

# frontier

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## THE PAID COMMISSION

A decade ago, the Second Pay Commission produced a six-thousand-and-odd page report. The Third Pay Commission has submitted a three-thousand-and-odd one at last. This is not to belittle the learnedness of the Commission or its intent to do good. But it has not been able to do much good to the poorer section of the government employees (incidentally, in the Indian context, even the poorest of them happen to be among the privileged section of the society in general), simply because their number is enormous. It has been computed that every rupee paid to them means Rs 10 crores to the national exchequer. Therefore, the financial interest of the Government, being the prime consideration, the Commission has recommended a 10 per cent increase in the lowest scales which in actual terms means an additional Rs 10 to Rs 11. The Commission, an agent of a socialist government, had no soft corner for the higher-ups and recommended only a 5 per cent increase, which in actual terms, in some cases, means an extra Rs 300 to 400 increase. The minimum wage of Rs 185 p.m. as recommended is considered too high.

The new increases will cost the exchequer Rs 144.60 crores annually. The budget-makers could not arrive at the incidence of taxes to be levied earlier this budget season, because it did not know this quantum. Now that it is known, additional levies will be in order. To the common government employee, who is not privileged with fringe benefits like commissions and bribes, and whom inflation has been haunting like a shadow in the evening, the Commission means little. A rupee in 1960 is now equal to 40 paise. With a fresh spurt of price increase, he is doomed to look forward to more agitation, more demonstrations and less work and less productivity.

The 3400-page report will call for so many pages of commentary—the members themselves have made many pages of dissent. Till the publication of the report, we will have to defer the luxury. But many people knew, at least one full week before the submission, the details of the recommendations. The Delhi parliamentarians have a cause for grievance—these days they seem to be neglected a bit. However, agitations among various sectors of government employees, have already started because they feel they have been overlooked and not

suitably rewarded. But the government has taken the leakage and agitation in its stride, as a part of its occupational hazards. It will also pat its own back for allowing the Commission to announce some revolutionary measures—for example, reducing 300 scales to 80 or provisions for lateral entry into the doyen of the corps—the IAS. Mrs Gandhi has requested these mansabdars to practise absterity and asked for forbearance that she would not be able to increase their salary. Those who draw more than Rs 2500 a month have assured her of co-operation. An increase in their pay would have been eaten away by income-tax anyway—and they are not as mundane as to crave for a Rs 50 hike. What most of them are after is larger chunks of authority which bring in so many benefits. Look at them when they retire.

## Prisoners & Parliament

There is perhaps a case for not embarrassing the Government's right to deal adequately with its internal enemies, real or imagined, by making fine points about fundamental rights and all that. If the Government should yet get into trouble over these points, it must be given time to redefine its power to keep the enemies at bay. Some such plea must have led India's Attorney-General, Mr Niren De's to assure the Supreme Court that Section 17-A of the Maintenance of Internal Security Act would be amended within 10 days to obviate the consequences of its possible abrogation following the arguments in a habeas corpus petition challenging the Act. The Court obligingly reserved its judgment for two weeks at the end of the hearing.

The Attorney-General's cavalier manner in giving such assurance has hurt the amour-propre of opposition members in Parliament. Mr Bhupesh Gupta, the CPI leader in the Rajya Sabha, felt humiliated at this instance of "taking Parliament for

granted" by the Government. But much has been taken for granted by the ruling party for so long that all the fuss the combined opposition can make, as it did in the Lok Sabha by pressing a censure motion, is unlikely to change its ways. All these motions can be treated with contempt if the Government is so minded. Mr Gupta also seemed disturbed that judgment in the case should be postponed for two weeks in response to a government assurance. But one should not be squeamish about the propriety of the procedure. The promised amendment would, as he said, enable the Government to continue to exercise "tyranny and oppression".

Admitting that there are more than 5000 detenus under the Act in West Bengal alone, Mr De expressed the fear that all these prisoners would have to be released in the event of the impugned Act being struck down. There would also be difficulties in detaining them again. The proposed amendment is apparently designed to bypass these difficulties. Detention of such a large number of persons without trial (the figure exceeds 8000 in the whole country) would be abnormal even in an actual and not merely formal state of emergency. It becomes egregious when the grounds for such detention are only hypothetical and based on the Government's subjective assessment of the intents of the people concerned. In an individual such flagrant lack of objectivity would be deemed pathological. But a government's rationality is taken for granted in spite of such symptoms of paranoia.

