

# frontier

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## CHAVAN'S BUDGET

**T**HE great socialist budgets Mr Chavan is churning out year after year are becoming a big bore. They are long on what the common man should do but short on what he should expect. He should be prepared, for instance, for another bout of inflation which has already reached the breaking point. But he would be entirely mistaken to believe that there would be better welfare programmes for the masses, for which only Rs 125 crores (out of a total revenue expenditure of Rs 4752 crores or about 2.8%) has been provided, or that the employment situation would improve. On the other hand the more affluent sections seem to have everything to gain and little to lose. The prices of certain luxury goods are likely to go up because of additional imposts, but to equate it with socialism is mischievous sophistry. If past experience is any guide, the brunt of additional taxation always invariably comes to be borne by the poor and middle income classes, irrespective of the items on which the levies are imposed. The people who are the most defenceless, who are already at the end of the tether, must shed their sweat for the juggernaut of Indian socialism to march ahead. It has been so every year, and it will be so this year too. Mr Chavan has said that every effort will be made to "ensure that the additional levies do not impose an undue burden on the common man". But what are these measures? And why were these not enforced before? If he believes that the common man would take him at his word, he is unreasonably naive.

Apparently, the Finance Minister has wilted under the pressure organized industry has brought on him. He has been made to believe that the corporate sector has exhausted its paying capacity, and the rates of company taxation have accordingly been left unchanged. But has the style of corporate living become more austere than in the past? Has there been any empirical evidence that investment has buoyed up when tax rates have not been distributed, and depressed when they are raised? So many loopholes are open to the resourceful entrepreneurs that they could not care less if the tax rate is 45 or 50%. But still Mr Chavan has decided not to make things difficult for New Delhi which is now wooing private capital. There is indeed such a conscious effort to keep industry and business in good humour that the Finance

Minister has not proposed any new measure—except perhaps the half-hearted move to raise the tax on Hindu undivided families' income—to net black money. Last year, he at least made certain proposals on this line. Of course, we have been promised that comprehensive legislation will soon be brought before Parliament to deal with the problem, but that hardly seems to have sent shivers down any businessman's spine. The budget speech has made some appropriate noises about socialism and social justice and all that, but it seems to have hardly strengthened the bona fides of the government which is supposed to be eager to give a better deal to the poor and set up an egalitarian society. Meanwhile, the expenditure on defence continues to swallow a huge chunk of the country's resources.

## Orissa

The juggernaut the Congress wanted to make permanent in Orissa has fallen apart. A Ministry based on defections to the Congress has fallen because of defections from it. The crisis came even after the recent by-election victory of Mrs Nandini Satpathy who had left the Union Cabinet to become the Chief Minister of Orissa. At the moment she is neither in Parliament nor in the Assembly. Orissa is the first State where the Congress has gone after the landslide elections of last year. After Andhra, it is a setback for Mrs Gandhi.

Belying her name, Mrs Satpathy did not follow the straight path while resigning. She came to know of the defections of 25 Congressmen and ran to the Governor with her resignation letter and with the request, as the leader of a no-longer existing majority, for dissolution of the Assembly. Mr Biju Patnaik, that brilliant operator, paraded the strength of his Pragati Party before the Governor, but the Governor is but an agent of the Centre and peo-

ple knew what he would do. Orissa has been placed under President's rule, and the elections may be long in coming as, it is said, delimitation of constituencies is proceeding. In the interim period, much money will be spent, quite a sum of which will be foreign.

The Centre has been, and is, unscrupulous in its dealing with the States. It has been the biggest violator of the Constitution drafted by old, tired men who aped the form but never operated it in the spirit in which it was supposed to have been drawn up. This is not to say that a combination in Orissa of Dr Mahtab and Mr Patnaik could achieve a Konarak instead of the familiar juggernaut. It would have been more of the same. But one can still believe that since the Congress is not a whit different, in playing the parliamentary game there should be some honesty among thieves. Otherwise the audience, the people, will cease to be fooled by the game.

## An Old Scenario ?

*A correspondent writes:*

Those with a stake in the revival of the Congress as a well-knit party must have taken alarm at the renewed signs of crack in the monolith. In West Bengal the rift can no longer be dismissed airily. But what prompts the diverse interests of the ruling class to fall out and bring their conflict into the open is apt to be clouded by radical rhetoric on each side. The fact, however, is that these forces are hard put to maintain a harmonious equation. They are forced to fight out their contradiction with no holds barred. Such contradiction, inherent as it is, has reappeared in an aggravated form. The aggravation was implicit in the renewed lease of life the Congress had contrived for itself. The miracle that was Indira was faked up from a desperate need. The renewal was a myth, and so was the new unity.

In the mid-sixties the stage was set for a popular explosion, what with the accentuated crisis in the economy and widespread political unrest. The latter expressed itself, in one of its aspects, in an erosion of popular support for the Congress. But in most of the cases, it resulted in an accretion of the strength of the extreme right or in encouraging multiple, nondescript, populist factions contending for power. The questionable leftist alliances forming governments in some of the States were part of the picture. All the time, however, the ruling classes were manoeuvring to save themselves even as they fought among themselves in a mad scramble for profit and prerogative. But even in States where genuine leftism had made some headway no advantage could be taken of the crisis and unrest to outmanoeuvre the ruling class. All this helped to create the Indira spell while the popular discontent was turning into regressive channels and dissipating itself. The war with Pakistan and the victory helped Mrs Gandhi a lot, however.

The spell is breaking at last. All Mrs Gandhi's gimmicks have brought the ruling class no nearer to peace and harmony. This is what lies at the basis of the renewed signs of conflict and disruption. The new crisis must spark off a more acute unrest. The diverse interests of the ruling class may once again part company in an attempt to save themselves and exploit the popular discontent by competitive rhetoric as well as fomenting parochial passions. Demands for regional privileges, and linguistic fanaticism are calculated to help both political and economic stabilisation for the time being. Dissensions in the West Bengal Congress fall into a similar pattern, though with a different setting. This does not mean that the situation is fraught with no danger for the ruling class. Indeed it is.

But to those who are interested in a genuine social transformation mere signs of disorder in the existing set-up should mean little in them-

selves. Crisis, unrest, dissensions among the ruling class make for but do not make a revolution. They may equally lead to a consolidation of the existing order followed by popular apathy or hysteria. This may be temporary, but it begins a new cycle of regression for the masses. It happened in the past and may happen again. Not that the tide of events has decisively turned even now. But once again the stage seems set for a climactic explosion as in the late sixties. The initial acts are however depressingly similar to those that preceded the earlier anti-climax: popular discontent getting diverted or diluted by politics of defection and leftist muddle. Maybe this time the resolution of the crisis for the ruling class, if any, will not be as miraculous as in the past. It may be much more prosaic and mechanical. But will the leftists, wherever they are still a force to reckon with, be content to play their part according to the old scenario, as the CPM is appearing to do in Orissa, or will they put a new play on the same stage making it impossible this time for the ruling class to bypass the climax, by outwitting and outflanking them from the beginning?

## Ministers' Professions

*A correspondent writes:*

Some Congress leaders are at times mysteriously soft and sympathetic towards the leftists, even to the Naxalites. But each time they speak highly of them, their intriguing and notorious role in politics is exposed, with fresh evidence of hypocrisy. Hypocrisy, in fact, appears to be the one and only capital of those ambitious Congress leaders who, posing as progressives, try to be in privileged position in the party. Friends of the CPI, they are generally popular with the militant youth wing of the party. Aware of the favourable sentiments among the young party cadres, they frame their strategy to

exploit the vital political force that lies with the students and the youths, to serve their personal ends. Slogans usually raised by the leftists are uttered unabashedly by these Congressmen. Banking on the down-to-earth knowledge that socialist slogans will have an immediate appeal for the exploited masses, they spin out pious phrases that are expedient but empty. So the game of image-building goes on, with no one asking questions about the wide disparity between the precept and practice of the self-styled socialists.

The Union Minister, Mr Deviprasad Chatterjee, is a case in point. Few of his admiring young listeners at the recent Chhatra Parishad conference at Berhampore seemed to have paused for a moment to gauge the sincerity of his loud and righteous indignation at the sorry state of things around. He fulminated against the present colonial system of education, which he has discovered to be an anachronism, after 25 years of independence. He was, predictably, loudly cheered. Again, when he spoke with a well-rehearsed accent on radicalism, in admiration of the Naxalites' attempt to violently smash this anachronism, he was applauded. All this would have been very palatable indeed, were it not overshadowed by the fact that Mr Chatterjee is a Minister in the same Government which has been continuing this wrong all these years. Why, then, does he not demand implementation of all steps he thinks necessary or else resign? There, alas, is the rub: that would be a little too radical for the good doctor to work upon his prescription. Mr Chatterjee's purpose was at any rate served. He does not want to get things done by the Government nor does he intend to resign.

