pattern of the rule of law had Siraj or Topi won their battles against the British that they had lost a hundred years apart? One wonders, but the British ideal of democracy was certainly more progressive than the rules of Siraj, Bahadur Shah or any that Topi could have established.

APARNITA MITRA (Miss)
Calcutta

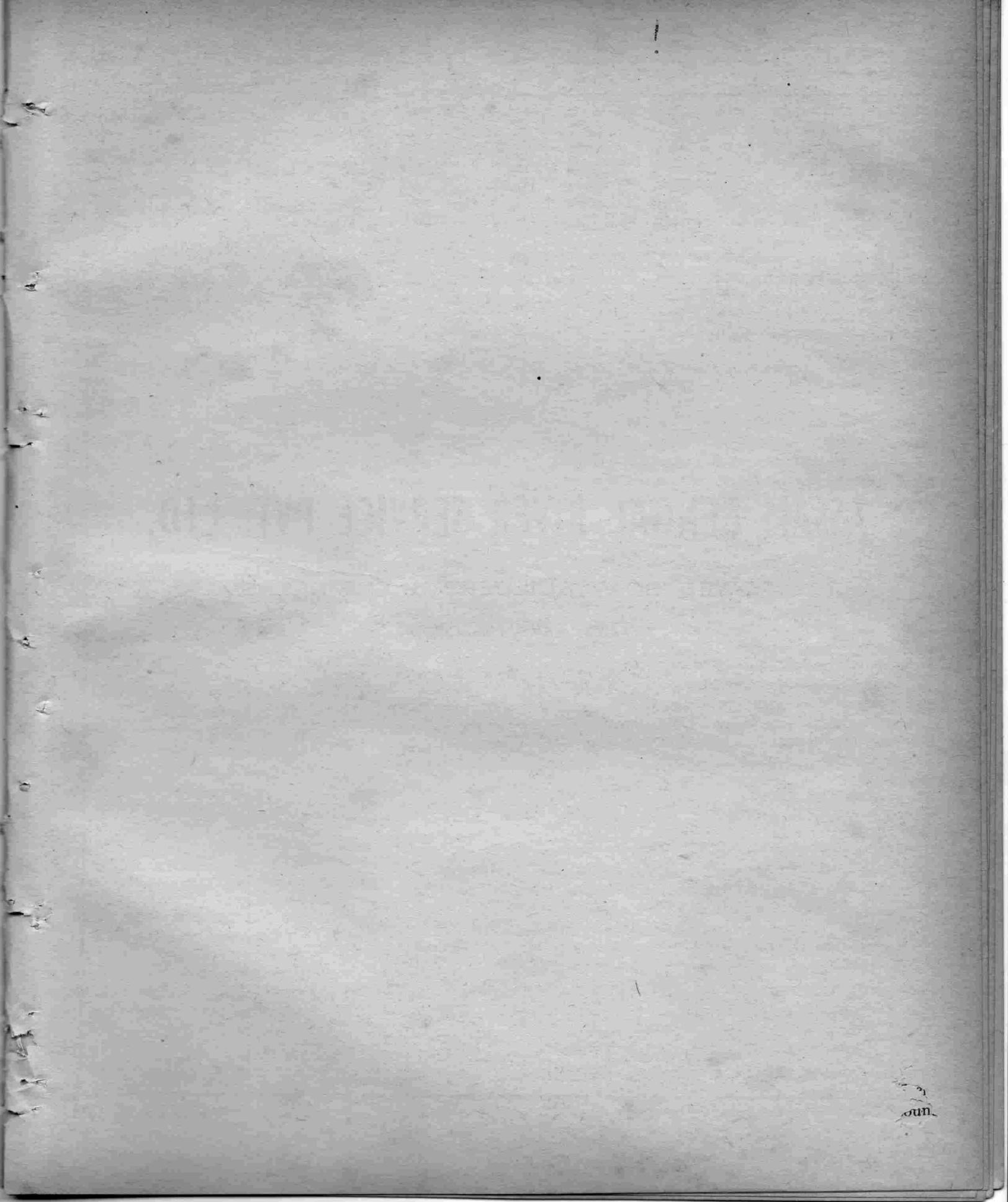
Peking And CPI (ML)

I feel that Kanu Sanyal and five other CPI (ML) leaders are unnecessarily allowing correspondence on the alleged document attributed to them. As Mr Mallikarjuna Rao from Delhi says that the leaders are allowed to make public statement, they could have made a statement that the document circulated among the cadre is authentic and thus avoid confusion prevailing now in the party.

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