Estimates as to the total number of political prisoners in West Bengal including those held under MISA vary from 12,000 to 18,000. It is admitted that even those held under specific charges cannot be convicted for lack of evidence acceptable to the court. Specious arguments are put forward for detaining them on one pretext or another even in defiance of law. The victims cannot apparently claim legal safeguards be-

cause of their alleged crimes against the rule of law. But the argument involves what is known as the fallacy of *petitio principii*, for none can be held guilty until he is convicted. It is sinister, Mephistophelian logic to deny legal and democratic rights to supposed enemies of the law. All this adds to the impression that there is little genuine respect for law in this country. But then, democracy or law can mean different things to different people. After all, it was not Karl Marx but Lewis Carroll who made Humpty Dumpty say to Alice when she objected to this confusion of meaning: "The question is which is to be the Master—that's all!"

## The Art To of Fooling

Some of the recent ministerial statements on foreign investment sound like a bang but are in effect nothing better than whimper. There is quite a bit of art in fooling people like this but it has been practised so often that today it wears rather thin. Take, for instance, Mr Dev Kanta Barooah's lengthy discourse on the question of nationalisation of the foreign oil companies. The Petroleum and Chemicals Minister begun on a markedly high pitch saying that there could not just be any justification for leaving an industry as vital as oil to foreign companies which have repeatedly tried to blackmail the country. It is not safe, he has pointed out, to leave such a basic industry with anybody other than the Government. So far so good. But then comes the anticlimax. He suggests two ways of going about the job: to nationalise the foreign companies or to squeeze them out of business by extending progressively the boundaries of the government sector. He has calculated that at the end of the fifth plan, the foreign oil companies will be left with only 18 per cent of refining capacity in the country. But the Minister has almost given an

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impression that nothing much could or would be done till the existing refinery agreements come to an end in 1979. Evidently the premise with which he started and the conclusion he has drawn do not match.

The Industrial Development Minister, Mr C. Subramaniam, did the same thing with a little more of his characteristic finesse. He has been quick to acknowledge the necessity, indeed the urgency of cutting down the excessive importance of foreign companies which are extending their range of business as well as sphere of influence at an alarming rate. But instead of going directly to the problem, he has chosen to follow a tortuous detour. There will be no check on foreign investment as such; foreign companies will be free to make as much profit as they like. Only they will be restricted to remit 40 per cent of it on "white" account. They can, of course, smuggle out more as long as the basic condition is not violated. Like Mr Barooah. Mr Subramaniam is only trying to keep the records clean, but is fully aware that the quarters for which the thunder is meant will see through the game and continue their merry ways as now. Would it not have been better if only both of them had started what is so obvious—that the Government has not the guts to do anything about these mighty foreign companies which in many cases are but the long arms of foreign powers and that the country has to go on wooing them whatever may be the language or style?

## More About The Approach

West Bengal's State Planning Board (SPB) prefaces its basic strategy with a perfunctory admission of overall economic stagnation after twenty long years of relentless economic planning. According to the SPB, the reason for this is that growth in income and output, all

but appreciable, has not by itself percolated to the lower strata of our people or to the backward areas of the country. Hence the need for a radically New Strategy, without the previous percolation hypothesis, to ensure not only economic progress at the maximum feasible rate but also equal distribution of benefits of economic progress among the people, regions and sectors.

With the Indian growth men these days a prima facie admission of overall economic stagnation after years of planning is a regular custom and this has never been called into question except by implication. However those who imply criticism are also their spokesmen. Take for example the findings of Mr P. D. Ogha of the Reserve Bank of India. According to him, in 1961-62 52 p.c. of our people were below the poverty line and the corresponding figure for 1968-69 was as high as 70 p.c. Messrs Dandekar and Rath in their new discovery of urban India has even more bitter things to say about the compelling misery of the lowest rung of the urban poor. This, as one reckons, is not a case of economic stagnation but a steep downhill movement.

Then comes the myth of percolation. No one with a sense of economics can expect percolation of benefits of economic growth to the lower strata or to the backward areas in the general framework of commodity production. Economics or no economics, why should anybody seriously expect the rich to ask the poor to share their fortune? Why should one imagine that the poor will eventually master the art of becoming rich and catch up with the Indian Midases? One can certainly dismiss all this talk about percolation as unmixed idiocy but then it is not really as simple as that.