Whatever these young misguided party cadres think of him, they should know that the class character of the ruling party cannot but allow the colonial education system to continue. It is in their class interest that the education commissions, headed by Kothari, Gajendra-

gadkar and Naik, were set up and their recommendations accepted by the Government. The Government's education policy, as envisaged by the blue-print for education in the Fifth Year Plan, betrays certain clear political motivations. On the one hand, it displays the Government's incompetence to transform education into an effective instrument of social justice, and on the other, it establishes its essential class character. According to the recommendations of these commissions, the Government of India, by proposing a moratorium on opening of new colleges, and thus allowing education to pass into private hands, has devised an instrument of accentuating the class differences and ensuring the hegemony of the ruling class which seeks an education system suited to their objective of capitalist development. Inheriting the strong remnants of the old colonial education system, the ruling class has enlarged university enrolment and introduced institutions of scientific, technological and managerial education in such a way as to enable them to move along the capitalist path of development. In this situation, school education, which is a State subject, suffers from inadequate finance from the States, and the primary school teachers, throughout the country, are among the badly paid sections of the population. The bourgeois way out of this crisis has been to provide facilities for a picked few from the richer strata. Thus, private public schools with very high fees have mushroomed and at the college level the process is continued by certain private colleges, which too have high fees and select admissions. Even at university level, though the U.S. inspired suggestion for "major universities" has not been openly accepted, in practice, the Government and UGC have been establishing favoured "centres" and institutes at the expense of a general improvement in university education.

In the ultimate analysis, the structure proposed by all the education

commissions further widen the social and educational gap. It is this class bias that reveals itself, though indirectly, in the structure of university administration as proposed by the Gajendragadkar Committee, or in the proposals for reorganisation of higher education as envisaged by Naik. According to their recommendations, the university or centres of higher education, in the new system, will educate at public cost primarily the sons and daughters of the rich. Since competition will be the pious yardstick for admission to these institutes, higher education will be more or less an exclusive monopoly of the rich students coming from model schools and autonomous colleges. In other words, in the field of higher education, state resources will be utilised only for the benefit of the privileged classes in India. This is a peculiar way of separating "quality" and "privilege" and ensuring "social justice".

All these simple things are certainly known to an intelligent man like the Union Minister, Mr Chatterjee, who was once a university teacher, but perhaps he can afford to overlook them since he knows well that he will never be asked to give any explanation for this sorry state of affairs by his young followers under his "progressive" influence.

## Pompidou's Challenge

President Georges Pompidou has thrown his own mandate into the French parliamentary election battle whose result will be clear next week. In an interview with a journalist from the ORTF—the State broadcasting medium—the President said that "my essential role is to defend the institutions...and I have to conclude that the propositions of the Communists and Socialists would disrupt these institutions completely... Don't count on me to go back on everything I believe in and everything that the French people have solemnly endorsed." It is

not clear from the statement what M. Pompidou would do in case the Communist-Socialist front wins the elections. Will he deny M. Georges Marchais and M. Francois Mitterrand an opportunity to form a government even if the united left wins an absolute majority? In case a minority government is installed, the left front will either have to live with it or overthrow it in the Assembly. The latter is more likely to happen. Or will the President dissolve the Assembly in case the Gaullists become a minority? Although the President has not said clearly what would be his future course of action, many think that France is not going to have a left Government—there was never one since the short-lived Popular Front Government of Leon Blum in 1936—so long as M. Pompidou occupies the Elysée. One does not know whether the President has any plan to avoid a clash between a right-wing President and a left-wing Assembly. He has consistently refused to open his mind on this delicate issue. The Constitution which is full of obscurities is of no help either. Article 8 gives the President sole power to appoint the Prime Minister, but Article 3 which says that national sovereignty belongs to the people who exercise it through their representatives also contains the provision that "no section of the people and no individual may claim to exercise sovereignty." Can it be said that left-wing deputies constitute such a section? Is the President like any other individual or can he claim to exercise sovereign powers at certain times? But it may also happen that there will not be any constitutional crisis. Opinion polls have showed that the Gaullists have recovered some lost ground in the wake of the international financial crisis and it will not be surprising if they find themselves in a position to form another Government with the support of the centre Reformists who are now on the other side of the fence. It is doubtful whether M. Pompidou would have been so much

involved in parliamentary elections if the joint programme of the left coalition did not propose to clip "the unreasonable powers that the President exercises without control". But it is not true that the coalition wants to "reduce the powers of the President of the Republic almost to nothing", leaving the office less power "than it had under the Fourth Republic". The Opposition parties have criticised M. Pompidou for his "unwarranted interference in the campaign". The people, in general, also think that the President should remain above electoral battle. But M. Pompidou is determined to make the parliamentary elections a sort of "third round" of the presidential contest of 1969.

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# The Prime Minister's Face

R. P. MULLICK

FEW would have bargained for such a development. Fewer still would have credited the P. M. with a political face that could be feared as lost, much the same way as the opposition parties are supposed to lose.

Yet the impossible has begun to happen. In Nehru's city, Allahabad, Mrs Gandhi recently has had a taste of what the possibility of losing face might signify in terms of political power equations. She has been proving before public opinion at home since the good old days of 1959—when though a political non-entity, she had started from Kerala the rewarding game of toppling established oppositionist regimes—that smudging the opposition's face with a slander-campaign by the establishment's near-monopolised publicity media and other powerful means of propaganda (e.g. AIR), does pay. But the Andhra unrest has unhinged her. It is no longer the imagined combination of ghosts out of the cupboard, external foes as well as internal, which frightens her. It is the much-too-near forces and factors within her own ruling class-complex, and the party, that maddens her. Now comes Orissa. Have there appeared alternatives already to her stewardship and that too within the party's confabulating circles that wield power? Else, there would be no need for her to vent her inner feelings and resolve not to quit till the "job is over", and, to fight it out.

India's hallowed tradition of equating the ruler's personality, i.e. face, with people's will, is slowly withering away, yielding place to new tendencies and newer habits of polity. This is the reason why the Prime Minister is unable to repose faith any longer in the effectiveness of traditional legacies, despite the charisma

of Nehruism. Hence the premonitions about her political destiny. Hence the unconsolable anxiety complex within her official mind that refuses to be calmed by the tearing campaign against an apparently faceless opposition.

Is people's urge for autonomy the only factor that disturbs now the happy team-spirit within the ruling group? Andhra alone does not focus this inherent aspiration towards self-determination of the multi-people Indian nationality. Since 1947, the lid is off. Pakistan was its product; whether or not the former's religious basis is regarded as real or unreal may be shelved as an irrelevancy. Next Kashmir illustrated the tendency. The eastern region, West Bengal specifically, and the southern too, focussed public attention on the question. But, what Coupland could visualise in a limited way more than thirty years ago, is now an anathema to the new votaries of centralist authoritarianism (in federalist garb). Therefore, the prospect of creating two provincial units appears now as a Frankenstein's monster of regionalism which boomerangs from the Congress' own ideology, or fetish, of language-based nationalism.

So Mrs Gandhi must fight back this desire, now crystallized in the Andhra and Telengana peoples' demands for different, though not discordant, streams of existence. She must also, discover "motives" among those that have an ineradicable choice to differ from her. She must have to echo, very nearly completely, her political rival, Bhutto's obsession with the integrity of the State.

Yet there is a genesis of this obsession about face. That no political face of a feudal-bourgeois ruler is immutable, has not dawned upon Mrs Gandhi. After all she is no chip of the traditional bourgeois block. Like West Bengal's Chief Minister she probably shares the amour propre of a liberal school of the democratic socialist, all but a declassé, a proletarian have-not of self-induced dreams, the Messiah (after Marx) to waft

garibi (i.e. poverty) away with her party's subjective wand.

But withal the seemingly impregnable self-assurance of the super personality cultist, she cannot still remove the disquiet caused by an awareness of simmering dissatisfaction too close to her political citadel of power. There is a near analogy to the last days of evanescent Nehruan authority. Now, as then, non-alignment was as good as given up. Yet, the subtly inducted tactic of veering away towards some sort of modified alignment, with the formal mask of nonalignment a convenient wear for convincing and deceiving people at home with moral-political ideals, could not be left off as a half-measure. It had to be consummated with a new trend, and a new stance. With the USA's stock much enhanced in New Delhi's eye, especially after the former had "seen the reality on the Indian sub-continent" and recognized Bangladesh, it is rather a natural sequence that strident voices should have begun asserting in the Foreign Ministry's decision-making conclaves for reformulating India's U.S. policy. The famous Washington tilt towards Pakistan is no more harped upon. Even the USA's *obduracy* in refusing to understand the Indian point of view—meaning thereby the rulers' interests, is as good as forgotten. Sure there could not be a more propitious moment, a more promising crossroads for treading unobtrusively back to the good old days of happy Indo-U.S. amity (e.g. 1947-49-52, and 1962-68) than now, when the supposedly prestigious Sino-American detente is being presumed as an usherer of a new era of tripolar super-power balancing and when international forces of communism are believed to be in polycentric disarray. In fact, new and budding foreign policy architects have uncannily sensed the new direction of change in the USA's South-Asia policy. All the dreams of the Galbraiths, Bowles' and Coopers have begun to tumble back—through the slyly made economic overtures of McNamara and the international credit organizations of

world imperialism. Chains are no more chains, since the cursed strings of aid have apparently gone. Even PL-480 methodology seems to have been given up along with the jettisoning of the USA's outlived love for Pakistan. In such circumstances, a trek back to unannounced, U.S.-aligned nonalignment was the agreed consensus in New Delhi's D block. Unfortunately, a little breeze of misunderstanding that stemmed from Mrs Gandhi's casually indiscreet interpolation of her "personal abhorrence" of "racialism" with the "savage bombing in Vietnam" that would not have been tolerated in Europe. This has now blown over, thanks to the unusually efficient promptness of the dispellers from the Foreign Ministry and Mrs Gandhi's own explanation. Indeed it looks as though the makers of India's State policy are no more prepared to take chances with useless habits of outworn liberalism that die hard. Mrs Gandhi can hardly afford to overlook these rising faces in the Administration; certainly cannot subordinate their importance to her own.

