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NO RESPITE

EARLIER this week there was a minor deadlock in Vietnam over the pigheaded American demand for the return of prisoners of war held in Laos too. Unless these ten, including a Canadian, were back, the Americans would not pull back all their troops. And the mines, thousands of them, would continue to be there in North Vietnam waters. But far more serious is the threat that unless the North Vietnamese stop their supplies to the South, Mr Nixon will do something. We all know that Mr Nixon has to be taken at his word.

What is happening in the South was expected. The fighting has gone on, with more than 16,000 killed after the cease-fire. The Thieu men, rearmed to the teeth between October and January, are determined to grab as much territory as possible and wreck all the significant clauses of the Paris agreement. Thieu is not interested in a political settlement. He will not release the bulk of the civilian prisoners; he is converting them into the category of ordinary criminals; his minions will not allow the military commissions to work. He can do all these things because behind him is Mr Nixon—and his bombers. These are merrily wreaking havoc in Laos and Cambodia where villagers are being reduced to rubble and the villagers to refugees. They can go into action again against Hanoi and Haiphong and in the south. It is likely that the Vietcong are receiving some reinforcements—where one side is determined to wreck the agreement, the other side has every right to protect itself. Thieu thinks he will be able to throttle the Vietcong with his reinforced strength. But that is not to be. That explains why he is squealing again.

The Americans have learnt that it is not possible to crush national liberation forces, however overwhelming the modern weapons of destruction are. But they have also learnt that the national liberation forces can be prevented from taking over cities and towns by terror bombing, because they have not aircraft or adequate anti-aircraft guns. This is where the matter of aid from fraternal countries comes up.

Those who were ecstatic about the impending withdrawal of tired Americans from South-East Asia and perhaps worried about another spell of American isolationism are wrong. The bombers will remain and the boys who use them—most of whom deserve to be in tiger cages for manslaughter—will be treated as heroes if and when they return. As

for those who fought on the ground, they proved themselves worthless. There is no need to use Marines Bombers are enough.

Indian Way Of Wooing

It is one of the privileges of the Government to possess state secrets; it can conjure up dangers, existing or imaginary, whenever they suit the occasion, without having the obligation to prove that they exist. Last week we had Mrs Gandhi informing us that big foreign powers were out to topple her Government. Promptly taking the cue, Mr S. S. Ray in West Bengal informed the Brigade Parade public that big powers were out to topple his Government too; albeit internal big powers.

It has grown into a habit for Mrs Gandhi, since she took on the socialist garb, to imagine an enemy in the U.S. Government. Probably she considers that the stronger the enemy, the more prestigious would be her position as the protagonist of the drama. After all, it is no glamour to have only Pakistan as the enemy—India can now pull it down in the very first round of a knockout any time any place. She has been called the most powerful statesman in the world by the foreign press, but cosmopolitan as she is she knows that the epithet will not last long because Pakistan is less than a pigmy in the world arena. To make her claim strong she will have to find a stronger enemy. It is however unfortunate that she happens to belong to India, less than a non-entity in world politics. However declamatory her speeches may be, they ring totally false to everybody except herself. For the last fifteen months she has been dourly tilting at American aid. However, now that Mr Nixon has unfrozen foreign aid, Mrs Gandhi has lost no time to state that it will be accepted. As our experience says, abstinence adds to the passion. We shall be disillusioned if the American aid does not

become fatter now. In all fairness it must be also stated that American statesmen have been using the technique of freeze much as an Indian film director does—without any credibility, much too often, and achieving nothing but the ridiculous.

The freezing of American aid for the last fifteen months looks all the more farcical as newspapers now admit that, at the time when Mrs Gandhi was most vociferous against American aid, U.S. firms emerged as the largest single group of foreign collaborators with Indian firms, far outstripping the British firms which were hitherto the major collaborators in India. And these U.S. collaborators were not merely technical, they were in the major cases financial. It is needless to state who controls whom, when American firms collaborate with Indian, unless one is gullible enough to believe that it is collaboration among equals.

But it must be stated at this point that Mr Rogers, the U.S. Secretary of State, was interfering in India's domestic policy when he said that Indo-American differences should not be exaggerated and are not to be publicly discussed at all. What the hell, he has no right to deny Mrs Gandhi one of the principal levers of her State policies. Mrs Gandhi has all the right to invoke off and on the American danger, which is the thing in world politics today. Being an Indian, she has all the more entitlement. Didn't Ravana choose to woo Ram as an enemy?

Defence Estimates

A correspondent writes

The announcement about the resumption of American arms supplies to Pakistan is about the best rationalisation the Government of India could have had for justifying its latest Defence Service estimates. There is nothing modest about the estimates. The budgeted estimates for 1973-74 are Rs. 1,404.82 crores; the final amount that is going to

be spent this year in the name of Defence (if past experience is any guide) will certainly be considerably more than the budget estimate, which seems quite a huge amount to spend on the armed forces. One of the consolations offered during the year before the Bangladesh war was that if Bangladesh should become independent, there would be a lessening of the defence burden, as a dismembered Pakistan could not possibly pose a threat to us. Last year's budget was presented too soon after the 1971 war, and the huge defence allocations were justified as actually necessary to compensate for the losses suffered during the war. But surely, it is idle to pretend that the truncated and internally crisis-ridden Pakistan of 1973 continues to be a military threat to India. The Pakistanis, even in their most aggressive and sabre-rattling days, were a little too long on rhetoric and abuse, and a little too short on action. Like Arabs, their bark has always been worse than their bite. Of course, our patriotic members of Parliament have always been more than willing to vote, without question, the most inflated kinds of demands on behalf of Defence; before this holiest of the holy institutions, any reason, let alone criticism, has always bowed. Still, considering the intolerable burdens our people are suffering from, some rash people might have started making questions, might have dared wonder if all this huge allocation is after all necessary. But the American announcement has once again created a bogeyman of Pakistan; a real menace, now sustained by Machiavellian super-powers whose evil designs against this country seem scarcely credible. Hence, it would be too far-fetched to expect Parliament to go in for any radical questioning of the rationale of our defence policy.

BANI PRAKASH,
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Assam.

MARCH 31, 1973

One Year

The Ray Ministry in West Bengal completed its first year of rule only recently and the party in power, quite jubilant over the work done so far by the government, organised a public meeting at Calcutta Maidan to celebrate the performance. Lorry-loads of flag-waving Congressites, an assortment of well-fed, complacent urban faces and emaciated, sunburnt, rather bewildered folk from the countryside were emptied on the Maidan and the Press did not miss the sight. What was it all about, though?

The Government too is very satisfied with its 365 days of activities. The Chief Minister, Mr Siddhartha Sankar Ray, gave a grand dinner—the guests have been writing long articles on the spectacular achievements of the Government. The Government is publishing a series of expensive advertisements in newspapers claiming that it has done record work. While publicity and propaganda can bluff the people into believing that a lot has been done, the facts speak for themselves.

Some of the unpalatable facts are the rise in the number of educated job-seekers in the State (from 9.12 lakhs to 14.03 lakhs in the last ten months between March 1972 and January 1973, as disclosed by the Live Register of the Employment Exchange in a press release on March 23 this year) and the alarming increase in evictions and deprivation of sharecroppers and landless peasants. Mr Ray, during his 60-minute Maidan speech, repeatedly claimed that his Government had been able to restore order and stability, evidently secure in the knowledge that in a public meeting none would have either the chance or courage to ask why more than 6,000 people were arrested or why nearly 12,000 young boys are still rotting in jails without trial. His long lecture on the progress of "Garibi Hatao" also raises many bewildering questions among, for instance, people with

post-graduate qualifications who have hopefully queued up for Class IV posts with the Government and the 11 lakhs who have been jostling for a few posts advertised by the State Electricity Board.

After being sworn in as the Chief Minister, Mr Ray declared dramatically from the balcony of Writers Building that his Government was a "workers' government, peasants' government and the government of the people" and that he would force the private undertakings run by Tatas, Birlas and Goenkas to create job opportunities on a wider scale and not for a select few. But after one year, he, at the Maidan, publicly admitted that "Tata, Birla and Goenka have virtually stopped new recruitment to sabotage our socialist programme." Mr Ray knows well how to cover up his Government's failure to take action, as promised earlier, against these "saboteurs". The reason for this failure can easily be traced to the ruling party's political and economic obligations to them. The Government's well-tailored fiction of progress cannot hide the fact that even when unemployment is staggering, it makes a huge profit by selling application forms to the ill-fated job-seekers. The Income Tax office in Calcutta recently earned Rs. 1.27 lakhs selling 17,000 application forms against 48 posts.

The claim that the Government was "a peasants' government" was contradicted by no less a man than Mr Nurul Islam, General Secretary, WBPCG, when he had to admit at a recent peasants' gathering in Burdwan that the jotedars were all out to strike the poor farmers with greater ferocity and in a more organised way than before. The eviction of sharecroppers has become wider and more frequent with the enactment of the much-publicised Land Reforms (Amendment) Act.

The Government has mastered the art of lying, raising high hopes in the mind of a susceptible mass. The long chain of Cabinet meetings in different district headquarters made

all sorts of promises. The Union Minister, Mr Deviprasad Chatterjee, was perhaps alive to the consequences of false promises when he warned his colleagues against it at the Maidan meeting.

Taking Over Education

A correspondent writes:

The West Bengal Government's decision to take over the management of a private college at Kamarpukur, Hooghly, need not be taken as an earnest of its commitment to socialism, though the Congress party's student wing has been clamouring for "nationalisation" of educational institutions as part of a "socialist" ideology. The decision, however, is to be welcomed only if it leads to a full enquiry into the allegation of gross irregularities against the existing committee of management. The circumstances which led to the summary dismissal of sixteen teachers of the college should also be gone into, for it is alleged that they were victimised for not abetting or conniving at the abuses. Misuse of funds and violation of university regulations are among the irregularities reported.