If for example one cares to turn the pages of the report of the Mahalanobis Commission, one will come across this startling observation: "It is evident that the working of the planned economy has

contributed to the growth of big companies in Indian industry. The growth of the big companies has been facilitated by the financial assistance of the public financial institutions... Government policy during the plan period has been responsible in other ways as well for the growth... of the big companies." The then Union Minister for Planning, Mr G. L. Nanda, concluded in the same vein (in the Lok Sabha, August 26, 1960) on the eve of the Third Plan: "The private sector has grown from plan to plan. It would never have grown without the plan. It has grown because of the resources mobilized by the public sector which creates opportunities for the private sector also". All these and the economic events of 1964-68 when side by side with the increasing misery of the masses a handful of monopoly houses flourished tremendously will adduce evidence in favour of the so-called 'percolation', if only not in the direction that the SPB people expected.

And finally the New Strategy. This strategy is again by no means new. Neither in form, nor in content. People all over India and in West Bengal in particular are now tired of hearing the hollow promise of radical land reforms and all that. The Congress this year can celebrate the 36th year of its promised land reform, which in practice is a policy of redistribution of land in favour of those who have already enough of it and merrily continue rack-renting, as the SPB people have blandly admitted. As for other items, the less said the better.

But then while the SPB people desperately try to sing to the tune of their masters, they are let down by the latter who in their unguarded moments speak the truth and express their determination to work for the monopoly houses. The people of West Bengal by now know pretty well growth for whom and strategy for what.

# Telengana And The Revisionists

MALLIKARJUNA RAO

“TELENGANA means communists and communists mean Telengana”, thundered B. T. Ranadive at the second congress of the CPI in 1948 where his famous Political Thesis was adopted. The Telengana armed struggle was a few months old and it was not until after Telengana delegates had attacked the failure of the thesis to realise the “revolutionary significance” of the struggle to the “present epoch of maturing democratic revolution in India” did the new CPI leadership appear to support the Telengana struggle.

A special resolution moved by a Telengana delegate was passed at the congress amidst resounding cheers. But the leadership returned to its ways in no time. The ultra-revolutionary Ranadive, in his polemic against the Andhra communists (leading the Telengana struggle invoking Mao Tse-tung's *New Democracy* in justification of their analysis), suggestively bracketed Mao with revisionists like Tito and Browder and denounced him as a charlatan. (“...some of Mao's formulations are such that no communist party can accept them; they are in contradiction of the world understanding of the communist parties,” Ranadive wrote).

No wonder Ranadive and his party to which some of the prominent leaders of the struggle (P. Sundarayya and M. Basavapunniah) belong have been shy of owning up the Telengana armed struggle yet. Sundarayya has written a draft study. But the CPI, to which C. Rajeswara Rao, the most prominent leader of the struggle, belongs, has tried to embarrass the CPI(M) by celebrating the silver jubilee of the struggle, albeit in the most dishonest manner. When Rajeswara Rao was away in the GDR, N. K. Krishnan of the CPI's Central Secretariat inaugurated the “celebrations” in

Hyderabad with a sermon to the younger generation of communists on the futility of armed struggle. While anxious to undercut the CPI(M), the CPI cannot own up Telengana in toto. So it has to be apologetic about many things. But in fairness to Rajeswara Rao it must be admitted that he has had the equanimity to say, despite his party's commitment to peaceful transition, that the Telengana struggle “made our party in Telengana and Andhra areas a revolutionary party. The armed struggle set revolutionary traditions among the Telugu people, which is a great asset for our party.” (*New Age*, September 10, 1972). He has also had the equanimity to let the “entire communist movement” claim the legacy of Telengana. “Those who led and took part in this struggle are today inside the Communist Party of India, the Communist Party (Marxist) and in the extreme movements. It is the common heritage of the entire communist movement.”

While breaking with P. C. Joshi's reformist line, the Ranadive Politbureau did not give serious political thought to Telengana though the second congress had passed a resolution greeting the struggle. It broadly supported the armed struggle but did not effectively support the local leadership. The reason lay in Ranadive's new-fangled Titoite theory of two stages of revolution interwining in India and his dogmatic reliance on revolution by the urban proletariat and not by the peasantry. The young and well-knit Andhra leadership challenged Ranadive and proposed an alternative thesis which attempted application of the Chinese experience to the Indian situation for a four-class alliance to achieve a two-stage revolution. The challenge from the unsophisticated “peasant communists”

was too much for Ranadive “to stomach.”