The "thaw" in Indo-U.S. relations has been long in coming. But it was being assiduously prepared throughout the latter half of 1972. The \$200 million debt relief from the international credit organization, was after all, the USA's measure of grace through devious means. More will follow. Only the dollar needs some brushing up; and a reappraisal of Delhi's financial approach towards the entire question of finding a linkage between the dollar and the rupee, with the pound and Commonwealth preferences adjusted in between, needs evolving. To that happy climax both India and the USA are moving. Is the USSR to remain an agonised spectator of this new trend? Will it stand and suffer a softening of the substance of the Indo-USSR treaty of friendship of 1971, or will it start contending for love, afresh?

## Reflections On A Heroic Mandarin

AIJAZ AHMAD

THOSE who insist on the myth of Debray as a sort of wandering seer of the Latin American revolution dutifully forget a specific past: that of a young French intellectual of bourgeois origins who grew up in Paris, in Ecole Normale Supérieure (the French bourgeois school par excellence; neither normal nor superior, as Nizan once said), during the late '50s and early '60s, as a pupil of Louis Althusser and as a member of a Marxist circle of youths. Inherent in this situation is a personal crisis of historic dimensions: that of a bourgeois youth in search of viable means of revolutionary practice. The major theses of *Revolution In the Revolution?*, as of his earlier essays which we now read again in *Strategy for Revolution\** were directed to find a revolutionary role for committed young men outside the class context.

In addition to this personal crisis, Debray's youth was also haunted by the crisis of the French Communist Party which complemented his own.

Since World War II, this party has been revisionist and collaborationist—much like most other parties of Western Europe. While Khrushchev's ascendancy in Russia, the French Communist Party became objectively pro-capitalist under the guise of co-existence and peaceful evolution toward socialism; communists were now parliamentarians, with no other objective but to some day command a majority. During the Algerian war, the Party played a most abject colonial supremacy; it had become pro-imperialist as well. These were the years when Debray grew up.

\*STRATEGY FOR REVOLUTION: ESSAYS ON LATIN AMERICA, by Régis Debray; Monthly Review Press, \$2.95, paper.

For Debray, the lesson of his situation was clear: no revolutionary practice was even possible in Western Europe within the context of the communist parties there; he had to seek his salvation elsewhere. Hence his trips to Cuba.

From Debray's standpoint, the true energy of the Cuban revolution resided in the fact that it had been made outside the framework of the Cuban communist party. He felt suddenly liberated of his own dilemma, and in order to reinforce his sense of personal liberation he was ready to invent many myths.

First he distorts the Cuban experience itself. For example, it is entirely true that Fidel organized his forces outside the framework of the then Cuban Communist Party; it is also true nonetheless, that the domestic legitimacy of his forces was won so quickly at least partly because the Party allied itself with the Revolution fairly quickly. Similarly, while it is undeniable that the leading cadres of the Rebel Army had not been members of the Party, it is equally undeniable that many of them had been Marxist-Leninists before they joined the Army; Che himself was one such even before he left Argentina.

Most important of all, the point that a socialist revolution can be made outside the Party structure is of course crucial in countries where the class struggle as a whole is dominated by a revisionist communist party; but this sort of struggle against the party is wholly irrelevant and can lead to self-injury in countries where 1) the Party is not revisionist, or 2) does not enjoy a monopoly of leadership over the class struggle.

The crucial error in Debray, upon which the entire fallacious structure of his work is predicated, is his insistent identification of all party organization with revisionism and collaboration. What was specific experience in some parties of Western Europe and Latin America became for him the source of universal postulates: since these parties were collaborationist, he repudiates all party

structures; since the revolution in Cuba was made outside the framework of a political party, he concludes that all revolutions need to be made without parties. As if the revolutions in China, in the Democratic Republic of Korea, in countries of Southeast Asia were even conceivable without the Party to lead them. This is anti-Leninism in the name of Leninism. To say it yet differently: Debray's criticisms of the Latin American parties are generally correct; his conclusion that Latin America is so ripe for revolution that it needs no parties is simply infantile.

In reading Debray, one has to be constantly wary of his inconsistencies.

In his essay, *Problems of Revolutionary Strategy In Latin America*, which was first published in 1965, before *Revolution in the Revolution?* (to be referred to, for abbreviation, in later references as *RR*), and is now included in *Strategy For Revolution: Essays on Latin America* (to be referred to as *SR*), Debray has proposed an important set of reflections under the sub-heading, 'Revolution revolutionizes the Counterrevolution'. What he meant by this superbly phrased principle is that international counterrevolution, based and formulated in the imperialist countries with vast material resources, is constantly watching the specific aspects of each successful revolution; that after each revolution imperialism becomes more aggressive and vigilant in the areas surrounding the country where revolution has succeeded, so as to pre-empt a repetition elsewhere; and that each revolution has to invent its unique character in terms of organization as well as strategic and tactical considerations, quite largely because the tactical lessons learned in the course of any one successful revolution are rendered largely useless for repetition by the corresponding advances made by the counter-revolutionary tacticians in the period immediately following.

This principle was wholly sound and recommended necessary cautions and innovations. We know that

counterrevolution was particularly active in Germany, Poland and other neighbouring countries after the Bolshevik success in the Soviet Union. We know that the U.S. counterrevolutionaries launched wars of aggression in Korea and in Indochina as a direct result of the successful Chinese Revolution. We know that after the initial surprise of the Cuban Revolution, the U.S. has been particularly vigilant and savage in all of Latin America and that its intervention in the essentially bourgeois-democratic framework of the Dominican Republic was the direct consequence of its nervousness about the Cuban experience being repeated elsewhere.

Well, in his later writings there is no trace of this most valuable lesson Debray had learned and taught earlier. The possibility of a direct counterrevolutionary intervention (not limited, that is, to training and equipment for indigenous troops (but involving bombings, personnel deployment etc. from forces abroad) is not even mentioned. Nor is any thought given to the strategy of resisting massive U.S. interventions in a war which is supposed to be based, on the side of the revolution, on guerilla bands who are themselves alien to the countryside. While we are asked to learn our lessons exclusively from the Cuban experience, we are never told that the element of surprise was crucial to success in Cuba and that we cannot reasonably expect the imperialists to let themselves be surprised in the same fashion again. Precisely because the Rebel Army was not overtly communist, precisely because it was the first revolution in the Hemisphere, counterrevolution was caught with its guard down. Now, after Cuba, such relaxation in counterrevolutionary vigilance can never be guaranteed; a guerilla foco can be sought and destroyed with impunity, as Che's group was in fact isolated and wiped out in Bolivia.

#### No Quick Process

If we could predict that the revo-

lutionary process would be necessarily a quick one, we could perhaps make do with a theory that deemphasizes political organizations. Unfortunately, such a prediction would be suicidal, as the martyrdom of too many American revolutionaries testifies. If it is true that each revolution has lessons which the imperialists will learn, then the primary lesson of Cuba for the imperialists was that no revolutionary situation should be allowed to develop in Latin America to a point where it cannot be controlled through a quick intervention. It does not mean that interventions would necessarily succeed; if the revolutionary process is prepared with care, objective conditions can be obtained wherein no intervention shall be successful (witness Vietnam!). What it does mean is that we now live in the age of the pre-emptive counterrevolution, and the imperialist strategies are designed with maximal vigilance and maximal brutality to overthrow the socialist governments not after they take power but before they take root. That is an important aspect of the war in Vietnam: the imperialists are willing to live with a socialist North if they can pre-empt the socialist success in the South. In Latin America, where the revolution is in most countries incredibly weak on the level of organizational infrastructure, pre-emptive counterrevolution is at the hub of U. S. strategies, and no general theory of armed struggle in Latin America, which is presumably what Debray wishes to outline, can be considered serious unless it takes into account the possibility of direct Yankee intervention at any stage of the struggle. Contrary to Debray's private wishes, more Cubas are unlikely to occur. Che, in fact, was closer to the truth: two, three...many Vietnams.