The way the Government has been dragging its feet in taking the present decision cannot be explained merely by a "democratic" hesitation to barge into the affairs of a private educational institution—for which the invocation of Article 31 (a) of the Indian Constitution has been necessary. A more reasonable hypothesis for caution on the Government's part can be found in the implication of the Bill for other private colleges in the State. The state of affairs in most of these may not be as free from reproach as the absence of any agitation against their authorities would suggest. The irregularities in the administration of the Kamarpukur College would possibly never have come to light but for the arbitrary dismissal of a large number of its teachers. It

is the agitation of the college teachers' association against the dismissal that forced the Government to take heed after months of procrastination. Its subsequent action has apparently come after/widespread reports of irregularities following the agitation. In many private colleges such or even more blatant irregularities may be quite rampant with or without the acquiescence of the teaching staff. But even where the teachers, as a whole, are critical of the ways of the college administration, prudence may prove stronger than any courage of conviction and prompt discreet silence.

Of course a mere takeover of the management of all private colleges or transforming them outright into Government colleges will not bring about a miracle. But private colleges should be cured of administrative misdemeanour as the first step to ensure proper atmosphere for imparting education. A good few of these colleges owe their origin to local political jockeying, a bid for wielding political influence in a locality, and remain ever since a source of dispensing favours and patronage to various shady interests. Corruption flourishes under government indifference or active patronage of the politicians. The first thing to do is to impose financial control and supervision, and then ensure proper machinery for staff recruitment and enforcement of regulations governing the terms and conditions of service. The least that can be done in this respect is to institute an enquiry into various aspects of college administration and bring them under a single set of rules applicable to all similar institutions. The reorganisation of college administration, making it responsible to a real Government within the terms of these rules, can only follow the Government's assumption of full financial responsibility in respect of private colleges. All this will clear part of the muck, perhaps.

View from Delhi

Red Carpet Again

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

LISTENING to Mr Y. B. Chavan last Tuesday in the Rajya Sabha, one almost thought it would be rude to reject the 87.5 million dollar U.S. loan, which it was made to appear was a routine affair—the freezing and the subsequent defreezing and all. Yes, we protested against the decision to freeze and now we welcome the decision to defreeze. Mr Chavan has gone to the USA and Mrs Indira Gandhi has launched another strident campaign against the “grander alliance” to be and the CPI is treating itself to the most expensive tamasha the Capital has had, in the form of a Long March on Parliament to remind the ruling party of its broken election promises. And all is well once again with India/United States relation, the campaign against Mr Nixon and the resultant anti-United States feeling in the country converted quietly into a 87.5 million dollar largesse to begin with and more aid to come shortly.

American correspondents in New Delhi had been told by their embassy to look out for something the afternoon Mr Patrick Moynihan called on Mrs Gandhi. If he did not speak to newsmen after the courtesy call, take it things are bad for Indo-U.S. relations. If he spoke, everything is smooth once again. And Mr Moynihan did more than speak. Then came the quiet announcement by Mr Chavan accepting the loan.

It is clear now that India does not want to take the resumption of arms flow to Pakistan seriously though initially Mr Swaran Singh seemed to react sharply. It has turned out to be an “over reaction”. The Jana Singh kidded itself staging a demonstration of sorts against it but the Government does not want such manifestations of anger. Not

any more. Even Dr S. D. Sharma does not talk about the CIA activities in India and Mrs Gandhi does not want to denounce U.S. arms to Pakistan.

Oddly enough, Mr Swaran Singh who said the arms would prove a setback to the implementation of the Simla agreement, later talked of the time being ripe for an initiative to break the deadlock. The new stance could certainly not be the result of a realisation that India's rigid stance was becoming counter-productive and countries which backed India during the Bangladesh issue are moving closer to Pakistan on the POWS issue. In any case, such a change in attitude cannot come in the matter of a single week.

Could it be that there is a tacit Soviet-United States understanding on arms balance in the sub-continent and the USA has settled for a marginal role to provide the “corrective” operations whenever there is any need? Pakistan can well get Soviet arms from third countries like Iran just as India was supplied from Soviet arms dumps in Egypt. (Ceylon also got arms from the same dump to crush the Che Guevarist insurgency.) Continued Soviet silence on the Pakistan POW issue could only mean displeasure with Indian and Bangladesh attitudes.

What about the American offer of communication equipment for the “Project Peace Indigo”, a radar surveillance system against China? It is little secret now that as late as October 1972, serious negotiations were on about equipment for Project Peace Indigo and the Government could neither deny nor confirm newspaper reports. But something seems to have happened since. India has other sources of supply and part of the equipment, it was found, could be fabricated indigenously. Besides, there is at least one other power, a super-power at that, which would be too glad to aid the project. The United States might no longer be interested in the kind of data the early warning system would yield but someone else is damned serious

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about it. So India might be in a position to say no to the offer.

The Government leadership has been lucky in having so many diversionary campaigns developing in the country and could time for politicking with the States. Almost all the political lightweights Mrs Gandhi had imposed on the States, subverting the normal process of party functioning, are in trouble. All of them come raging mad to New Delhi when they are in trouble and seek the Centre's protection. The Gujarat episode is a case in point. Instead of taking disciplinary action against the dissidents carrying on a signature campaign, the Congress President called them over to New Delhi for a patch-up.

In Andhra Pradesh, Mrs Gandhi thinks she can buy time and wear the separatist agitators out. She told a group of Andhra MPs that she was preoccupied with the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections (a whole year away!) and they should give her time to take a decision on the Andhra separation issue. But meantime, the CPI storm troopers financed from not so mysterious sources in New Delhi are going about bashing up the separatists with the real of a demolition squad. The CPI is getting police protection for all its activities and its leaders have direct liaison with the district authorities in many places. No central leader, not even the Prime Minister, and not one of her Andhra Ministers, have dared to go to the State after the current phase of the agitation and all are content to tote things up in New Delhi.

The mood all round reminds one of the pre-1967 election days—of a growing atmosphere of violence and discontent amidst a drought and shortage. But with this difference: there is no general election round the corner. Mrs Gandhi and her aides think that once the monsoons come and harvests begin reaching the market, the people will forget their wrath and the Congress can rule the country happily ever after. The negative anti-Congressism of

1967, which threw up non-ideological coalition ministries in several States, petered out by the end of 1970 and the country returned to one-party dominance. But stable majorities did not result in stability. The Andhra Pradesh Government did not go out for want of a house majority. It was the loss of legitimacy and not the loss of majority.

Mrs Gandhi's shrill attacks on the "grander alliance" suggests a new kind of psychosis, after the CIA

bogey had failed to click. But the Opposition is still in disarray, groping for a strategy. It has failed to make any impact in Parliament or outside. The CPI's compulsion to stage the Delhi march is perhaps an index of the growing anti-Congress mood in the country, but a repetition of 1967, when there was a general stampede against the Congress resulting in political pandemonium, will not achieve anything.

March 25, 1973

Myrdal : Theorist And Confessor Of The Intermediate Regime

ARJUN BARUI

ON the fringes of orthodox social science live non-Marxist radical social theorists. The most famous and in some ways the most influential among these self-confessed heretics in Gunnar Myrdal.

Myrdal's claims have generally been taller than his actual achievements. He has discovered for himself important ideological elements in orthodox economic theory; his earliest book, *The Political Element in the Development of Economic Thought*, remains, apart from his book on the American Negro problem, perhaps his best work. But his performance in the field of analysis of the ideological content of bourgeois economics does not have much objective originality: after all, Karl Marx had done the job with so much greater power in his *Theories of Surplus Value*, although he never had the time to finish his projected Vol. IV of *Das Kapital*. (One is reminded of Myrdal's own complaint in *Monetary Equilibrium* that Keynes displayed, because of his incomplete knowledge of the previous literature, an unnecessary brand of originality). What is important, however, is that by blunting the political edge of the Marxist attack, Myrdal made his brand of heresy acceptable to the Establish-

ment. He has continued to perform the same function of defusing the various explosive mixtures emerging from Marxist enterprises of different kinds and presenting them for harmless experimentation by the powers that be in the developed and underdeveloped non-communist countries.

This explains Myrdal's vogue: but if he was merely merish, he would not be important; he could be relegated to the dustheap of history with people like Bastiat, Harriet Martineau, Ludwig von Mises, and Minoo Masani. He is important because he provides presumed solutions to problems that Marxists, until recently, treated rather perfunctorily but which have real political significance.

Take, for example, the racial question in the USA. For a long time, many Marxists saw it as just another problem of exploitation within the capitalist-imperialist system, to be treated as just a part of the general contradiction between the workers and capitalists in that country. They did not see that this racial distinction between the exploiters and the exploited also provided a unique political opportunity: consciousness of oppression, a feeling of cohesiveness as a group did not have to be created among the oppressed Afro-Ameri-

cans; what had to be done was to provide a political expression to that consciousness through appropriate ideological and organizational work. The Marxists' awareness of the revolutionary potential of this situation lagged considerably behind the consciousness of the black people of the USA, and even behind the programme of other political groups which in their own ways provided a focus for the struggle of the Afro-Americans. Myrdal was one of the first social scientists to treat this racial question on a wide canvas.

Or take again the connection between the market mechanism and regional and inter-regional inequality. While the Marxist-Leninist theory of imperialism is the most powerful apparatus for exposing the extreme consequences of this inequality, there was not enough exploration of the functioning of this mechanism in "normal" times as an ongoing process. There was even a tendency to portray such inequalities in terms of the *conspiracy* of the ruling classes to maintain them: inequality as both a consequence and a sustaining twist of the irrational order of capitalism was not studied in concrete detail. On the other hand international and inter-regional inequalities in income were given a prominent place in the analysis of such non-Marxist heretics as Balogh, Myrdal and Perroux.