The Calcutta thesis was in fact based on a misunderstanding of the Europe-centred Zhdanov line. The Cominform did not seem to have a clear line for former colonies like India when Ranadive embarked on his anti-Mao polemic. The Chinese revolution had not been brought to a formal end. It was not until June 1949 that the Cominform seemed to endorse the formulations of *New Democracy*. A Soviet academician, E. M. Zhukov, advocated a four-class alliance in colonies and semi-colonies. A little later, Academician V. Balabushevich in his report hailed the Telengana struggle as the “first attempt at creating people's democracy in India” and the “harbinger of agrarian revolution”. This was vindication of the Andhra leadership's line. Another indication of Soviet support to the Maoist strategy of a four-class alliance for a two-stage revolution came in Liu Shao-chi's speech at the trade conference of Asian and Australasian countries at Peking in November 1949. He prescribed “the road of Mao Tse-tung” as the path for other colonial countries, and armed action as the *main* form of struggle, *whenever and wherever possible*. This strengthened the Andhra leadership's position vis-a-vis Ranadive. An editorial in the Cominform journal, entitled “Mighty Advance of the National Liberation Movement in Colonial and Dependent Countries” (on January 27, 1950) endorsed the most crucial formulation in Liu Shao-chi's address:

The experience of the victorious national liberation struggle of the Chinese people teaches that the working class must unite with all classes, parties and groups, and organisations willing to fight the imperialists and their hirelings to form a broad nation-wide

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united front, headed by the working class and its vanguard—the Communist Party...

But when it came to the form of struggle, the Cominform listed China, Vietnam, Malaya, and "other countries" as examples of how armed struggle was becoming the "main form of struggle" of the national liberation movement in many colonies and dependent countries. Then it listed Vietnam, South Korea, Malaya, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Burma, as countries engaged in armed struggle, but not India which was merely mentioned as a country with "sham independence".

#### Mission to Moscow

With the Cominform debanking Ranadive, the Andhra leadership assumed charge of the party and Rajeswara Rao replaced him as the general secretary in May-June 1950. The Telengana line of peasant partisan warfare as the tactic of Indian revolution triumphed at this point but Moscow's intervention was to suppress it later. When Moscow felt compelled to intervene, it was not so much out of a desire to put the CPI on the correct path but to placate Nehru as an ally in a cold war situation so that he did not go over to the Western camp. The new Soviet policy meant a moratorium on class struggle in India. Moscow tried to achieve its objective through a letter from the British party to the CPI first, later through the British leader, R. Palme Dutt, and finally through a CPI delegation which clandestinely visited Moscow early in 1951. The CPI's new draft programme as well as statement of policy rationalized the rejection of armed struggle as the tactic for India. But as a sop for the hardliners, the party had an unpublished version of the same document. The difference between the two documents was limited to the varying degrees of emphasis each of them laid on armed struggle as means. But neither of them referred to armed struggle as part of the imme-

mediate programme. At best it was to be an ultimate tactic.

The 1951 documents together meant abandonment of the Telengana armed struggle. The new leadership (with Ajoy Ghosh as general secretary) went about the task rather apologetically. A Central Committee resolution began with the tacit admission that while the CPI could offer suggestions on tactics, "it is primarily for the masses, the people of Telengana who began, fought and suffered in their great fight against feudal oppression, for land and liberty, who have to decide the issue" of the tactics of the Telengana struggle. But the Central Committee was ready to solve the issue through negotiations and settlement to protect the interests of the peasantry and restore normality in Telengana. Thus the Central Committee was virtually disowning the struggle and was trying to emerge in the role of a "mediator" offering its good offices for a negotiated settlement. The CPI was not prepared even to admit that the movement in its last phase was aimed against Nehru's government:

It is believed in some circles that the struggle in Telengana is being fought in order to overthrow the Nehru government. These circles ignore that the struggle of the peasants for land and against the oppression of the feudal lords and the Nizam began in 1946 long before the Nehru government came into existence.

And it continued even after its entry into the Nizam's state, solely to protect the peasants against the landlords who were now being reinstated by the Nehru government in alliance with the Nizam, to overthrow whose rule it had ostensibly entered the State. The Central Committee listed seven demands as the basis of settlement but the State Government did not respond to the offer of negotiations. This forced the leadership to climb down further. It had to call off the movement with no guarantee whatever because Moscow

did not want it to continue.