Revolutionaries everywhere, Pakistan included, need to understand precisely this: because the U.S. allowed itself to be surprised in Cuba, the possibility of another such surprise has been pre-empted. Now, all revolutionary war are likely to be of long duration. And in a war of long

duration, the guerilla bands of the type Debray proposes can be isolated, institutionalized, defeated by their own logistical problems. Resistance in a long war has to be essentially of a political character and widespread among the masses, with a military equivalent which is also widespread organizationally and coordinated with a view to achieving great physical dispersal of the enemy troops and great insecurity on their part everywhere. As Giap points out, the quickest way to commit suicide in a revolutionary war is to fight under conditions where the enemy enjoys absolute military superiority, where it is allowed to concentrate in limited terrain without worrying about covering the rest of the territory, and where front to rear its basic military organization remains intact. Debray presents a blueprint for just such a suicide. The type of political organization which is crucial for sustaining a war of long duration—whether guerilla, mobile or of fixed position—is simply not on Debray's agenda.

*Castroism: The Long March in Latin America* has on its opening page a quotation from Louis Althusser with Debray's approval: "...no tactic is possible which does not rest on some strategy and no strategy which does not rest on some theory" (SR, p 27). Debray warns us, nonetheless, that his own essay "seeks to study only a tactic", namely "Castroism as a tactic of insurrection"; he also admits that these notes are "deliberately incomplete...abstract, since they aspire to theoretical knowledge" (SR, pp 27-28). In fact much of his writing is replete with admissions of sketchiness, haste, shortcuts, absence of strategical considerations and theoretical knowledge. *Reply To My Critics* (SR, pp 231-41) is filled with such acknowledgements regarding *Revolution In the Revolution?*

"Who will make the revolution?" Debray asks repeatedly in his work, quoting Castro, and quotes Castro again to answer the question: "The revolutionaries, with or without the party." The ambiguity of this for-

mulation is cleverly designed to circumvent the class question. A revolutionary, according to this formulation is one who a) resolves to make, the revolution, and b) learns how to make it. In other words, revolutionary struggle is a matter of private determination to take up arms and of the relevant technical know-how. As Debray himself would say: "...only a minority organization of professional revolutionaries, theoretically conscious and practically trained in all the skills of their profession, can prepare a successful outcome" (SR, p 33). Under the significant sub-heading, "The Myth of Mass Action", he elaborates on the foundations of this elitist model: "...a mass action as such has never achieved power anywhere...The masses as such do not fight in the streets, nor do they fix on a plan of action...the entire apparatus of organized violence belongs to the enemy. The violence with which the people can strike back, 'mass action', is easily dismantled" (SR, pp 32-33). One could imagine Debray warning against adventurism generally, or against disorganized mass action as such. No! He is building on his mistrust of the peasant. "Peasants", he says "are also the most closed to any political consciousness, and the most difficult to orient and organize—because of their dispersal, their illiteracy, their initial mistrust towards strangers" (SR, p 39).

Throughout his work he accepts Che's formulation: "In underdeveloped America the terrain of armed struggle must be the countryside". Debray specifies the locale: "...in the zones of agrarian feudalism outside the framework of the repressive machinery concentrated in the towns" (SR, p 42). And: "A guerilla center must attack the weakest links and therefore must keep away from urban zones—the strongest links—where the state's administrative and repressive forces are concentrated" (SR, p 63). And: "Operating in a fixed and naturally limited area, the urban guerilla movement is easily pinned down. It has neither the

choice of time nor of place...the movement cannot be transformed into a flexible operation and even less into a war of fixed positions... (it) can never become a guerilla army, and even less a regular popular army" (SR, pp 65-66). In other words, the withdrawal into the countryside is recommended on tactical grounds: the guerillas are safer there. It is *not* recommended on the basis of any class factors or any sense that the peasants may want to make the revolution. The guerillas live relatively securely in the countryside not because of the peasants but despite the peasants, not because the peasants might help or hide or feed them but because vast stretches of the South American countryside are relatively unpopulated. What is reliable is the inert politically neutral forest, not the living peasant. Illiterate peasants...cannot be awakened or acquire political consciousness by a process of thought" (SR, p 57).

Given the need to fight from the countryside as well as the distrust of the peasant as being illiterate and stupid, a specific question arises: who, then, will make the revolution? Who will create this lovely base in the jungle? Well, the urban guerillas who will have withdrawn to the countryside for the use of a favorable terrain. Again, Debray does not mean that even these urban guerillas will have anything to do with the working class: "An anti-imperialist liberation struggle in a colonial or semi-colonial territory cannot be conducted under the banner of Marxism-Leninism or the leadership of the working class" (SR, p 53).

Having set aside the questions of class, Debray goes ahead and sets aside the need for thinking of strategy etc. as a bourgeois hangup. In *Castroism: The Long March*, he had quoted Althusser on the importance of strategy with approval. By the time we arrive at *Revolution in the Revolution?*, we are told: "That an intellectual, especially if he is a bourgeois, should speak of strategy

before all else, is normal. Unfortunately, however, the right road, the only feasible one sets out from tactical data" (RR, p 60-).

To recapitulate: The peasant is stupid and a potential traitor ("distrust of the stranger" etc.); neither the working class as a class nor Marxism-Leninism as a theory of action can lead the revolution; mass action is a myth; questions of strategy are useless bourgeois hangups. One doesn't even need or want success: "For a revolutionary, failure is a springboard. As a source of theory it is richer than victory: it accumulates experience and knowledge" (RR, p 23). What we are left with, then, are a set of tactics: "truths of a technical, tactical, and even of a strategic order which the Cuban Revolution has demonstrated and acted upon" (RR, p 15). There is no reason to waste time on theory, organization, class questions, political work, clarification. We need only a group of heroic mandarins, men like Debray himself, the technocrats of armed struggle, modern-day Robin Hoods who mean well, to act upon these fixed, eternal truths discovered by the Cuban Revolution which have rendered all other historical data obsolete.

With such friends, the Cuban Revolution needs no enemies.

#### Debray and Fanon

The books that come most readily to mind in a discussion of Debray are not by Lenin or Mao or Giap or Ho Chi Minh or even by Cabral, but by that other romanticist of the revolutionary intelligentsia: Frantz Fanon. The two are remarkably similar: in their rhetorical facilities, in their insistent engagements with only the general features of a situation, their shared refusal to descend

into the realm of particular historicity of defined situations, their need to deduce universal truths from single and narrow instances of revolutionary practice, their urgencies, their shortcuts, their propensities to distort the truth of the very processes that they know best. Some Cubans have had to correct Debray's assertions of fact regarding the Cuban revolution; the Left Wing of the FLN knows that the Algerian Revolution, as recorded and glorified by Fanon, never happened in the real world. The man from Martinique who made such passionate commitment to Algeria was after all not so very different from the Parisian intellectual who steeped himself in the implications of the Cuban Revolution. These are students and outsiders who will give their breath and even life, if necessary, as the price for inclusion. One salutes their genuine internationalism, one affirms their indisputable subjective integrity, one is not altogether certain that escaping the inertia of their countries of origin was the only motivation behind their travels far and wide. However, one notes also the tendency toward inflation in their admirations, their haste, their generality, their self-righteousness. And the similarity is not limited to temperaments alone. Their political pursuits are also roughly identical: the need for ideological anchorage and practical affirmations outside the Marxist-Leninist context. And both have battled, in their separate ways, the same ghost: the revisionism of the post-war French Communist Party. And in the face of this ghost, this apparition, both took flight. They are men of honor of sorts, both of them, and of intelligence and individualistic type of courage as well. But they have been grievously wrong. As revolutionary intellectuals who influenced actual practice, they have done harm.

Precisely because vast segments of international radical youth have found Debray's ideas so very attractive, precisely because these ideas have done actual harm in sections of the Latin American Revolution

and are capable of harm elsewhere, we need to set aside our admiration of private courage and speak bluntly: these ideas were formulated with the intent of circumventing the class question, of reducing revolutionary activity to the technical plane, of repudiating the historic revolutionary role of the peasantry and the working class, of affirming a vanguard role for the city intellectuals with a guilty conscience. Because of a deficiency of theoretical thinking among the Latin American vanguards (which vanguard can boast of having had enough of such thinking?), these ideas and various shapes thereof enjoyed a transitional fame; that popularity is already ebbing. Primarily, though, this work is designed for massive seduction of radical youth in the metropolitan countries; they are given to believe that being a revolutionary is not a matter of class, history, anything; instead, it is supposedly a matter of pure subjectivity, and anyone can be a revolutionary if he decides to pick up the gun and learn how to shoot; for the rest, the rural climate will 'proletarianize' him. This is an ideology of the rootless.