But these analyses fall short of a full exploration of the logic of the capitalist system. Despite Myrdal's insistence on the correctness of the method for analyzing social and economic problems, it is in fact his methodology that has let him down very badly. I am not suggesting that it is only faults in method that lie at the root of my dissatisfaction with Myrdal's posture as the international heretic who has occupied important positions within the Establishment but has yet remained critical of it. Even within the rather wobbly ground that he has allowed himself, Myrdal's exploration is lacking in power: there are not enough bones and muscles in the creatures he sends

out to do battle with the monsters of orthodox economic theory. But an apparently heretical method has a strange fascination for the radical mind, and it is therefore necessary to see how far it stands up to logical scrutiny.

"Equilibrium"

Myrdal, like most other Swedish economists since the 1920s, started with Wicksell as his direct intellectual ancestor. He has elevated a simple process described by Wicksell in his monetary theory—that a cumulative disequilibrium within a system defined by a rather crude set of axioms—into a grand methodological principle. The concepts of "equilibrium", "stability of equilibrium" etc. in economies are lifted straight out of Newtonian mechanics. So long as we are aware of what the limits of their meaning are—in particular, so long as we know that equilibrium is to be defined with respect to a properly formulated set of relations among a clearly specified set of variables (price, quantity, income, etc.)—they serve their purpose. One can say that for any observed state of things there always exist a sufficient number of suitably defined relations which would generate that state. But that statement remains empty until such a system has been constructed and verified as to the correctness of the claim.

I am not clear what Myrdal is really claiming. Is he making the statement that things are always in flux, so that there is no point in talking about equilibrium? That proposition might be true, but in that case science in the usual sense would be a terribly uncertain affair—hardly worth the effort that has gone into its construction so far; for, if all relations are changeable all the time, it would be foolish optimism to try to discover any stable relation in this infinitude of flux.

I would suggest that Myrdal is not meaning the non-constructibility of stable relations, for among his "modernization" goals, science occupies a very prominent place. Fur-

thermore, for cumulative disequilibrium to be there the notion of equilibrium must be definable. It might then be taken to mean that within the systems constructed by bourgeois economists and sociologists, the equilibrium exists but is unstable. It is curious that he does not make any important effort to develop this line of attack. Trying another tack, Myrdal might claim that for the phenomena that he is interested in, with the systems of relations that represent them faithfully, an equilibrium exists but is unstable. One retort would be then to ask Myrdal to construct a fuller system of equations within which the movement away from the earlier putative equilibrium is an attribute of the new, properly defined equilibrium state ("state" here includes both positions at a moment of time and changes in those positions over time)¹.

The construction of such a full system, however, is contrary to Myrdal's purpose in writing. He is an inveterate reform-monger; he wants to intervene. Neither the technocratic determinism of the modern neoclassical economists nor the revolutionary dialectic of Marxism would suit his purpose. He wants the system to be sufficiently mechanical so that he can conceive of the drivers of such a system—drivers who would seek his advice; but he wants its equations of motion to have a degree of freedom that would allow him to try to alter it significantly through such advice. This explains the apparent puzzle that anybody should want to oppose a preposterous principle of cumulative disequilibrium against the equally preposterous principle of an essentially static social universe.

Talking about the Negro problem he writes, for example: "The principle of cumulation—insofar as it holds true—promises final effects of very much greater magnitude than the efforts and costs of the reforms themselves. The low status of the Negro is, for instance, tremendously and self-perpetuatingly wasteful all round—their low educational standard

causes low productivity, health deficiencies and low earnings, and these again keep down the educational standards, and so on.

"The cumulatively magnified final effects of a push upward when wisely applied to the relevant factors is, in one sense, a demonstration, and also a measure, of the earlier existing 'social waste'. In the end, the cost of raising the status of the Negro will not involve any 'real net cost' at all, but instead result in great 'social gains' for society. The definition of these political concepts, based on explicit value premises, must be conceived of in the dynamic terms of circular causation of a cumulative development."²

Intermediate Regimes

With such a view of the social process, the emergence of Myrdal as one of the chief theorists of the intermediate regimes in underdeveloped countries should cause no surprise. What misleads radical students of Myrdal is that he is also a kind of father confessor for the predictable failures of such regimes. These regimes are needed by the stunted and dependent capitalism which is the legacy of direct or indirect rule by the advanced capitalist countries. The capitalist class is too weak to foster fully capitalist rules of the game in all social arrangements and must find accommodation not only for the landlords and the bureaucrats, but also for the waste products of a stagnant society. Myrdal takes up the pose of a moralist and preaches "social discipline" to them, and cautions them against "opportunistic" decisions. "Opportunistic" is in fact an oft-repeated reproof addressed by Myrdal to the policy prescriptions of other social scientists. Myrdal wants the States of these intermediate regimes to be less "soft" and enforce social discipline and practise the attributes of "modernization" so that they can save themselves from the ultimate horror of communism. But when some of the past efforts of these regimes to practise the virtues of

modernization end in dismal failure, he has nothing more to offer than another mixture of the same old remedies—aided by optimism.

Take, for instance, his treatment of the problems of agriculture in one of his latest books, *The Challenge of World Poverty* with the subtitle: *A World Anti-Poverty Programme in Outline*.³ This book contains the policy conclusions derived from his larger study, *Asian Drama: An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations*,⁴ written, appropriately enough, under the auspices of the Brookings Institution. He points out the failure of the land reform programmes in the countries of Latin America and South Asia. Even when the land reform measures are supplemented by other institutional reforms (which were "often presented as revolutionary in their effect of fostering greater equality in the villages"), by the logic of the existing inegalitarian social, economic and political stratification in these countries and not least in their villages", they have almost regularly had the opposite effect. "Ordinarily only the higher strata could avail themselves of the advantages offered by the cooperative institutions, and profit from the subsidies given for their development. *The net effect has been to create more, not less, inequality*".⁵ (Italics in the original).

But what does he conclude from past policy failures? That only a thoroughly socialist order could really solve the problem of feeding the people and improving their standard of living continually? Not Myrdal. He falls back on the "dignity of property" and dreams of small peasant democracy. "... a high priority should be accorded to a programme to give a small plot of land—and with it dignity and a fresh outlook on life, as well as a minor independent source of income—to members of the now landless underclass in the villages. Even in densely populated areas it would be possible to give at least small plots on acreages that are now uncultivated waste. The existing pattern of cultivated holdings need not be seriously disturbed

—in some localities it need not be disturbed at all.

"It would be essential in such a scheme of very limited land redistribution, however, that *unrestricted right to own and use the land pass into the hands of the landless as individuals*. The Indian system, applied in the very small-scale attempts to give waste land to the landless, viz., to press them into co-operatives under the control of the village panchayats (mostly dominated by the higher landowning castes) must be suspected to have been devised in order to prevent low-caste persons from acquiring the dignity of landowners, however small the plot. In any case it has had that result".⁶ (Isn't it simpler to believe that those who *have* land are not likely simply to give it away to others, without invoking caste?).

How fatally Myrdal slides into the formulations of Proudhon⁷ on the one side and the Narodniks⁸ on the other! There is a peculiar kind of Nemesis which overtakes reformers on a grand scale: they do not have the certainty of the henchmen of the existing system nor do they have the clarity of vision about the necessity of change that the true revolutionary has. *The Challenge of World Poverty* is written as an act of intervention in the political debate in the USA; it is addressed to the ruling class of that country, and I suppose, of other capitalist countries. Naturally, therefore, while he talks about "pressure from below", he is careful to eschew any reference to class struggle or the use of violence by the oppressed to counter the organized violence of the existing regimes.

The avoidance of any serious class analysis by Myrdal deprives him of a powerful analytical tool as well. He oscillates all the time between the two poles of an imaginary, homogeneous society and the loneliness of the individual conscience. Hence his exhortations for change remain on the plane of mere moralizing: there is no revolutionary class or alliance of classes that he can invoke as an agency for dynamic social change.

Thus Myrdal is reduced to the status of a consultant to bureaucrats and reforming bourgeois politicians. And when his recommendations cannot be carried out because of the very logic of the existing system, he puts on the robe of the Father Confessor nodding sadly at his errant charges.

1. Cf. the remarks of J. R. Hicks on Wicksell's "cumulative process" in *Value and Capital* (Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 251-3, esp. p. 253: "Wicksell's price-system consists of a perfectly determinate core—the relative prices of commodities and the rate of interest—floating in a perfectly indeterminate aether of money values. Since the money price-level is so utterly arbitrary, any shift and temporary disturbance of data may shift it about to a large extent".

2. G. Myrdal: *Economic Theory and Underdeveloped Regions* (Bombay, 1958), p. 32.

3. Penguin Books, 1971; first published in 1970.

4. Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1968.

5. *The Challenge of World Poverty*, p. 116.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

7. For a summary of Proudhon's views on property, justice etc., see Eric Roll: *A History of Economic Thought* (London, 1954), pp. 240-45; for a devastating critique of Proudhon, see the letter of Marx to J. B. Schweitzer in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: *Selected Works*, Vol. II (Moscow, 1966) pp. 24-30.

8. For summary accounts of the doctrines of the Narodniks see among others, N. Georgescu-Roegen: "Economic Theory and Agrarian Economics," *Oxford Economic Papers*, N. S., 1960; R. Luxemburg: *The Accumulation of Capital* (London, 1963), Chapters XVIII-XX and V. I. Lenin: *Collected Works* (Moscow 1964) Vols. I-IV.

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Debray And The 'Marxists'

ASHOK BHATTACHARYA

WHILE going through 'Reflections on a Heroic Mandarin' (March 10) I wondered why I kept reading Mr Ahmad when I bitterly disagreed with whatever he has to tell us on the gradual transformation of the heroic mandarin. With extraordinary brilliance and originality he equated the educational process of Debray with that of the degeneration of the French Communist Party and concluded that Debray set sail for Cuba to seek a way out for his personal liberation. This is the same unscientific analysis which the 'Marxists' applied against Che Guevara and the Cuban Revolution. This is the reason why Che Guevara, at Punta del Este for a conference (August 1961), when he met a communist youth asked him if he had come for making counter-revolution [See *Vencermos* edited John Gerassi, Introduction, page 18.]