A. K. Gopalan in October 1951, announced the withdrawal of the struggle. The announcement was on behalf of the Central Committee and the Andhra committee. The party, he said, was obliged "to advise the Telengana peasantry and the fighting partisans to stop all partisan actions and to mobilise the entire people to rout the Congress at the general elections".

To the new leadership, participation in the country's first adult franchise elections was more important than protecting the gains of the Telengana struggle. The party as a whole was settling for peaceful constitutionalism and the Andhra leadership was not consulted about the withdrawal of the struggle. It was a decision from above, imposed on the Andhra cadre and the guerilla fighters.

#### The Movement

In the Telengana district (that is, the Telugu-speaking, areas of the erstwhile Hyderabad State ruled by the Nizam) the contradiction between the masses of the peasantry and feudalism was most advanced in 1945-46. The communist peasant movement initially centred around simple demands against evictions and oppressive feudal extortions but quickly escalated when it met with the combined repression of the landlords and the Nizam's governmental machinery. Peasant resistance to the attacks of organised hoodlums, police, and the Nizam's military took the form of armed clashes, which eventually swelled into a movement to overthrow the Nizam himself. By mid-1946 the Telengana movement had acquired the characteristics of a national liberation struggle—to free the people from the rule of the Nizam and the feudal order. The communists were already in effective control of the nationalist movement and the Andhra Mahasabha which led it. The Mahasabha was in fact the front organisation of the illegal CPI. The decision of the Nizam of Hyderabad not to accede to India

after independence placed him in direct contradiction to the new Indian government.

In the initial stages the Telengana struggle was confined to 150 villages but within a year it spread to hundreds and thousands more. Throughout the Telengana region, communist guerillas were locked in combat with the Nizam's forces and with a small private army known as the Razakars. In early 1948, the CPI had begun establishing liberated zones with people's governments, people's courts, and people's militia and by 1950 the whole of Nalagonda and Warangal districts comprised a contiguous liberated zone.

Agrarian programmes were undertaken in the liberated zones and more than a million acres of land were distributed in 3,000 villages through peasant committees. About 4,000 communists and supporters died in encounters or prison camps. More than 5,000 women were raped by the police and military during the conflagration, while 1,000 villages were burnt down and 11,000 vilages thoroughly raided by the police.

The Indian army marched into Hyderabad in September 1948 and forced the Nizam to surrender and accede to India. The Nizam's autocracy was formally at an end but the peasant armed struggle continued. A section in the CPI leadership at the centre favoured withdrawal of armed struggle and cooperation with the Indian government which had brought Hyderabad State under its rule through a military governor. The Telengana struggle entered a new phase, from an anti-Nizam struggle to a struggle against the Indian government.

In the silver jubilee year, Rajeswara Rao noted that the extension of the struggle to the second phase was done with a "wrong understanding of the situation obtaining in the state, our country and the world at that time". He also holds that the extension of the struggle to the adjoining Andhra area (then in Madras

Presidency) was also wrong. If the CPI had changed its political line after the military intervention (euphemistically called police action) and utilised the opportunities which came at that time, its position and the movement would have been far stronger than what it became as a result of the continued armed struggle, according to Rajeswara Rao. He also said :

Last, there was never any difference in the Telengana and Andhra units of our Party over the anti-Nizam phase of the struggle. But when some leading comrades saw the bad effects of the second phase of the struggle, they differed and wanted the withdrawal of the struggle. But the major section of the leadership thought otherwise and the struggle continued upto the end of 1951. (*New Age*, September 10, 1972).

But a question not satisfactorily answered so far is whether even the 1951 programme and statement of policy warranted the withdrawal of the Telengana armed struggle, without tangible guarantees of protection for the gains. The withdrawal of the struggle means surrender of all the guerilla zones and the liberated zones to the Indian army and with them all the other gains.

Rajeswara Rao claims the following gains for the struggle which revisionism betrayed : 1. it ended the autocratic rule of the Nizam and foiled his plan to make Hyderabad an independent state; 2. it was a revolutionary agrarian armed struggle for ending the feudal order and for giving land to the peasants, agricultural labourers and adivasis. Though this could not be achieved in full, the struggle helped eliminate forced labour, illegal taxes and oppression by the feudal lords, and the elimination of the jagirdari system; 3. it was a struggle for division of the state into linguistic zones and for the formation of unified linguistic states (like Andhra, Maharashtra and Karnataka) with the people of the adjoining areas speaking the same language; 4. it was an

armed struggle fought under the leadership of the communist party over a vast area, in which about 20 districts in Telengana and Andhra area were involved.