Why do we admire Che? First because he played a crucial role in creating the Cuban Revolution, no one could aspire to a higher privilege. Secondly, because, as Allende puts it, when he had everything he left to help revolutionaries elsewhere; since Bolivar, Che is the only man who gave concrete content to the idea of Latin American unity and staked all on it; for that alone, he deserves our profoundest love. Thirdly, because of his commitment to a global revolution and his recognition of the Vietnamese people as the interna-

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MARCH 10, 1973

tional vanguard: "two, three...many Vietnams"; the proper way to pay homage to this great son of Latin America is to create the so many Vietnams he envisioned, everywhere, Pakistan included. Nonetheless, Che, this lovely man whose death is our permanent loss, must be criticized within the matrix of Marxism-Leninism so that those of us who aspire to follow in his footsteps may follow him at his best and not in his errors. Che in Cuba was superbly right; Che in Bolivia was altogether wrong. That is all. Latin America has paid for his errors not only with the blood of this, its most precious son but also with setbacks in the revolutionary process on the whole. "A single political error", Debray observes in one of his saner passages, "can lead to many military defeats".

As for Debray himself, I should point out something else as well. In the process of reading him, I have often wondered why I kept on reading when I disagreed with practically everything he has to say, and I find that the reason is something that is central to his project: his focus on the need to make the revolution. In this man, this intellectual of the metropolitan areas, this uprooted ideologue of the rootless, this theoretician despite himself who upholds the elite models in the name of revolutionary masses, in this otherwise useless man, one finds a very particular use: his insistence that, in the midst of all revisionist postponements, negotiations, collaborations, failures of nerve and imagination, revolution can in fact be made. In this most fundamental of affirmations, Debray is right. He is right in stressing the need for theories which are theories of practice. The specifics of his own theory are, unfortunately, capable of much harm.

(From *Pakistan Forum*, Canada. Abridged).

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## Book Review

# Zionism And The Arabs

### THE EVASIVE PEACE

By John Davis

John Murray, £1.30.

AS the sub-title says, this book is a study of the Zionist-Arab problem. Dr Davis has drawn upon his experience as Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in West Asia for five years to give us a detailed account of the Arab-Israeli problem and the plight of the Palestinian refugees. He has traced the history of this part of the world from the time of Israel's creation to the Six-Day War, and in conclusion, offers a justifiable and humane solution to this dispute. The book will confound and shock the apologists of Israel's cause.

The force most responsible for the Arab-Israeli conflicts has been world Zionism. Theodor Herzl, born in Budapest, Hungary, has been identified as the founder of the Zionist movement. A journalist by profession, Herzl began to take active interest in Jewish affairs whilst covering the Dreyfus trial in Paris.<sup>1</sup> Herzl felt that the strong anti-Jewish feeling among the people of France was characteristic of all Gentiles and therefore, Jews could not escape persecution while living in the midst of Gentiles. Thus was born the first fervent plea for the establishment of a separate nation for the Jews and Herzl outlined his plans for its creation in a book called *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State).

Davis recounts in great detail the role played by protagonists like Chaim Weizmann (who was to become the first President of Israel), Sherif Hussain and his four sons Ali, Abdullah, Feisal and Zaid, and Arthur Balfour (Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in Britain at that time) in the first attempts to establish the State of Israel. Israel owes her existence today to Weiz-

mann's tireless activities in her cause mainly in the USA and Britain. He was primarily responsible for mobilising both popular and governmental support in these two countries for the creation of Israel. From the very beginning Weizmann was dedicated to the proposition that, "The Jews were a People, they must have a State and that State must be Palestine." After getting the complete backing of the leaders of all the parties in England, Weizmann strove hard to get the official support of Her Majesty's Government for the formation of a Jewish State in Palestine. His efforts met with success and led to the publication of the Balfour Declaration.<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting to note that all along the Jews and the Arabs had lived most amicably in Palestine. Even after the Balfour Declaration, Sherif Hussain was in sympathy with 'the encouragement of Jews' to settle down in Palestine. He deputed his third son, Emir Feisal, to meet Dr Weizmann and discuss with him the idea of a Jewish Home. They even signed an agreement in 1919 which stated that, "All necessary measures shall be taken to encourage and stimulate the immigration of Jews to Palestine on a large scale, and, as quickly as possible, settle the Jewish immigrants upon the land..." But the agreement was qualified with a proviso by Feisal which made it conditional upon the Arabs being granted complete independence. This demonstrates the 'tolerance with which the Arab leaders approached the idea of Jewish immigration.'

About this time President Wilson of the USA sent H. C. King and C. R. Crane to privately ascertain the wishes of the people of Palestine. They came back with the report that people were unanimous in their desire for independence and were strongly opposed to the Zionist proposals. But later on the U.S. Government tacitly approved the Balfour Declaration. All the trust the Arabs reposed in the 'fair-minded Britons' was brought to nought. The

Zionist Commission led by Weizmann arrived in Palestine to establish the Jewish National Home under the aegis of the British Military Force led by General Allenby. The Arab suspicions were kindled when the Jews insisted on participating in the British Military Administration whereby they could train Jewish forces. Doubts turned to anger and in March, 1920, gave way to open violence. The Arabs protested strongly against the growing immigration of Jewish people as they feared economic and political subjugation with a very large Jewish population. They were terribly disappointed with Britain's perfidy. Thus began the long-lasting animosity and strife between the two peoples, which, in the final analysis can be principally attributed to the insistence of Jewish leaders on establishing a Zionist State in Palestine<sup>3</sup> and the treacherous rôle played by the USA and Britain.

#### The Mandate System

The Covenant of the League of Nations was drawn up at Versailles on June 28, 1919, and it established the Mandate System, the guiding principle of which stated that, "... the well being and development of the inhabitants should be a sacred trust for civilization..." under the tutelage of a Mandatory acting on behalf of the League. The Arabs lost their last chance of achieving peaceful independence when the King-Crane report was unceremoniously scuttled by the U.S. Government. Then the Zionist Organization—which deserves full credit for the zeal with which it undersook to establish the State of Israel—asked the Conference to appoint Britain as Mandatory<sup>4</sup> of the League of Nations for Palestine. The selection of Britain by the Jews was expected and an obvious recognition of the great help accorded them by the British Government.

Hitler's genocide against the Jewish people in Europe resulted in widespread sympathy for the cause of the Zionists. It was proposed to

send Jewish refugees from Europe to Palestine to help in establishing the State of Israel. The Arab viewpoint was never well presented and it was but natural that the Jews received such extensive support. Britain referred the Palestine problem to the United Nations when it was set up after World War II. The UN Special Committee on Palestine recommended partition of the territory into a Jewish and Arab State and the General Assembly approved the proposal by 33 votes to 13 with 10 abstentions on November 29, 1947.<sup>5</sup> Immediately thereafter, large-scale violence ensued in many cities of the Arab world. President Truman acted shrewdly at this stage and to forestall a further deterioration of the situation he announced recognition of Israel as an independent country on May 14, 1948, a day before the British Mandate was due to end. Weizmann followed up by proclaiming the State of Israel, the outcome of which was a series of conflicts between the Arabs and the Israelis. The lack of unity, training, discipline and equipment in the Arab armies and guerilla forces was fully exploited by the well drilled Israeli troops. The history of the conflict after 1948 is well known.

The most tragic aftermath of the establishment of the State of Israel has been the refugee problem. The author with his first-hand knowledge, rips the cloak of Israeli innocence. Palestine was one of the most advanced of Arab areas, both in terms of literacy and economic growth, even before Israel was born. In 1949, nearly 700,000 Palestinians, mainly Arabs and Christians, fled from the ravaging Israeli troops and were prevented from returning home. By 1967, the number of accounted refugees had grown to more than 1.3 million. Davis regards the killings of Arabs as the prime reason for this large-scale flight. Arabs were hounded out of their homes by persuasion or force and the dwellings handed over to immigrant Jews. No equivalent reparation has been offered them so far. Davis clarifies cer-

tain misunderstandings regarding the treatment meted out to the refugees in Arab countries. They have not been prevented from finding work in these nations. Wherever possible all able-bodied refugees have been offered employment without affecting the livelihood of the local people.

Davis has only one solution in mind to ensure lasting peace in this area: Israel must revoke her condominium with world Zionism and function as a conventional State. Secondly, the wrongs committed against the Palestinian people must be rectified. Thirdly, the USA must force Israel to divest herself of her Zionist attributes and make appropriate compensation to the refugees. The Western nations which support Israel hold the key to peace. Lastly, the basic rights of Palestinian Arabs must be restored, which might result in an Arab-Jewish State. Otherwise, the author envisages a prolonged war till de-Zionisation of Israel is achieved. The Arab people view Israel as an agent of world Zionist nationalism which has done them great injury. Israel can never hope to win an endurance contest as long as she is Zionist-dominated, as this itself engenders and perpetuates Arab hatred. With 3 million Jews versus 10 million or more Arabs, Israel cannot get peace by force.