While accusing Debray of distorting the Cuban experience, Mr Ahmad himself distorted the well-known facts about the Cuban revolutionaries. He writes "...it is equally undeniable that many of them had been Marxist-Leninist before they joined the Army. Che himself was one such even before he left Argentina". This is sheer reversal of the fact. Only Carlos Rafael Rodriguez had relation with the PSP (Popular Socialist Party). Let me again quote Gerassi: "According to Juan Bosch, the former President of the Dominican Republic, who met Che in San José, Costa Rica, 'it was there that Guevara first met a group who had participated in the Moncada assault'. At that time, says Bosch, 'Guevara spoke very little. He would answer questions, but not volunteer information. He would sit to one side and listen. He was in a very bad economic condition, but when I tried to help him, he would never accept anything. He was in-

tensely preoccupied with what he saw. He seemed dissatisfied with all solutions proposed up to that time, and when he was asked specific questions, he criticized all parties, but never defined his own position. However, I am convinced by the way he answered questions that he was not a communist then'."

This happened in the early part of 1954, after his second departure from Argentina. What is more regrettable is that, Mr Ahmad, without going for a concrete analysis of the Cuban Revolution, rejoiced for the Cuban victory only because the PSP identified itself with the guerillas. Unlike Mr Ahmad, W. J. Pomeroy has presented a brief but qualitative analysis of the Cuban success. Pomeroy states, "The Cuban people had a good deal of experience in organisation and mass struggle. Oriente, where Granma landed and Santiago de Cuba, the supply base, were familiar with revolutionary struggle for a long time... The revolutionary process in Cuba was very much insurrectionary in character. All sections of population were brought into it adopting various forms of struggle as the crisis matured with armed struggle playing the decisive role. The existence of a revolutionary situation that matured rapidly to a revolutionary crisis and affected the entire population may account for the fact that a prolonged guerilla war as has occurred for example in Asia was not essential in Cuban circumstances" (*Guerilla Warfare*, edited by W. J. Pomeroy; see introduction on Latin America).

In a letter to Vera Zasulich Engels in 1885 speaks of "exceptional cases where it is possible for a handful of people to make a revolution; i.e. with one little push to cause a whole system... to come crashing down and thus by an action in itself insignifi-

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cant to release explosive forces that afterwards become incontrollable". (See introduction by Richard Gott in his remarkable book *Guerilla Movements in Latin America*).

The profound lack of study on the part of Mr Ahmad becomes visible when he writes, "The crucial error in Debray, upon which the entire fallacious structure of his work is predicated, is his insistent identification of all party organisation 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 the countries of South-East Asia were even conceivable without the party to lead them". Here again Mr Ahmad has pursued the path of twisting the facts. There is no mention anywhere in Debray's *Revolution in the Revolution?* that all over the world the communist parties have gone revisionist. There is not a single argument that the revolutions in China, Korea, Vietnam could be performed outside the boundary of the communist party. While analysing the Vietnam issue Debray justifies all the political and military activities of the Workers Party of Vietnam—even at one stage while analysing the self-defence tactic he quotes from Giap and Che. Perhaps a more attentive study of Regis Debray is needed for Mr Ahmad to have a grasp of the Latin American situation. It seems, however, that Mr Ahmad has little knowledge of the Debray model and less so of the periodicals which discussed the issue with extraordinary depth as early as 1968 (*The Monthly Review*, July-August, the whole issue was devoted to Regis Debray and the Latin American Revolution). Unlike Mr Ahmad, this issue of MR sought to

find out the discrepancies of Debray from a height inconceivable for Mr Ahmad. Leo Huberman and Paul M. Sweezy wrote: "Debray's book was written before Che's unsuccessful attempt to establish a viable guerilla foco in Bolivia, so obviously, he cannot be taxed with failure to analyse that episode. But the same cannot be said about the equally disastrous attempt of the Peruvian MIR under the leadership of Luis de La Puente to establish guerilla focos in Peru in 1965. Debray refers to the Peruvian defeat but makes no attempt to analyse it... why did Debray evade this issue? Was he afraid that an analysis of the failure in Peru would cast doubts on the validity of his own theory?"

Another serious point which Pomeroy mentions in his book *Guerilla Warfare*—Debray's adherence to the organic aspects of human beings: Young men can sustain heavy exertions and hence are capable of being revolutionaries while the old who are less accustomed to hardships pursue the revisionist line and so on.

Under the heading "No quick process" Mr Ahmad unnecessarily wastes a lot of time—his own and unknowingly of his readers—by laboriously inserting unnumbered quotations from Debray. But what for—to prove that Debray is wrong? Then what is right? Can he give us any clear analysis of the Latin American situations? Can he explain the Marxist view on the Cuban victory? Was the Cuban Revolution a stroke of good luck—an accident? To use his own witty phrase, with such friends of the Latin American revolutions Yankees and oligarchies need no Green Berets or U.S. Marines.

Further, Mr Ahmad writes, "Precisely because the rebel army was not overtly communist, precisely because it was the first revolution in the hemisphere, counter-revolution was caught with its guard down." Before countering this over-simple reasoning, let us have a look at Guatemala in 1954. As a successful inheritor of Arévalo, who took over the government as a result of a suc-

cessful coup in 1944 and initiated a land-reform programme, Colonel Jacobo Arbenz assumed the presidency in 1951. He "initiated a comprehensive law reform programme. Compared to the land reforms of Mexico and Cuba it is a much milder programme of land distribution" (Lajpat Rai, "Latin America"). This liberal-democratic government which expropriated 160,000 hectares of land of the United Fruit Co., a farm owned by Americans, was overthrown by an invasion from Nicaragua—led by Castillo Armas and supported by the Yankee air force. On 30th June 1954, after the successful overthrow of Arbenz, Dulles said in an address to his countrymen "Communist agitators... dominated the social security organisation and ran the agrarian reform programme." [*Guatemala—Another Vietnam* by Thomas and Marjorie Melville, page 97.] Melville adds, "we must remember that the communists were only four out of fifty-six in Congress, hardly control the legislative body", [*Ibid*, page 97.]

It is amply clear that the U.S. did not even risk the possibility of an agrarian reform and nakedly intervened in Guatemala. Then, why did it not intervene in the case of Cuba? Mr Ahmad states that "precisely because the Cuban guerillas were not overtly communist". Does this analysis suffice after the Yankee take-over in Guatemala? It is also a well-known fact that the Cuban situation was highly focussed even during the earlier period of the revolutionary process, when the Spanish newspaperman Menrique and the U.S. journalist Herbert Mathews visited the Sierra Maestra. Is it because of the fact that the very complex nature of the Cuban export economy had something to do with the U.S. non-intervention policy or, as Che Guevara has stated, that Cuba was the weakest link in the Yankee chain that broke away from it?

Unless Mr Ahmad can answer these questions, until he has sound command over the socio-economic-political situations in Latin America,

Debray stands out outside the bunch of theoreticians who had so long blindly given shape to the Moscow-oriented interpretation of world revolution. Debray has shaken this

vicious circle, awakened the masses to the need to make revolution and, above all, aroused hatred against the revisionists. Despite many loopholes, here lies his historic significance.

Tamil Nadu : The Bhakti Movement

S. N.

BEFORE we come to the Bhakti movement, a few words about the pre-Bhakti period of Tamils would be relevant. The ethics of Jainism and Buddhism had firm roots in Tamil literature of the Sangam age, e.g. Silappadhikaram, Mani Mekalai and Thirukkural. These great works were produced around 100 A.D.-500 A.D. and represent a turning point in the social life of Tamilians. The ideas of non-violence, morality, prohibition, contempt of prostitution, chastity of women etc. contained in these books were borrowed from Aryan mythology, contrary to the claims of originality with respect to these ideas by the Tamils. In spite of the anti-Brahminical ideas contained in the main Sangam works, the Brahminical caste structure was intact. Brahmin scholars held a dominant position in the society and the Sanskrit language was considered superior to Tamil in the courts of Tamil kings. The Brahmins were already settled in villages, adopted local customs in their ceremonies and successfully imposed certain conventions on the tribes in order to ensure their dominance. Thus, the Brahmins had to be consulted before constructing a house, sowing or harvesting and other agricultural operations. A section of the Brahmins served as priests for day-to-day religious ceremonies of birth, ear boring, marriage, death etc. (But rituals like fire rites had not entered deeply into the routine life of the Tamil people. These rituals remained exclusively in the customs of Brahmins alone). Another custom that developed during this period was the entrusting of women

to Brahmin custody when men were leaving for war or trade for a long time. These Tamil Brahmins treated these women with honour. The Brahminical influence in the society was the cause of the rivalry between Brahmin pundits and the Tamil teachers of Jainism from the 1st century to the 20th century: it underlies the rivalry between Brahmin and the non-Brahmin movement of E.V.R.

The Jain teachers of the Sangam age called on women to observe chastity and men to observe a saintly life. The heroine of Silappadhikaram was a model of chastity and such was her power that she burned the city of Madurai by a curse when the King mistakenly put her husband to death. This cult of chastity was brushed aside by the Bhakti movement with its queenly characters like Thilagavathi, Mangayarkarasi, Karikal Ammaiyar, Andal, who were women liberated in the modern context.

The ideas of Sankara with all his clever arguments had no effect on the Tamil people. In order to break the hold of Jainism and Buddhism on the people, a mass movement—a sort of revolution—was necessary. A section of Brahmins shed their obsession with Sanskrit and entered the Tamil literary field even before the pre-Bhakti period. During the Bhakti movement, Brahmin poets, mainly the Vaishnavas, joined the bandwagon of Saiva bards distributing the opium of devotional songs among the masses to make them forget their miseries created by the rising empire and their exploitative organisation.