But what he fails to mention is that it was part of the tide of national liberation struggles sweeping the post-second world war colonial and semi-colonial world—in Malaya, Burma, Indonesia, Indochina, Philippines and China.

At one level, Rajeswara Rao owns up the Telengana armed struggle as the common heritage of the entire Indian communist movement. (vide *New Age* articles). But in a pamphlet (in Telugu, *Charitramaka Telengana Poratam*, September 1972) he virtually disowns it. He says the 1948 Andhra document which advocated a Maoist model revolution in India based on armed guerilla struggle and liberated zones in the countryside to encircle the cities was a sectarian document blindly advocating the Chinese path for India. In 1948 none of the factors which made the Chinese revolution possible (its backwardness, lack of modern communications, and a weak bourgeoisie, a weak central government and domination of the government by the warlords; from the beginning the Chinese revolution adopted the path of armed revolution combating armed counter-revolution and the party which had its own army led the revolution; and the proximity of the Soviet Union to China and Soviet help to the Chinese revolution) were present in India. The Andhra leadership's subjective understanding of the favourable situation in Telengana, its elation over the initial successes in the anti-Nizam struggle, the spectacular victories of the Chinese Red Army over Chiang Kai-shek's forces; and the sweep of the armed guerilla struggle in South-East Asia, were responsible for the 1948 document, according to Rajeswara Rao. (pp. 25-7).

#### Elections

Rajeswara Rao was still insisting

on continuing the armed struggle when Sundarayya was already a votary for its end. But it should be recorded here that the results of the 1952 elections showed that the CPI's performance was most spectacular precisely in those areas of Telengana and Andhra where it had led peasant partisan warfare or guerilla squad actions, inviting massive police and military repression. If the votes mean anything at all, it was the vindication of the Andhra communist line of Maoist armed struggle. The CPI's electoral fortunes have steadily dwindled since.

More than 2,000 leading CPI cadres were still in jail and over 1,000 underground when the elections took place. The party itself was illegal and its candidates had to run under various guises and had difficulty in fielding candidates for all the constituencies. It could run candidates for only 45 of the 98 Telengana seats to the Hyderabad Assembly, under the banner of the People's Democratic Front and a few independents. Thirty-six of the 45 PDF banner won. In addition 10 Socialist Party candidates backed by the PDF also won. The Congress won 41 seats, contesting all the 98 but 25 of these were from Mahboobnagar and Hyderabad districts where the PDF did not put up candidates. In the "Red" district of Nalgonda, the PDF made a clean sweep of all the 14 seats. In Warangal, another "Red" district, it won 11 of the 14 seats. In Karimnagar, the tally was 10 out of 14. Of the 2.5 million votes polled, the PDF got approximately a third, while the Congress which contested every one of the 98 seats, also polled approximately the same proportion of votes. In the Andhra area, of the 140 seats for the Madras Assembly, the CPI bagged 41 while helping the victory of 8 independents and KMPP candidates. The Congress could win only 40 seats. Though the CPI contested only 74 of the 140 seats, it polled 20 per cent of the vote while the Congress, contesting all the seats could poll just 30 per cent. The CPI vic-

tories were concentrated in its traditional bases. It won 10 of the 12 seats in Krishna district, 10 of the 18 in Guntur, 5 of the 12 in West Godavari, and six of the 12 in East Godavari.

#### Naxalbari

In 1967, the Chinese Communist Party saw the resurrection of the Telengana movement in the Naxalbari armed struggle. An authoritative Chinese commentary said, "the peasants of Telengana and some other districts in south-eastern India once established a Red regime in an area embracing a population of 10 million and carried out a large-scale armed struggle that lasted five long years..." (NCNA, 1 August, 1967). Under the influence of Soviet revisionism beginning with 1946, and because of the Indian revisionists' reluctance to work among the peasants the movement was at a standstill between 1956-58. But spontaneous struggles broke out in 1959 and again during the famine years of 1964-65, the commentary said. But it was vague about the circumstances that attended the withdrawal of the Telengana struggle in 1951 and the role of the Soviet and Cominform leadership in forcing the withdrawal. It merely said the armed struggle in Telengana had been "betrayed and put down".