#### Notes:

1. In December 1894, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a 35-year-old probationary officer on the General Staff of the French Army in the Third Republic and a Jew, was found guilty of treason for having turned over military secrets to Germany. He was sentenced to life imprisonment on Devil's Island, a penal settlement off Guyana in South America. Dreyfus' conviction set off a wave of violent anti-Semitism coming as it did just after the Panama Scandal, in which three Jewish financial promoters were convicted of bribing high officials in the French Ministry and Parliament, to stave off somehow the

bankruptcy of the company formed by Ferdinand de Lesseps (famed builder of the Suez Canal) and prevent a loss of nearly 300 million dollars to small bourgeois investors. A large section of the French populace was convinced that the Jews were responsible not only for corruption in high political and financial circles, but also for betraying military secrets to their hated neighbour, Germany, even as their country was recovering from the defeat inflicted by Prussia in 1870. Many Jewish officers were removed from the Army in consequence by the Catholics and Nationalists who controlled it.

2. The Balfour Declaration was first mentioned in a letter from Balfour to Lord Rothschild. The proclamation of this notorious document is intriguing as at that time Rothschild held no position either in the British Government or the Zionist Organization. The Declaration came as a blow to the Arabs who had been promised prompt and full independence by the British after the defeat of the Turkish Army in the First World War.
3. It is interesting to note that the territory of the present State of Uganda was rejected as a site for the projected State of Israel by the Zionist Organization.
4. Britain's Mandate over Palestine ended in May 1948. This period was marked by political and military pressure by Zionist terrorist groups like the Haganah, Stern and Irgun.
5. The United States lobbied strongly for partition but Britain abstained. Also interesting is that the USSR voted for partition but India voted against such a course of action.

S. ANAND

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## Letter From Dum Dum Jail

BY A PRISONER

VICTIMS of the repressive policy of this anti-people government (of West Bengal), we, several thousand political workers, pass our days in prison. Most of us are undertrial prisoners or detained without trial or variously sentenced by a travesty of justice. It would be impossible to imagine the crushing mental strain and physical distress to which we are subjected. The common man wishes to know about the life the prisoners lead, and that is why we wish to present before the public our general experience of prison life.

We, political prisoners, are completely cut off from the people. The only means of communication is through letters. None but relatives can have interview with the prisoners. Such is the order from above. Even close friends are not allowed. Letters from outside don't reach us regularly; nor do our letters get to their destinations properly. For if anyone writes anything beyond the "I am rather well" stuff, the authorities see that the letter never reaches its goal.

The other medium of communication with the outside world is newspapers and magazines. But leftist or even slightly anti-establishment papers are prohibited. That is, we have no right to read anything political.

The kind of food we eat? Well, we had no idea it was possible to serve people food of this unspeakably wretched quality. But to keep alive we somehow swallow this beastly food, and even then our bellies are only half-filled. As a result most prisoners fall seriously ill and silently move on towards death.

But in sickness we do not have the advantage of proper treatment. An unwritten barbarous law ordains that Naxalites in prison are not to have treatment. There are doctors,

but they have no will of their own; they can't move a step without the jailor's permission. Requests and complaints or even angry rows have proved powerless to mend matters; this cannibal government has not batted an eyelid.

We have heard that it is necessary according to the Geneva Conventions to observe certain basic principles in treating war prisoners; but this barbarous Government does not show the slightest scruple in dealing with political prisoners like us. And yet it is these same people who parade themselves before the world as guardians of the biggest democracy in the world.

Please try to imagine, in this Dum Dum Jail alone there are about 400 Naxalite workers who are kept confined in small cells for 24 hours a day without even the permission to stretch their legs in the adjoining corridors. This government of blood-suckers does not admit even our right to live; in certain cells even singing revolutionary songs is not allowed. Political discussions are debarred. We are often treated with abuses and blows by the Government's hired ruffians for infringing these monstrous regulations. However, we are carrying on our political propaganda in defiance of all this; all their monstrosities won't be able to break our morale. Crores of working people are our support, our everything.

Exercise-books are allowed within the prison, but there too there is the clear instruction: no political matter is to be written. Then there is the system of searching. When the hirelings enter our cells on the pretext of making a search, they turn everything topsy-turvy. Discovery of any political paper or document results in the infliction of inhuman torture. All protest proves futile. And to whom can we protest either?

MARCH 10, 1973

In their view we are anti-socials, that is, criminals who oppressed people for selfish gain.

Through the revolutionary people of this country we extend our appeal to actively support the struggle we are carrying on here. We are sure all working people will cry out against this tyranny, will join in the task of smashing this cannibalistic social set-up and create a happy and beautiful society for working people to live in. This united struggle will bring us tremendous enthusiasm and enable us to move on firmly towards our revolutionary goal.

We will leave our say incomplete if we fail to mention one last point. Taking advantage of the setback we have had, this rapacious Government is trying by means of false witnesses to inflict death penalties, life sentences and long terms of penal servitude on our comrades. Only the other day several comrades were given life sentences. How do they have the effrontery to claim the right to deal out such penalties? It is these very people who committed the fascist massacres at Baranagore, Cossipore, Barasat, Howrah and at so many other places.

## 'Routine Treatment'

The Association for the Protection of Democratic Rights has drawn attention to an incident in Dum Dum Central Jail on the night of February 23 when political prisoners (who have been under illegal 24-hour lock-up for the last few months), after being served with their usual meals were not supplied with the water necessary to wash their dishes. Next day, meals were about to be served on those very unwashed stinking dishes. Naturally the prisoners refused to accept it. But they were not given any opportunity to wash their dishes. Their relatives, who were due to interview them, came to know that the prisoners had passed the whole day without any food and water. What happened is not yet known.

The present 24-hour lock-up of political prisoners is not only illegal but also in violation of the promises made by the jail authorities in the first week of January, to withdraw it. Prisoners withdrew their 7-day-long hunger-strike. On the day the strike was withdrawn four teenager political prisoners were ordered to be removed to their cells. They objected to it as they, in the light of past experience, apprehended that they were going to be beaten up in the cell. An altercation with the jail warders followed. However, ultimately they were forced into the cell later. At midnight about 10 to 15 warders entered their cells (they were confined in two cells), awakened them from their sleep and beat them with sticks, batons etc. The boys fainted. On the following day, the father (Ajit Dutta) of Utpal Dutta received a letter from the Superintendent, Dum Dum Central Jail through O. C. Metiaburuz Thana, saying he might see him in jail hospital. Going there, he found that the injury was so severe that 14 stitches had to be done all over the body. Of these, 6 were on the head alone. One ear was covered with a big bandage because the ear-leaf was smashed. Due to profuse bleeding the whole body was motionless.

passed every now and then.

It is in the knowledge of all and we presume, you too, will admit it, that these prisoners who are our nearest relations did not have any personal or group interest involved in whatever they did. All their efforts were directed, of course in their own way, towards changing the horrible plight of our people, to which, right from the Prime Minister herself to you and your colleagues often refer. We have not come here either to defend or to oppose the ways they took in translating their ideals into reality. That is to be decided by the people. But we do want to put this humble question before you: why should our dear ones be refused the right to be recognised as political prisoners,—a right, which in all democratic states is granted to all persons fighting for some social cause even if, in the process, they overstep the limits of law. Even British rulers during their reign in India respected this right.

Far from recognising them as political prisoners, the way these unarmed and helpless prisoners are being subjected to continual torture, right from the police lock-up down to the prison is to be considered totally inhuman even in the cases of notorious criminals. It makes us mad when in prison we meet these objects of our deepest affection, to see the marks of these tortures engraved all over their bodies. Every day, we wait with a choking fear, to hear the news of our dearer-than-life ones falling victim to another incident of jail-killing like those at Midnapore, Berhampore, Alipore etc.

Hon'ble Chief Minister, it—as Indian citizens, that we place our humble question—is not such repression on unarmed helpless prisoners completely illegal according to the Indian laws? Why is not then our government prosecuting the involved persons in the court of law?

Even mothers and sisters of the political prisoners, when they went to protest against such illegal acts, had to bear unspeakable humiliation and were arrested. Our question is—

## A Memorandum

To  
The Chief Minister, Government  
of West Bengal.

Sir,  
We, the mothers, sisters, wives and other female relatives of the political prisoners, confined in different jails of West Bengal, have come to place before you a deeply agonising tale of ours and an appeal for proper remedial measures...

Our sons, brothers or husbands have been in detention for a long time. A great number of them are there as undertrial prisoners, many others have been detained without trial and on the remaining ones hard and long-term sentences are being

do not mothers and sisters of this country possess the right to protest against the tortures inflicted upon their sons and brothers?

Inhuman torture, ever present apprehension of being beaten brutally and above all the horrible insanitary condition inside, all these things together are crippling and causing incurable diseases in many of our dear sons. Gradually they are losing their vitality. If this state of affairs continues for some more time, a large number of them, no doubt, will lose all ability to work.

Under these circumstances, we, on behalf of mothers, sisters, wives and other female relatives of all the political prisoners of W.B. pray before you that the government

1. Declare all prisoners detained due to political reason as political prisoners.
2. Withdraw all cases against and all sentences passed on political prisoners and release them unconditionally.
3. Prosecute the administrative personnel connected with the incidents of physical violence upon and death of the political prisoners, in the court of law...

Yours faithfully,  
Mothers, Sisters, Wives and  
other Female Relatives of the  
Political Prisoners of West  
Bengal.