Bhakti Period

The beginning of the Bhakti movement in Tamil Nadu coincided with the rise of the Pallava Empire in the 7th century A.D. The Pallavas were overtaken by the Cholas who built the mightiest empire in Tamil Nadu and stayed powerful from the 8th to the 13th century. The Bhakti movement in Tamil Nadu also reached its zenith during the rule of the Cholas. In a society where agriculture was the principal occupation, a huge standing army could be maintained only by appropriating the agricultural surplus. This naturally impoverished the peasants and the only solution offered was prayer.

Appar, the first among the bards of the Bhakti movement, was a Velala kulak (non-Brahmin agricultural community). He converted the Pallava King Mahendra to the Saiva cult. The suffering of the masses Appar attributed to the restrictions imposed by Jainism (Buddhism had already declined). The Bhakti movement pioneered by Appar encouraged drinking, promiscuity, adultery, meat-eating etc. since, after all, a prayer to Siva would expiate all the sins. Appar was actually leading the Tamil masses back to primitive worship with a difference. It is important to remember that in a primitive tribal society the masses were innocent as the ideas of morality and hypocrisy had not developed.

The Brahmins joined the Bhakti movement only to safeguard their status in society. Further, the united front they formed with the non-Brahmin bards was also unavoidable in the circumstances. The Brahmins were a minority comprising 5% of the population and their mastery was of Sanskrit and special rituals. To popularise Siva or Vishnu among the masses of the entire State was beyond their capacity. In fact, if they had the capacity, the Dravidian or Tamil culture would have been submerged by the Aryans. Therefore to take the message of God to the masses was the job of non-Brahmin bards and Pandarams under the leadership of Appar.

Peria Puranam, a Tamil epic which gives the biographies of all the Saiva bards of the Bhakti movement, was compiled by Sekkizhar, a non-Brahmin Vellala poet-cum-minister of a Chola king, around the 12th century. Kannappan, a hunter character of this epic, offers only flesh and blood to Siva. This clearly indicates how Siva was taken to the tribal community. Sundarar, a leading bard of the Bhakti cult and co-author of Thevaram, the magnum opus of devotional songs, married many women and sought the company of new courtesans. The phallus or the linga had been an object of worship from the ancient days of primitive tribal society. Though there were places of such worship, they were apparently small structures and there was no magnificent temples anywhere. As the Bhakti movement advanced, the great bards—Appar, Sambandhar, Sundarar and Manickavasagar—visited the various villages and small towns of Tamil Nadu. They sung special devotional songs in praise of the local deities. As the Chola and later the Pandiya and Vijayanagar empires arose, huge temples were erected in the places of phallic worship glorified by the Saiva bards. These temples stood as monuments to feudal glory. The temples and palaces were built within the same fort. The temples were also used as courts, storage place for weapons and as theatres for staging dances of Devadasis for the benefit of gods and their believers.

In spite of Sri Ramanujam, the greatest reformer of his time who had converted several non-Brahmins to Brahminism, the Vishnu cult could not be popularised in the same way like Siva. According to Tamil chronologists, he belonged to the 12th century and was preceded by the twelve Alvars (rival bards of Vishnu). As the first three primary Alvars out of twelve were Brahmins, they were not as successful as the non-Brahmin Saiva bards. While the Bhakti movement with Siva as the god was led by the non-Brahmins,

the Brahmins only playing a second fiddle, the movement in relation to Vishnu was led by the Brahmins themselves. This explains the extremely limited popularity of Vishnu vis-a-vis Siva. Since the majority of the population was non-Brahmin, they trusted the Saiva bards who were of their own castes. The Vishnu cult popularised mainly by the Brahmins could not strike roots since the Brahmins were in minority. The small numbers of Vaishnava non-Brahmin Reddis, Naidus spoke Telugu and lacked the talents of the Saiva non-Brahmin Pillais and Mudaliars of the Vellala castes.

In spite of the limited popularity of Vishnu, later Chola kings built hundreds of temples for him under the influence of Sri Ramanujam; even the Siva temple of Tripati (Andhra State) was converted into a Vishnu temple. In Tamil Nadu, we have nearly 1000 temples of both Siva and Vishnu built during the period of the glorious empires around 800 A.D. to 1400 A.D. This process was continued during the later Pandiyar and Naicker kings of Madurai who glorified Lord Muruga and the Mother Goddess (Meenakshi or Parvati). Apart from first and second-grade temples, there are about 25,000 temples of Pillaiyar, Kali or Mariamman.

The founders of the Bhakti movement belonging mostly to the Vellala community were richly rewarded by the kings. They were made the trustees of big temples to which hundreds of acres of arable land were assigned for maintenance. The bulk of the produce from the so-called temple lands was appropriated by the trustees. This phenomenon, beginning from the Bhakti period, continues. Brahmin priests were no doubt appointed for the temples. They were flattered with the control and maintenance of the sanctum sanctorum of the temples. They did enjoy the privilege of performing the Pujas only for a pittance. These Brahmins were poor and seldom enjoyed a social status. Further in South India the practice of throw-

ing coins and currency notes on the deity as a part of worship is marked by its absence (it is so in the North). In these temples there is a cash box into which money is to be dropped. Only the trustees of the temple have the keys to the cash box and not the Brahmin priest. These temple trustees have been enjoying immense wealth through centuries and today they are a force to reckon with in the politics of Tamil Nadu. The pandar Sainathis of Kunrakkudi, Dharmapuram and Pantrimalai etc. can be cited as examples. According to the founders of the Saiva Siddhanta Siva (God) is greater than the King. This was not true because the King who subjugated the God remained a supreme power in the glorious Tamil empire era. In many places the name of a particular king is identified with the same name of the linga in the sanctum sanctorum. Those who worship Siva according to prescriptions can demand worship from the people. On this analogy, the King who worships Siva can also be worshipped for attaining mukti. This Bhakti cult gave rise to a two-fold exploitation—by the King and by the temples. The agricultural surplus was appropriated by the kings, non-Brahmin trustees and the Brahmins.

Post-Bhakti Period

At present, the exploitation originates from the kulaks and the business magnates who patronise various modern saints such as Kripananda Vari, Tambirans and Adigals. They are popularising Muruga, the old god, in new form and diverting the attention of the masses from the source of exploitation. With the decline of the empires in the Tamil country around the 14th century, the Bhakti movement almost ebbed out. There was no direct exploitation by the State of any great dimension. Perhaps the masses were tired of singing the songs of Siva and Vishnu. A new god was necessary to charm the masses. Murugan now makes his appearance in Tamil history.

A new epic called Kandhapuram was written after the 14th century where the great tribal lancer god, Velayudha, attained the status of the son of Lord Siva. The imagination of Tamil Saivas had even surpassed the Brahminical acculturation while adopting a pig-sticking tribal chief as the supreme god of Tamils, viz. Murugan. The Tamil Saiva ministers who wrote this epic gave an impetus to the Hindu kings of Tamil to start a revolt against the rising Muslims.

It has been claimed by various Tamil scholars that the rise of the Bhakti movement marks a revolution in the history of Tamil Nadu. It is contended that the fetters put on the social life of the Tamils by Jainism were broken by the Bhakti cult which liberated them from the clutches of normal imperatives. This is only one part of the story. The Bhakti cult gave rise to a new cult of worshipping the worshipper which is considered to be a superior form of worship. In Tamil we have names like Thondarruku Thondar, Adiyarkku Mallar, Thondar Adippodi etc., which convey the above meaning. There are temples and palaces instilling a sense of fear and inferiority in the minds of the masses. Even poetry reflects the total degradation of the masses and at the same time the glorification of this degradation. In the words of D. D. Kosambi, "Ganga and Pallava nobles of the South would offer their own heads, cut off before some God or Goddess for their Royal Master's welfare; this is attested by numerous inscriptions and sculptures from the 8th century onwards".

Political Significance

This legacy of slavery beginning from the Bhakti period has crept into modern times. We find the Thondars (servant or slave) ready to sacrifice their lives for M.G.R., Karunanidhi, Kamaraj etc. We can trace the influence of the Bhakti cult in the political parties of Tamil Nadu, none of which is free from it. If the Congress wants to solve all

the problems of the country by Ram Dhun and Gita, the DMK is confident of achieving the same end by Tirukkural. The gods Muruga, Siva, Iyappa are not inimical to the DMK and Mr Karunanidhi openly proclaims that gods are behind his party. During the DMK rule, the renovation of temples built by the Cholas and others has been undertaken with a great zeal. New gold ornaments worth several lakhs of rupees are being added to the already overornamented gods and goddesses in a manner that would make Mahmud of Ghazni turn in his grave, to be reborn and attack Tamil Nadu with his cavalry. The slogans of the perpetrators of the Bhakti cult are as tempting as "Garibi Hatao" and also as hypocritical and unreal. Karunanidhi is singing songs of the green revolution and the IR-8 and IR-20 varieties of rice which are used as adulterants for the superior varieties of kichidi rice. For the sake of vitamins and minerals small stones are added. And the merchants who sell this rice quote Kural and Devaram to prove their saintliness.

It is irritating when we read the Tamil dailies adorning the names of the "leaders" of Tamil Nadu with amazing adjectival titles conferred on them by their sycophants in the truest Bhakti spirit. Thus we have Kamaraj, the best statesman this world has ever seen. Karunanidhi is the best poet in the world though his writing is as puerile as the compliment which is misleading. We have a Sivaji Ganesan, the world's best actor from whom Utpal Dutt, Dilip Kumar and Peter O'toole can learn many a lesson. And MGR is greater than Sivaji Ganesan! Jayagandhan, who mixes up individualism, moral obstinacy and pure nonsense in his writing, calls himself a Marxist (without revolutionary ideas) and in the eyes of Tamils he is the greatest short-story writer in the world. In short, if you want to see everything that is best in the world please learn Tamil and visit Tamil Nadu.

Even the leaders of the communist parties in Tamil Nadu have fallen a prey to the onslaught of the Bhakti cult. A large-size photograph of P. Ramamurthy on art paper is sold for 25 paise by the CPM. Jeevanandam and Kalyanasundaram are also sold for the same price by the CPI. The Tamil dailies of both these parties publish the speeches of their leaders together with their photographs.