Another NCNA commentary on August 2, 1967, noted that for a long time, the Indian communist movement had witnessed an intense struggle between two lines. The revolutionaries had resolutely urged seizure of power through armed struggle, that is, the path of the Chinese people who were guided in their victories by Mao's thought. "Some revisionist chieftains, however, feverishly pushed ahead with the revisionist parliamentary road resulting in doing tremendous harm to the Indian revolution". In 1946-51, base areas of armed struggle were established in Telengana where the landless and the land poor peasants were aroused to seize land by armed struggle "and become the banner of the Indian

people's revolutionary struggle of the time". The commentary charged "Indian revisionists" with betraying Telengana but was again silent on the Soviet and Cominform roles. The analysis said the Telengana struggle grew under the radiance of Mao Tse-tung Thought though the Indian revisionists described peasant armed struggles as adventurism and individual terrorism. In a party document in September 1950 and again in an open document in 1951, they vilified the Chinese people's revolutionary war led by Chairman Mao Tse-tung, and put forward the theory of India's exceptionalism, hysterically preventing the Indian people from taking the road of Chinese revolution.

Long after the Telengana "sell out" and after many setbacks the Indian peasants had realised the "futility of the parliamentary path and the need for armed struggle", the Chinese commentary said.

The real significance of Telengana lies in this: it was the first application of the Maoist model revolution outside China, even before the Chinese revolution had triumphed fully and China had proclaimed itself a people's republic. After all, the first recorded debate on the legitimacy of Mao's teachings as part of Marxism-Leninism took place between the CPI's central leadership and the Andhra communists leading the Telengana struggle. Neither of the establishment communist parties would like to be reminded of this now.

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## President In Partisan Politics

N. K. SINGH

**P**RESIDENT V. V. Giri and his Orissa emissary, B. D. Jatti, seem to have reached the conclusion that floor crossing to the Congress is a 'revolt against reactionaries' while vice-versa is sheer defection.

Refusing to take note of the physical parade of 75 MLAs out of a total of 140 at Bhubaneswar Raj Bhavan to affirm support for the Orissa Pragati Dal leader Biju Patnaik, the Governor deprived the opposition of the constitutional right to prove its competence to form a ministry and instead chose to impose Central rule on the State in the name of the President.

Hadn't the Governor yet another yardstick to measure the strength of various parties in the State legislature—the March Rajya Sabha by-election from the Orissa Assembly constituency in which a Congress candidate was defeated by the opposition candidate by 17 votes? There could be no better proof than this that the Congress party had lost its majority in the State Assembly.

The incident is further proof of the Governors' not-so-secret ties with the power-that-be in New Delhi. Trying to bring a motion for the impeachment of the President, the opposition leaders justifiably described the action as the 'murder of democracy', 'unconstitutional' and 'partisan'.

According to the Governor, this step was taken to prevent political instability. In his letter to the President, Mr Jatti said that he did not invite the opposition leader to form an alternative ministry before recommending dissolution of the State legislature because the defectors' government to be formed under the leadership of the still-less-predictable Biju Patnaik "may not remain for a long time." The Governor's concern for

political stability does him credit, but it is arguable if the gubernatorial mandate includes making presumptions on the possible future conduct of legislators. In fact it is a matter that should be exercised only on the floor of the Assembly. In Orissa itself the Nandini Satpathy Government came to power through the same procedure. After the change of party loyalties by a few Swatantra and Utkal Congress legislators, and the consequential fall of the United Front Government, the Congress Legislators' Party with a strength of just 48 members in a house of 140 was invited to form a ministry.

Yet another violation of the known procedure is the dissolution of the State Assembly. Recently, while imposing Presidents' rule on Andhra, the Assembly was not dissolved, but only suspended.

The 'advice' to dissolve the Assembly was given by Mrs Satpathy while tendering the resignation of her Ministry. The Head of the State was neither bound to accept her 'advice', nor had she any right to offer 'advice' to the Governor, head of a minority Government as she was. The resignation was tendered when 26 MLAs had already left the ruling party and the Government was assured of its defeat when the supplementary budget was due to be presented. Mrs Satpathy chose the expedient tactic of forestalling a trial of strength which would have left the Governor with no alternative but to call upon the leaders of the opposition to form an alternative administration.