Calcutta  
February 12, 1973.

For Frontier contact

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## Meera Mukherjee's Sculpture

SANDIP SARKAR

ONE should be grateful to a sojourning German couple for giving the Calcutta viewers a chance to see the recent sculptures of Meera Mukherjee, at a private show, from February 14 to 16.

Meera Mukherjee is an extraordinary sculptor. In the late forties she won a scholarship to go to Germany and study at the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst for four years. Returning to India she worked with the Bastar Gharuas and later with the Shilpacharis of the South and Dhokra artisans of Bengal. In 1952 she became a senior fellow of the Anthropological Survey of India and studied the techniques of various metal craftsmen and published papers on these. In her wanderings abroad and in India she was able to learn a variety of ways of handling metals.

For a long time the artists in India have faced a very difficult problem. The coming of the British had dealt a death-blow to the traditional arts and crafts. The centres of art shifted from the old cities and villages to the newer cities of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta and other imperial administrative centres. The urban elite replaced the traditional artists and craftsmen as creative artists. These new artists were city-bred people, trained in Western-style art schools and influenced by the art of the West. They either mimicked the West or tried to resurrect dead tradition.

Today the problem is even more acute. The newly independent Afro-Asian nations are adopting technological culture and in the process rejecting worn out values, ways of life, ancient social organisations, customs, dress, food habits and even style of living. The individual faces a crisis of identity—is he for progress or for culture? Does he have to give up his tradition outright or

can a synthesis be worked out? This crisis is even more evident in contemporary works of art.

Moreover, patrons of art in India are the Western-educated urban men and women who know what is the latest fashion in art in Paris and New York and they force the artist to take note of their requirements. Then there is the foreign tourist who is looking for something which the artist has also to take into consideration. What about the artist's own experience and inner world where this experience comes into fruition as art? Compromises have to be worked out. No wonder modern Indian art is mostly neither modern, nor Indian, nor art!

Meera Mukherjee refuses to conform to this pattern. She wants to be true to her experience, true to her inner world. Stubbornly she fights with her medium to impose her will rather than be imposed upon by it. Her works are Indian in their totality, yet curiously enough they are contemporary. She is aware of the experiments being carried out and conscious of the art movements in various parts of the world. Her Indianness is valid because she does not turn her back to what is new and innovative. Yet she has not been overwhelmed by the challenge of modernity as she has her roots firmly planted in her tradition.

She has succeeded because she has gone back to village India instead of being locked up in the environs of the city. She has gone to the traditional metal craftsmen and learnt from them. She has identified herself with humble and lowly peasants, the miserable real Indians living in reservations to be exploited by a minority living in the cities. She has a dream that these little people will rise and return one day as giants. Like her Vaman Avatar (6) they patiently await their moment.

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**Myth-Maker**

Meera Mukherjee has mothered a race of giants. Even her small things have gigantic stature, and austere grace, a certain serenity. There is nothing petty or small about them and they even seem to have lofty souls. The effect of seeing 19 of her works is similar to that of visiting a sculptured Indian temple. She is a modern myth-maker.

In her sculptured works the human head has a special value. As if the whole body is an extension of the head, a culminating point of physical existence. Although her works are highly stylized, she has been able to make her heads and faces bring out the personality, the charm and character of her figures. She has used eyes, nose, brows, forehead, hair-styles, ears, curves of the mouth to emphasize individuality. Asoka (1) is 14 ft. tall and weighs almost a ton. He leans on his sword and presumably contemplates the evil of war after the battle of Kalinga. The face is not tortured or fierce, neither is it blissful. It has the intensity of realisation, a calm determination. The whole body, muscular, covered with armour, awaits the decisive moment. In these and other details she leaves the work of craftsmen far behind and enters the world of sculpture.

Vaman Avatar, Guru (4), a woman with a vessel on her head (19), Philosopher Gargi (10), all have expressive faces. Even the Sunflowers (7) have been given faces. She has done faces that are sometimes smiling, sometimes determined, sometimes peaceful yet never overwhelmed by life, faces, real, mythological and historical, which inspire. Stylized faces which strongly remind us of real ones—e.g. the boatman's face in Punting (5).

Meera Mukherjee is also interested in capturing frozen rhythms in postures. She portrays the lives of rustic folk to emphasize this. The Juice Collector (12) climbs a date-palm tree and his whole body fuses with the tree and gathers strength from it. Village Fair, hardly a foot

tall and 10 inches broad, has the atmosphere of a fair and a lot of human figures done in miniature. In both these pieces she has attacked the problem which so far has only interested the painters. Her stylization of trees reminds one of Indian miniature painting. Yet she cannot be said to have borrowed, as her sculpture is in the round—three dimensional. She has identified herself with the toilers, fisherfolk and their work as she herself works with her hands and toils with mud and metal. Her sympathy is evident in Punting, Archer (3), Fisherman (9), Pole Net (17) and the Juice Collector. Cat has a certain majesty. In Violence (14) she shows two persons pouncing upon a fallen victim and on the verge of killing him. It is like a frozen ballet scene. Deliberate elongation and distortion is used to capture the

tension and motion of this event. Details have been left out and only suggestions used. In almost the same way we see three heads bending slightly to discuss something (Problem 13) where a minimum number of indicative lines and shapes is used to bring out the mood.

Apart from history, mythology and village people, Meera Mukherjee has another interest—music. In Alap (16) and Tuning up (8) she captures the postures of artistes to heighten our feeling for music.

On the whole this has been an exhilarating exhibition. The irony of the whole situation is that while our art academywallahs were busy organising Husain and Hebbbar's exhibitions, a foreign resident took it upon himself to organise Meera Mukherjee's. A prophet is not without honour save in his own country and house.



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# A New Horizon

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

"IN producing films that cater to the demands of our time, it is most important to reflect truthfully the struggle between the new and the old and vividly show the superiority of the socialist system which opens up broad and unlimited vistas for the people". This is how Kim IL Sung sums up the fundamental aesthetic requirements of the post-revolutionary cinema in Korea and the films shown in the recently-held festival from the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea (organised by Cine Central, Calcutta) seem to translate the instructions of the leader into creative forms and spell out the first lessons in socialist realism with enthusiasm and clarity. Naturally, the themes of war and revolution dominate most of the films; the characters are often portrayed more as abstract ideals than as concrete types drawn from real life and often values are depicted in sharp black and white, lacking in the necessary middle tones. Nevertheless, the films do bring to us the land and the people with an authentic flavour and map out the achievements and the aspirations of a resurgent nation.

*The Flower Girl* set in the thirties depicts the poverty and exploitation during the feudal regime through a simple story of two sisters and their long lost brother. A picture of unrelieved misery in telling detail, this film has a ballad-like lucidity in its scenic treatment. The characters emerge with the simple nobility of their everyday life and the basic human appeal is never lost despite the schematic ending. The colour is pleasing and the performances, are of a high order. *Merry Stage* is a film of a different variety, a rollicking comedy set in the swinging world of acrobatics. The balance between the narrative form and the documentary portrayal of circus background is maintained beautifully and one

element is never allowed to submerge the other. The characters are all real, with their fads and foibles and the comic situations with the ingenious and inventive gags make this film as funny and fresh as a Harold Lloyd mayhem. *We Have Nothing To Envy In The World* is rather a weak attempt at depicting the post-revolutionary reconstruction through a thin story-line. There is a heavy burden of overblown messages and the entire approach and the pattern are absolutely one-dimensional. *Among The Villagers*, is an action-packed story of a woman guerilla-fighter's experience in an enemy-controlled village during the anti-Japanese resistance struggle. Told with the usual pace and the rhythm of a war-thriller, this film also follows the artistic credo set forth by the revolutionary leader. Almost the same pattern is repeated in *In An Enemy Occupied Town*. *A Wife's Working Place* is a routine study of a woman's duties and responsibilities in a revolutionary society and *On Jongryong Ridge* dwells on the oft-tried material, an artist's obligations towards revolutionary struggle.

On the whole, however, these films from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea point to a new horizon of socialist cinema. A far cry from the complex abstraction of the East European cinema or the technical gloss of the Cuban films or the overbearing spectacle of the Soviet blockbusters, the Korean cinema seems definitely to have been trying to evolve a peculiar form of its own by blending its own national folk traditions with the new socio-political ideals. There are, of course, pitfalls of overstatement and over-simplification, but judging these films as portents of the future, it is definite that the Korean cinema will get over these limitations and attain a positive and genuine national style.

## Gospel In Cans

Harbance Kumar, the director of the West Indian film *The Right and The Wrong* has brought in the messages of Gandhiji and Martin Luther King in heavy doses when he preaches the cult of non-violence through his melodramatic story of the workers' struggle against their master's oppression on a fruit plantation. The scenes and dialogues are grossly over-dramatised and almost everybody in the film plays a preacher. The white tyrant is made to behave like an inhuman monster and the people who rise against him are all copybook idealists. There are quite a few song-dance sequences in the Bombay style and a liberal exhibition of sex for box-office catch. Throughout the film one is sick of the talk about non-violence and bloodless revolution, but the struggle becomes effective only when the workers capture the guns of the plantation-owner and the tyrant is brought to book.