The task of liberation from the Bhakti cult is not easy in Tamil Nadu. Here even our aesthetic senses are influenced and limited by Bhakti. There is no classical music of Carnatic or Tamil variety except in praise of one god or the other. The best pieces of our sculpture are figures of gods and goddesses. The Christian can boast of only one Bible. In Tamil Nadu we have hundreds of bibles—Tirukkural, Sangam classics, Thovaram, Perin Puranam and Sthala Puranams and what not.

One expects the writers in Tamil to provide a break from the effects of the Bhakti cult. But, unfortunately they are themselves a victim of it. The early modern writing in Tamil began in the 19th century in glorious imitation of the writings of Thackeray and Hardy. In the 20th century our writers borrow ideas from Saratchandra, Tolstoy, Zola, Agatha Christie etc. to quote a few. The heroes and heroines are made to fit into the Tamil Babu society. Yet these characters are sentimental and melodramatic. Occasionally poverty is the theme, just for the sake of jerking out tears from sensitive souls. But basically all our writers believe in the status quo and are anxious to receive some form of patronage from the State.

We have had enough of this Bhakti cult. We need new values in order to shatter all those old institutions which represent the exploitation of the masses. There is no need now to tread the same path and sing the same old songs in praise of Siva or Vishnu in order to free ourselves from poverty. All

Calcutta : The City Of Renaissance—III

BENOY GHOSE

this old trash should be scrapped and a new bible should be created that would pave the way for the liberation of the masses both from exploitation and ignorance.

(N.B.:—The idea of this essay is to trace the origin of the Tamil people's speciality in slavishness, restrictions and obedience. Even courage is too often mixed with Bhakti. In spite of their noisy claims, courage is a new subject of the Tamils and this term is very often misunderstood by Tamil pundits for Bhakti. I am afraid any deviation from my approach will lead to theology, a costly subject at a time of spiralling prices of rice and oil. Therefore, the details of Brahminical and non-Brahminical controversies and tracing the causes of the rise and fall of Jainism or Buddhism etc. are minimised here. I may be pardoned if there is any inaccuracy in one or two centuries mentioned—this is usually a topic for the Tamil pundits in the colleges or universities.)

‘অনুষ্ঠান’

প্রকাশিত হলো

সংস্কৃতি সমাচার—শ্রমিক সংস্কৃতির রাজসূত্র
যজ্ঞ, রাজপুরোহিত এ আই টি ইউ সি
ক্রিকেট সংস্কৃতি ; সন্তোষ ঘোষের চারণ দল ;
সনাতন পাঠকের সনাতন কদাচার ; চলচ্চিত্র
ও মৃগাল সেনের ‘আমি’ ;
ব্যারিকেড ৩ : ৭৯৯ ।

প্রবন্ধ । ববীন্দ্রনাথ : আমাদেরই লোক ?

—অচেনা মিত্র

নারী সমস্যা—এডওয়ার্ড ও এলিনর মার্কস

অ্যাভলিং

গল্প । অগ্নিমুখ ; বোকা বুড়ো

কবিতা । মতামত । দ্বিতীয় পাঠ-পত্র-পত্রিক
থেকে ।

P55B, C. I. T. Road, Cal-10

THE “rational progressive spirit of Europe”, the advent of which was announced in Bengal by the booming canons of Clive in Plassey, was filtering down slowly, from the British (masters to their faithful native servants, in the city of Calcutta in the 18th century. The most brilliant person, representing this ‘rational spirit’, was the founder of the Sovabazar Raj Family, the great Maharaja Nabakrishna, variously named and spelt in the official records as ‘Nobo Munshi’ ‘Nubkissen’ Moharaj Bahadre’ ‘Sootalooty Talookdar’ etc. He was a creature of Clive and Warren Hastings, completely made and shaped by them, and we have therefore, picked him out, from among at least a dozen others, to verify the claim of our great historian Sir Jadunath, as to how “in the space of less than one generation, in the twenty years from Plassey to (Warren Hastings (1757-1776)”, Bengal began to recover from the blight of medieval rule. The period of Nabakrishna roughly covers the entire second half of the 18th century, from the 1750s when he set forth for his social mountaineering, to 1797 when, reaching the highest peak, he died.

Munshi to Maharaja

Having been in the Company's service since the age of eighteen, Hastings was forty when he was appointed Governor of Bengal in 1772. Nabakrishna was also about forty then. But Nabakrishna had got his appointment under Hastings as his Munshi or Persian tutor, sometime in 1754, immediately after he arrived in Calcutta. He succeeded Tazuddin to the office of Munshi of the Company in 1756, and later was appointed Munshi to Clive also. In 1767, when Clive retired and left for England, Nabakrishna was elevated to the most responsible post of the Company's ‘political banian’, re-

commended by Clive, “in consideration of his faithful and diligent services” (Select Committee, January 16, 1767). What were the services rendered by him? Nabakrishna himself recounted in the following order his services to the Company, in his petition to the Council of Revenue, dated November 18, 1777 :

“From the year 1756 to the year 1767, an interval during which the welfare and interests of the Hon'ble Company were repeatedly in the most critical and dangerous situations, it is a wellknown fact that all the most important and secret negotiations and transactions with the Country Powers were conducted through the medium of your petitioner, the success of which, he humbly hopes, sufficiently marks his fidelity. The particulars of those services are too recent and wellknown to your Hon'ble Board to need recapitulation here. Your petitioner therefore only craves leave briefly to state a few of the most material heads thereof, viz :

“1. His services under the Right Hon'ble Lord Clive (then Colonel Clive) in the Revolution which happened in consequence of the capture of Calcutta and subsequent defeat of Serajuddowlah, on which occasion your petitioner acted as Persian Secretary and Translator, and was employed in all the most confidential transactions.

“2. His services under Major Adams, Commander-in-Chief in the wars of the Nabab Kassimally Cawn, in which your petitioner had the sole management of all such negotiations and transactions with Country Powers and chief people as fell under the province of the Commander-in-Chief.

“3. His services under Lord Clive on his return to India in the year 1764 when your petitioner was the only native entrusted or employed in all the several Treaties which

were made with the Mugal or King Shaw Alum, the later Vizier Shuja-ud-Dowla, the Nabab of Bengal Najum-ud-Dowla etc., when the grant of the Dewani was obtained for the Hon'ble Company.

"Lastly, for the sense which Lord Clive had of your petitioner's services on the occasions of the afore-said...his Lordship is pleased fully to express the sense he entertained of your petitioner's fidelity and abilities and of his steady attachment to the interests of the Hon'ble Company."

For these services Nabakrishna was richly rewarded by both Clive and Hastings. In 1766 Clive was pleased to get a Firman from Shah Alum, granting 'Nubkissen' a *Mansab*, four thousand sowar, and the title of *Maharajah*. He was pleased also to bestow upon him a gold medal with a Persian inscription, a *khelat* with a precious garland of pearls, a head-dress, a shield, a sword and various other costly paraphernalia, including silver mace and staff, which is the insignia of the Sovabazar rajahs, borne by their attendants when they go out on formal occasions. Clive allowed Nabakrishna a guard of sepoy to watch his gate. He had also the kindness to conduct him to his 'conveyance on an elephant', and the Maharaja came home in 'a grand procession, scattering rupees all about him'. (N. N. Ghose: *Memoirs of Maharaja* etc.).

As a humorous writer has it: "It is not the length, breadth, and depth of his titles, it is not the outward signs of honor by which the importance of Nubkissen can be correctly estimated. Rather the multitudinous and onerous official duties which belonged to him, defined his proper position. At one and the same time he held seven offices. The Banian to the Committee or Political Dewan, he was the Persian Secretary, the Receiver of Petitions, the President of the Caste Tribunal, the Keeper of the Treasury, the Head of the Revenue Court of 24-Parganas, the Collector of 24-Parganas, and what not! With other years he fill-

ed other posts, but whether they were added to the old ones, or whether he had to relinquish some, is unknown. This we know that over and above his regular duties he was frequently called on to execute jobs. Besides his ordinary offices, he may be said to have been a minister without portfolio... This man was half the Government! How this official... stalked amidst the puny administrators, including his superiors, who divided among themselves the other half and seemed ready to break down under its weight."—*Mookerjee's Magazine*, April 1861.

On January 6, 1778, Nabakrishna submitted a petition for granting him a sanad for the Mouza Suttanati in Calcutta, in exchange of the Mouza Noapara in Mushidabad. It was granted. It was a gift of Warren Hastings to his faithful servant. The talukdari of the three villages—"Sootalootie and Baug Bazar and Hogulkoondee, their Mal and Sayer"—was granted to Nabo Munshi, in spite of the objection of about 169 small landholders and principal inhabitants of the area. And it was done by Hastings only fifteen years before the Permanent Settlement was enacted in 1793 by Cornwallis, and some years before 'Nubkissen' died in 1797.

A few words more about our art-lover scholar-ruler Warren Hastings. Of his four Councillors, three, Philip Francis, General Monson and Colonel Clavering, considered him a wicked monster. He got rid of them, one by one. Monson died in 1776, and Clavering in 1777. The toughest opponent Francis remained, but he was wounded so severely in a duel by Hastings in 1780 that he was compelled to go home. "My adversaries sickened, died and fled" (Hastings). There was one formidable 'native' adversary, Nandakumar, who was cleared earlier. On a false charge of forging a will, Nandakumar was tried in accordance with the barbarous English criminal law of the day, and was hanged on August 5, 1775. Macaulay's statement that only idiots and biographers have

doubted that Hastings and Impey in collusion got rid of Nandakumar by legal process, is certainly justified. The story of the impeachment of Hastings has been dramatically told by Macaulay. Burke and Sheridan went to incredible lengths in their vituperations. "Spider of Hell" was the softest of epithets which Burke employed in the invectives hurled at Hastings. Hastings retired in 1785, and the legacy of his love for art, literature and culture was borne by Maharaja Nubkissen Bahadur, who eventually became not only the biggest talukdar of Calcutta, but also the greatest patron of Calcutta culture.