## Letters

### Captive Women

While you are busy shedding angel's tears over the lot of the Pakistani hordes now held captive in India and praising Bhutto's magnanimity (vide your recent editorials), let me refer to the tragedy of the hundreds of women and girls who have been forcibly taken away by the Pak army from different parts of Bangladesh as booty and reduced to camp whores.

A recent newspaper report has a very poignant story to tell regarding some of these hapless girls. A few Bengalis detained by the Pak authorities at Quetta have escaped to India. During their detention in the camp they saw appeals scribbled on the camp walls in Bengali by some of these girls, frantically urging upon any Bengali that might tread that way and chance upon their writing

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to move the Mujib Government for their rescue.

But the Mujib Government alone cannot do anything, unless the big powers, especially the socialist countries, come forward and put pressure upon the Pakistani authorities.

Cannot any international body like the Red Cross Society or any international women's organisation do anything in the matter?

ARUN SEN  
Calcutta

## Facts About Nepal

In the Nepal part of the article 'Octopus on the Himalayas' (January 6) Mr R. P. Mullick is to some extent misguided by bourgeois propaganda, particularly when he portrays King Birendra as pro-left, and when he overestimates the nomination of Mr Radha Prasad Ghimire.

So far as we know, King Birendra is actually pro-American in his approach. His academic life and the selection of behind-the-scene advisers prove it well. Only the geo-political setting of the country allowed both the late and the present king to create some so-called pro-Indian and pro-Chinese leaders in the Panchayat and bargain with the countries concerned. Therefore to describe King Birendra as pro-left is a subjective approach. Again, Mr Ghimire is not a member of the politbureau of the outlawed Communist Party of Nepal. He was only a district-level leader while the Party was legal in the pre-1960 era and left it when the suppression became acute. There is no central-level organisation of Communist revolutionaries of Nepal and the weekly *Jan-Jagriti* is not its publication. It is only the mouth-piece of the self-declared revolutionary faction of Pusp Lal. I know, Mr Ghimire is an intellectual but it is hard to believe that his appearance in the legislature will bring the urgently needed socio-economic changes.

It will be unjust to refer to only this part of the article. It has some

excellently bright aspects too. I agree with Mr Mullick when he explains the Indian Government's approach towards Nepal. Really, the politics based on threats and bargaining of the Nepali Congress is continuing with the support of the Indian reactionary ruling class and both are working for the revival of the same parliamentary rule.

Lastly I suggest Mr Mullick should be more objective and continue to write so that the common reader will be familiar with what is happening in this part of Asia.

HIMAL K. RAI  
Nepal

## Inquilab

Mr Hiten Ghosh has omitted a significant point in his review of *Inquilab* by Asif Currimbhoy, the Burma-Shell boxwallah. Along with Mrs Indira Gandhi, Sri A. L. Dias and Satyajit Ray, mention should also have been made of India Tobacco, who sponsored the play.

R. S. G.  
Calcutta

## IIT, Kharagpur

IIT, Kharagpur, is the first in the chain of five IITs which the Central Government changed into "institutes of national importance" in 1961. Since 1969, when Brigadier S. K. Bose took over as its Director, its affairs have been in a very bad shape.

On October 3, 1972, *The Statesman*, Calcutta, printed a report by its Staff Reporter highlighting serious irregularities and malpractices in administration, selection and promotion of teachers, admission of students, and misuse of public money on buildings, covered walks and an open-air theatre. The institute authorities dubbed it as the doing of "one or two disgruntled teachers", though the report unnerved them to the core.

Since then, the authorities have

mobilised the all-India press to improve their own image, but in doing this, they have made matters worse. They have not been able to deny the points made against them. So they are trying desperately to pin the responsibility on some others. In the second report in *The Statesman* (November 9 and 10), based on the briefing by the Institute authorities, they have tried to blame the previous administration, which, it is alleged, had built the Institute with war-vintage material so that now "renovation, remodelling and reorganisation" on a colossal scale have become necessary.

In the reports printed since in the *Times of India* (Bombay December 20, Delhi, December 21), also briefed by the authorities, the impression is sought to be created that while the authorities are keen to build up higher technological education and research, a large body of teachers have created obstruction. The *Times* (Bombay) headline is "fighting among IIT Staff at Kharagpur" and the *Times* (Delhi) headline is "Disgruntled teachers disturb Kharagpur IIT's Peace". The reports state, "Bickering began when emphasis was put on higher technology and inter-disciplinary research... Fresh problems were created with the appointment of new teachers in the recently opened Departments."

The fact is that during 1969-72, when Brigadier S. K. Bose has been director, and when the trouble started and grew to its present stage, IIT Kharagpur did not start a single new department. So the instance cited by the authorities of a 36-year-old ex-student of the Institute as heading the Department of Naval Architecture is irrelevant. The senior teachers of the Institute are not fools to oppose higher technological education and inter-disciplinary research for which the IIT exists. The root of the trouble is that, so far as selections and promotions are concerned, teachers at various levels have been superseded by their juniors and outsiders.

In recent appointments of deputy

directors, two teachers who are seniors have been neglected, and one of them, a former friend of the Director who is no longer bound by that tie, has represented to the Board alleging malpractices by Brigadier Bose and demanding the appointment of an enquiry committee. The dissatisfaction is widespread.

At one extreme to illustrate favouritism and graft is the appointment of a Marketing Economist at the Institute who has neither any degree, diploma nor any practical experience of the thing, and one wonders how the Selection Committee found him most suitable. At the other extreme is the case of a Professor of the Institute whose promotion to the senior grade has been debarred by the Director. The matter is now pending arbitration.

The IIT story during the past three years is full of such thrills. Another long chapter may be written on financial irregularities of which there must be many. Apart from big items involving colossal finance, like construction of new buildings and renovation of existing ones, covered walks, air-conditioned library, open-air theatre, etc., there are many petty items which are not very clean.

It is time the authorities woke up to the affairs of the IIT. If they fail, a great institution which has played such an important role in the growth of technological education will simply be wasted.

RAJIB KUMAR  
Calcutta

### The Document

Mr Sarad Senapati in his "A Document in Perspective" (January 20) questions, in so many words, the

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genuineness of the suggestions made by the CPC referred to in Kanu Sanyal and others' letter published in *Frontier* on November 4, 1972. In this connection, he not only demolishes the CPC suggestions by justifying Charu Mazumdar's line, but also, in a most sly manner 'establishes' the spuriousness of the CPC suggestions. The sole object of his article is to scuttle the most correct suggestions of the CPC by way of sowing distrust and confusion about the authors of the letter as well as the CPC suggestions. How does Senapati dismiss the genuineness of the CPC suggestions? He says, "Anyone who is familiar with Chinese style of polemics (as if Chinese suggestions were polemics!) can easily see that the alleged criticism 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 'charges' in their own language, but never even an 'excerpt' from the original document, if any." (all emphases added).

The readers might remember that nowhere did the letter of Kanu Sanyal and others say that the suggestions of the CPC were a verbatim reproduction from the original document.

Mr Senapati and the readers of the letter of Kanu Sanyal and others know quite well that the suggestions by the CPC were made in November 1970. It is common sense that neither the original document nor its true copy can or could be carried inside the jail or from one jail to other, that the letter from inside the jail cannot but be written in the language of the authors on the basis of their memory of the contents of the document. The only thing which might have been reasonable is to question whether the memory of the authors of the letter, had betrayed them, in citing the suggestions, but Mr Senapati is not in a mood to tread this reasonable and rational path.

There is one error in the letter of Kanu Sanyal and others. Memory

betrayed them when they said, "it will wound the national sentiment of the working class" while dealing with the CPC's fraternal suggestions over the slogan "China's Chairman is our Chairman". Mr Senapati asks, "How can one talk about hurting the national sentiment of the working class?" Mr Senapati says this quite correctly. In fact the CPC said that bourgeois nationalism is yet to cease playing its anti-imperialist role. As such this slogan wounds the national sentiment where the role of nationalism has not yet been exhausted, where anti-imperialist national struggle is a vital part. Perhaps it will not be irrelevant to mention that the CPC wanted to know why there was no anti-imperialist propaganda in CPI (ML) publications and why the CPI (ML) had no programme regarding anti-imperialist movements.

It is necessary to add here one more thing for the appraisal of the whole thing. The 'original document' under reference is nothing but verbatim minutes of a discussion between one Indian comrade and the CPC leadership. The minutes were handed over to Charu Mazumdar together with a report by the comrade who had discussions with the CPC leadership. The document did not see the light of day. The letter of Kanu Sanyal and others was written on the basis of the memorised version of the original document and their memory certainly did not betray them in the main. Somebody might have a true copy of the original document in his possession.

Mr Senapati, I am afraid, is not treading the clean path.

SENAPATI PRADHAN  
Calcutta

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