Patron of Culture

Receiving *Khelats* from Clive, 'Nubkissen' came to his Sovabazar home in a grand procession, mounting an elephant and scattering rupees all about him to the uncouth plebians. It was a grand spectacle in the traditional city of beggars. 'Nubkissen' then went to Kalighat temple and spent about a lakh of rupees on the worship of the goddess Kali. His offerings included a gold necklace, a rich bed, silver plates, dishes and basins, sweets sufficient to entertain one thousand people, and small silver coins to nearly two thousand of the poor beggars. Those were the golden days of the goddess Kali of Kalighat. A contemporary account says: "Last week a deputation from the Government went in procession to Kalighat and made a thank-offering to this Goddess of the Hindus, in the name of the Company, for the success which the English have lately obtained in this country. Five thousand rupees were offered. Several thousand natives witnessed the English presenting their offering to this idol." Another account says: "The daily offerings to this Goddess are astonishingly numerous; on days when the weather is very unfavourable, not less than 320 pounds of rice, twenty-four of sugar, forty of sweetmeats, forty of clarified butter, ten of flour, ten quarts of milk, a peck of peas, eight

hundred plantains, and other things are offered, and eight or ten goats sacrificed. On common days, of all these things three times the quantity, and at great festivals or when a rich man comes to worship, ten, twenty or forty times this quantity and as many as forty or fifty buffaloes and a thousand goats are slain."

About 'Nubkissen' Bahadur's taste and love for culture, the writer of his *Memoirs* says: "His appreciation of fine arts, music in particular, was in every way worthy of himself. Haru Thakur and Nitai Das, well-known as composers of songs, were his proteges and he introduced in Calcutta society and popularised the *nautch*... It is *Bainautch*. The songs of Kabis were a favourite entertainment of Hindu society. They were a curious illustration of the blended powers of metrical composition and controversy; songs composed by one person or party and sung before an assembly were then and there answered by another. The answer brought a reply and so the song duel went on till one side was fairly exhausted.... Of another kind of musical entertainment known as *Akhrai*, the Maharaja was a distinguished and probably the first patron. Kului Chandra Sen, who was not only competent in *Akhrai* but probably its founder, received great encouragement. A cousin of Kului — Ram Nidhi Gupta — popularly known as Nidhoo Babu, made great improvement in the art. Distinguished musicians, singers and players on instruments came to him, attracted by his fame as a votary of Muses, and none went disappointed."

Thus the "dry bones of a stationary Oriental society began to stir, at first faintly, under the wand of a heaven-sent magician." The native Munshi became the Maharaja, and then the great 'votary of Muses' in Calcutta and the greatest patron of Calcutta culture.

(To be continued. Part II of this occasional series appeared in the March 17 issue.)

Book Review

JOHN KEATS: HIS MIND AND WORK

By Bhabatosh Chatterjee
Orient Longman Ltd., Calcutta,
1971; Price [Rs 30.00 (cloth),
Rs 15.00 (Paper).

IN this ponderous, scholarly work Prof Chatterjee wades through the accumulated findings of his predecessors to trace Keats's spiritual quest "as revealed in his letters and poems." He considers nearly all the extant critical opinions bearing on his inquiry and this makes his book rather stodgy, though valuable to the advanced students of Eng. Lit., perhaps. The book contains 450 odd pages excluding preface, notes and references and the index, and may be said to have left out very little of potential worth to anyone setting or answering a paper on Keats. But as Prof Chatterjee has nothing very

original to say about Keats's quest, his book might have gained considerably in force and general interest by some drastic pruning. It might have then become a neat little introduction to the modern approach on Keats reinforcing our latter-day appreciation and evaluation of one of the greatest poets of the nineteenth century.

Prof Chatterjee sees Keats's quest as a twofold search for meaning of pain and suffering and for his own true bent as a poet. Keats looked for a coherent system of thought that would explain the tragic mystery and offer a way of deliverance. The quest ended in doubt and uncertainty. As to his other search for poetic identity, which can parallel to his intellectual quest and involved a changing attitude to poets of past ages and a struggle for identification with one or other of them, it also ended in failure inasmuch as identification was "never fully realized". But it is this failure

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of his search for intellectual certainty in the midst of suffering as well as lack of complete identification with other poets, which not only gave a strange intensity to and determined the thought and texture of Keats's mature poetry but also enabled him to find his true idiom in his later poems.

The dominating influence on early Keats was Spenser and then Milton to whom Keats owed much more in discovering his true idiom. His attitude to Wordsworth remained ambivalent and full of sharp variations. But while he felt strong revulsions against aspects of Wordsworth to which he was never reconciled even as he admired his broad humanity, his rejection of Milton was altogether in a different category. After admiring him for his "loyalty to his friend, his patriotism, his unswerving devotion to his cause, the fortitude with which he met his personal calamities and opposition of his countrymen, the breadth of his vision", Keats simply turned away from him as from a personality opposed to his love of doubt and incertitude. But so far from rousing his derision and contempt, as did Wordsworth's philosophisings, Milton represented for him "a way of life, and his rigorous self-discipline, struggle and sacrifice excited the young poet's emulation."

Although certain that he could fulfil his true role in society by writing poetry, Keats was nevertheless conscious of his wider obligations to society and quite anxious to perform them by addressing himself to some more practical and mundane activities. While Wordsworth's "egotism" repelled him, he was drawn to Milton for his "genuine human concern", and yet there could be no question of personal relationship between Keats and this austere puritan poet. The reason perhaps was Milton's theological certainty in regard to the problems of good and evil, pleasure and pain—problems which teased Keats out of thought like eternity. A poet, for Keats, must be capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts and remaining content with

half-knowledge. Keats's famous formulation of "negative capability" stemmed from his study of Shakespeare which had brought him into communion with another kindred spirit. But he grew to look upon Shakespeare not, ultimately, as an elusive, impersonal, chameleon soul, but a fellow-sufferer whose tragedies reflect his intense personal agony.

Even so, Keats's understanding of Shakespeare was partial and intensely personal. Hence his identification with Shakespeare was no more successful than with Milton, though the sense of kinship may be more real. In Shakespeare's tragedies Keats saw the reality of pain rather than the reality of evil. He might have identified the two, admitting no distinction between them and mistaking one for the other. What tormented Keats was not so much moral evil but evil in the nature of things which was brought home to him by the spectacle of human suffering. Prof Chatterjee says that "Keats uses the word 'evil' in the sense of misfortune wrought by time, disease and death—the contrast between flux and stability, between mutability and timelessness", and thus for Keats, "the tragic vision of Shakespeare can yield only a part of its complexity... he fails to grasp the full terror of the conflict on the moral plane." But doesn't Shakespeare, too, reflect on flux and mutability, death and decay in his sonnets and doesn't this reflection form part of his tragic vision? For Shakespeare, as also for Keats perhaps, moral evil is not what we mean by social evil but something intrinsically irremediable and inherent in the nature of things. It is part of the cosmic evil, so to speak. Being a dramatic poet, Shakespeare was naturally more concerned with moral evil which alone can manifest itself through human actions and give rise to dramatic conflict. But the consciousness of this evil as a part of ever-present agony of human existence was never far from Shakespeare's mind. It may be one-sided but quite profound (and being a lyrical poet, absolutely natural too)

of Keats to seize upon pain and suffering as the leitmotif of Shakespeare's tragic vision.

What distinguishes Keats from Shakespeare is, while for Shakespeare pain or evil was part of a cosmic order which, however irrational or inhuman, was regarded as unalterable, for Keats the romantic, belief in perfectibility could not admit evil, even natural evil, as something to acquiesce in. It posed a dilemma and caused perplexity. Keats remained a quester who, unlike Shelley, distrusted dogma and certitude and carried his burden of anxiety, but could never have the serenity of the tragic poet. This is at the root of his ineptitude as a dramatist despite his keen interest in dramatic literature. Prof Chatterjee rightly places Keats firmly in the Romantic Tradition but he asserts that Keats's honest self-searchings and perplexity link him with the modern writers. This may explain why Keats has survived the violent anti-romantic crusade of our day. But it is as well to remember the difference between the world of Keats and that of modern writers. For all the most significant modern writers, Keats's quest for meaning of pain has lost all import in the midst of tremendous suffering *en masse*. Even pain fails to register itself when it exceeds a certain limit of scale and proportion. Much of our present suffering is of human origin, but none the less intractable for that, and mere belief in perfectibility and progress can be no answer since the besetting evil of our civilization is seen as part of this progress itself. Nor can we accept it as a cosmic tragedy in view of our unprecedented power over natural forces. It is a different kind of dilemma from what Keats had to face, issuing in solutions of different kinds of which Keats could have no inkling. The various schools of existentialism novel experiments in form and content of art and literature, return to religious faiths, were all beyond Keats's ken.

The book might as well have ended here with the end of the first part.

But the author adds two more parts. The second entitled "The comic in Keats" begins with a quotation from Bernard Shaw saying that Keats made fun of his own grief, or something in that sense. It develops the idea contained in Miss Georgia S. Dunbar's remark that "Keats armed himself against suffering with mockery and met grief with laughter". The author considers Keats's lighter pieces which range from nonsense verse to satire. He traces the mood also in Keats's letters. The concluding part of the book is a detailed commentary on Keats's more important poems in chronological sequence so that the *quest* of the first part is seen here illustrated in the text. These two latter parts could have formed each a separate book or should have been incorporated in the first part by way of illustrating the argument. But then the whole argument would have to be reduced to due proportions.

HITEN GHOSH

Sunil Madhav's Exhibition

SANDIP SARKAR

SUNIL Madhav Sen at sixty-two is still painting, experimenting with zinc oxide paste and powder and stone chips to give a relief-like sculptural quality to his paintings. A prolific painter who turns out paintings like a machine geared to production.

His latest exhibition was sponsored by a little known organization called 'The Transition' who have organised other solo and group shows in this city and elsewhere. Although not specifically mentioned this was SM's retrospective exhibition of sorts which was on view at the Birla Academy from March 15 to 21.

Sunil Madhav is restless and constantly in search of new points of departure. Dissatisfied with what he achieves he moves on to new fields. In this exhibition he shows once more that he possesses everything an artist

needs. He knows how to draw and stylize, compose and utilize space, spread colour and probe deeply within the bounds of canvas. He wants to create an atmosphere of serenity, a dream world with its own logic, whim and tension. On the other hand he wants to establish a link with Indian tradition. He struggles hard at it. Indus Valley seals to Mughal miniatures, the patuas of Bengal and bazaar painters have inspired him and he uninhibitedly assimilated their influence.

The West has influenced him too. He cannot free himself from its clutches, however much he tries. Again and again he makes heroic efforts but the impact of the West staggers him. His nudes are examples of this. They have been influenced by many from Reubens to Modigliani. Reclining Nude (1957) has the carefree linear rhythm of Matisse but not the poetry of his colours. He seems, however, to shut his eyes to Indian temple sculptures, one possible source of inspiration for native nude styles.

No. 1 'Rani of Jhansi' (1967) is not just an enlargement of the Indian miniature, but an experiment in adapting the techniques of miniature painting to canvas and oils. In this SM successfully leads us into the chivalrous feudal world of medieval India. He also succeeds where he borrows from folk artists as in No. 38 'Annapurna' (1950). In 'Ravana' (1962) he is grotesque and yet retains the simplicity of folk art. He has a feel for popular Hinduism and would like to state its pictorial beauty in modern terms. e.g. No. 5 'Durga' (1971).

SM has wandered in the primitive and the pre-historic world, in the realms of mythology and history, found solace in the cool shadows of religion, but somehow the effect in most cases is like traveller's tales—imaginative but unconvincing. He is like a conqueror who annexes a lot of territory, but fails to consolidate his power with it. His kingdom is always in turmoil and he has to rush about to crush uprisings. He is like

a gambler that loses much of what he gains.

SM carries the germ of his own disintegration in the very qualities that set him apart. His excess of agility and versatility have hounded and played havoc with him, forced him to search always for novelty at the expense of his power for introspection. Hence his stance of being a trend setter, an avant-garde.

For Your Eyes Only

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

HUMAN deformity has always been a source of box-office appeal in our films. Make your protagonist a cripple, a deaf-and-dumb or a blind person, you have a fair chance of clicking with the public. Perhaps this consideration was uppermost in Tapan Sinha's mind when he launched his latest film *Andhar Perieye* with a blind heroine. Subhendu Chatterjee is a young press photographer who falls headlong in love with Madhabi, a freelance columnist, and they marry in no time. The portrayal of their courtship period is done through a sketchy sequence of still photographs (a badly-assimilated influence of Mrinal Sen's *Akash Kusum*). Madhabi has a serious eye-trouble which culminates in total blindness. They go to Kulu valley and there is another girl whose gay vitality stands out in sharp contrast to blind Madhabi's melancholic gloom. Subhendu gets rather chummy with the new girl. They go off for hiking in the snow. Madhabi declines to accompany them as she does not want to be a spoilsport. A landslide prevents them from coming back and they spend the night together (no, don't be squeamish, everything was correct and proper). Madhabi, torn by doubt, fear and anxiety, gropes out of the hotel in the middle of the night and falls over a cliff. Grief-stricken and suffering from an ever-haunting sense of guilt Subhendu and the girl come back to Calcutta and

say good-bye to each other. The basic themes are the gradual erosion of husband-wife relationship as Madhabi loses her eyesight and becomes a burden for her husband and the tragic process through which their love turns into a cold and mechanical performance of daily duties. But these core-points are lost in distracting sub-plots concerning a mad professor and the meaningless intrusion of a triangle-story in the Kulu sequences. Stilted dialogues with a silly attempt at laboured poetry and contrived situations spoil the smooth dramatic development and rob the film of the subtle nuances of characterisation. The director's observations on the contemporary scene including the episodes of a supposedly extremist action and the mobbing of a film-actress at a wedding reception are mostly superficial, incorporated into the film only to titilate the audience without going into the depth of the problems. Similarly, the newspaper office shown in this film has no touch of reality in it and the caricatures of the journalists are thoroughly in bad taste. The aesthetic reason for the use of colour in the Kulu-Manali sequences is open to question. Had the days spent there by the protagonists meant unmixed bliss and happiness, the use of colour in a black and white film would have been pertinent. But actually the case is just the opposite and Subhendu describes the Kulu period as "days of nightmare". In that context, the colour remains only a badly-executed gimmick.

Letters

When To Support

Instead of replying to any of the basic points raised in my letter (January 13), Mr Sugat Singh (March 3) resorts to invective of a very personal kind (with no logical coherence. According to his understanding of Marxism-Leninism, any move against the reactionary ruling party, whether from the left or the right, needs the people's active sup-

port. "In that context, the question of leadership is meaningless". Such a formulation is not only naive but extremely dangerous. Some years back, the Jana Sangh launched a massive anti-Cow Slaughter campaign culminating in a mammoth demonstration of several lakhs of people before Parliament House. This was definitely a move against the ruling party but should the revolutionaries have mobilised people's active support to help the campaign? Likewise, must the revolutionaries join the current agitation for bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh and various other campaigns, big and small, going on in different parts of the country under the leadership of parties like the Jana Sangh and the ilk because they constitute a move against the ruling party?

Mr Singh asks whether Lenin did not actually support the earlier revolutions where the leadership was not necessarily that of the Bolsheviks. Yes. But did Lenin ever consider the question of content and leadership as unimportant while defining his attitude towards any movement? The question of proletarian hegemony is of primary importance in revolution making in modern times.

Of course, there is no inevitable co-relationship between revolution making and the leadership being provided by a recognised Communist party. But the question of content of a movement and nature of the leadership guiding it should not be taken so lightly by those who claim to be revolutionaries. No revolutionary cause can be served by revolutionaries' becoming the tail of a movement led by a known reactionary party or a group simply because it militates against the interests of the ruling party in the immediate context.

D. R. CHAUDHRY

Delhi

(This correspondence is closed).

Lessons Of History

The possibility of a Kerala type coalition government in a soft State led many to believe in a communist France gathering a waiting Italy,

sweeping the smaller European States... all culminating in a Red Flag at the Red Fort. A confirmation of the litany that "People want Revolution"? One wonders. Paris '68, Calcutta '70 (yes '70), Colombo '71... and Bangladesh '71—the one which succeeded—do certainly have a story to tell.

It would seem that the advent of technology—particularly in the fields of military science, media-management, and mass psychology and the highly shrunk modern world—enmeshed in a crushing web of interdependence—secular, basic and comprising no discernible ethics—has made redundant all the classical theories of revolution. The concern is not so academic. The finest human elements in unliberated societies have been annihilated in the intense flame of revolutionary aspirations. This cannot be cynically or smugly tolerated by anyone with the smallest spark of human feeling.

There must be some who must be wondering why they had to die, while we all so studiously "live and learn", pondering over "eras of revolution and/or negotiations."

T. R. RAMALINGAM
Calcutta

Cricket Hysteria

Mr S. Neogy is right when he says (March 3) that devotion to cricket during the recent test matches assumed the proportions of hysteria among the urban middle class people. And the problems that our people are faced with are as acute and haunting as he thinks they are. But shouldn't there be a respite from this problem-ridden life just for a handful of days? Grim faces and furrowed foreheads surely do not enhance the revolutionary element in a man nor do they help solve problems. Games are a part of our life too, they are not always a device for killing time.

I would rather condemn the employees I saw in three different banks who left their desk every two minutes to pat a colleague sitting glued to a pocket transistor for learned comment.

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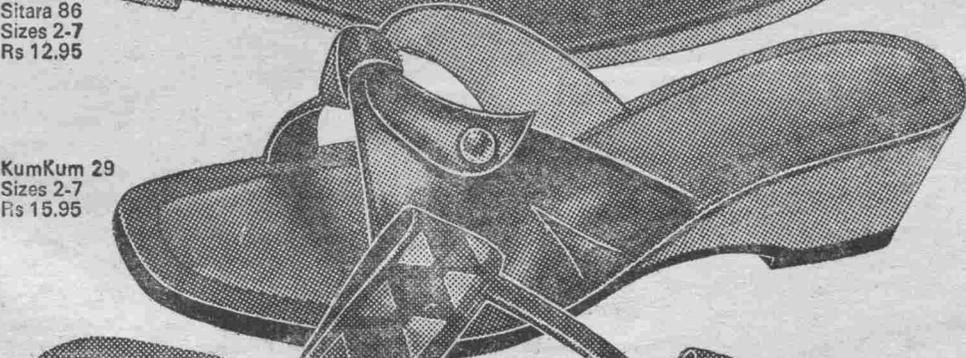
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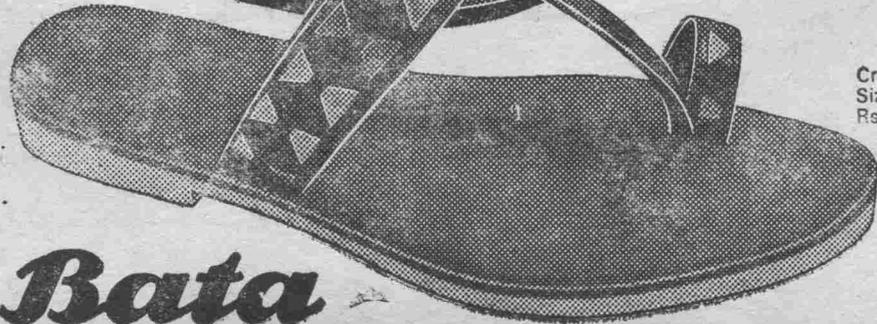
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