It is notable that on earlier occasions the advice of the Chief Ministers of Bihar, Punjab etc. was not accepted 'because they had lost their legislative majorities'. But they were non-Congress Chief Ministers.

It is quite another matter that a coalition of the kind led by Mr Biju Patnaik, consisting of a possibly reinforced Utkal Congress, the Swatantra and Mahtab's group, having come together mainly to topple the Satpathy Government, might have proved unstable. It is also another matter that they were a motley crowd activated by no other consideration than filling ministerial offices. (But so was the Congress party when it was allowed to form the Government eight months ago!) It is also another matter that a minority Government tendered its resignation to forestall its inevitable fall, and the Governor, despite all the evidence of majority enjoyed by the opposition, took the partisan decision of not inviting them to form a government.

The deart of the matter is, was it proper for the President in distant Delhi to deprive the legislature of its constitutional right to have a say in the affair when its regular session was only a few hours away?

What could have been a political drama, with a touch of poetic justice, was turned into a ridiculous farce in Orissa.

সশস্ত্র বিপ্লবের পটভূমিকায়

প্রথম পূর্ণাঙ্গ নাটক

অজিত মুখোপাধ্যায় প্রণীত

রক্তের দর্পণে ৩.০০

কোটি কোটি জনগণের মুক্তিযুদ্ধে যেসব শ্রমিক কৃষক ও মধ্যবিত্ত বিপ্লবী সংগ্রাম করছেন, তাঁদের নিঃস্বার্থ সংগ্রামের এক অলঙ্ঘন অধ্যায়।

কবিতা গ্রন্থ ॥ মানুষ হবার দাম ১.৫০

বিক্রয়কেন্দ্র ॥ নিউ বুক সেন্টার

১৪, রমানাথ মজুমদার স্ট্রীট,

কলকাতা-৯



# Women's Liberation And American Capitalism—I

GAIL OMVEDT

THE women's movement in the United States is fast becoming a key force in the struggle against capitalism and imperialism.

Before explaining what is happening, it is necessary to look at why this should be so. Why should the emergence of women into active social and political life and their fight to end their own oppression by men be a threat to the capitalist system as such? Why is the subordination of women and the particular role of the nuclear family crucial to the maintenance of capitalism?

In food-gathering societies (simple tribal societies based on an economy of hunting and fishing) there is only minor subordination of women, for two reasons: first, women play an important and direct economic role, and second, the family as an isolated unit is not important; a woman maintains her connections with her brothers and family of birth as well as with her husband's family. In societies based on horticulture (simple cultivation of crops with a hoe) women are also less likely to be subordinated, and often carry on much of the cultivation themselves; such societies are more likely to have matrilineal descent. For this reason too, women are given much of the credit in the evolution of society for the so-called "neolithic revolution", for inventions such as pottery and the development of plant cultivation which made it possible for settled agricultural communities to begin to evolve.<sup>1</sup> Both food-gathering and horticultural societies are also generally equalitarian; there is little class differentiation.

However, with the development of plough agriculture and the domestication of large animals (cattle, horses, sheep) comes the rise of both class differentiation and the subordination of women within the patriarchal family.<sup>2</sup> In such agrarian and pastoral societies there arises the class

differentiation between peasants who produce the surplus and the warriors, aristocrats, priests and intellectuals who appropriate and live off the surplus. At the same time, the dominant males who control the new sources of wealth (including herds of animals) assert their dominance within the family, and women become subordinated to their husbands within the large patriarchal household which includes not only wife and children but also servants, apprentices, serfs and slaves. Patrilineal descent (inheritance through the male line) becomes stressed; as Engels describes it in his ground-breaking work, *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, this development of classes and the patriarchal family carried with it "the world-historic defeat of the female sex. The man seized the reins in the house also, the woman was degraded, enthralled, the slave of the man's lust, a mere instrument for breeding children"<sup>3</sup> (p. 92). In such agrarian societies, however, women continue to play an important economic role. The workplace is not separated from the household: whether the family is one of peasants, artisans or aristocrats, most of its economic functions are carried out within the household, and work relations are not separable from the emotion-laden patriarchal relations of the family. Within such class-divided agrarian societies, it is frequently the case that among the lower classes there is more equalitarianism and a greater independence for women—often a carry over from the culture of simpler tribal days—while among the upper classes patriarchal patterns are extreme. (This for instance seems to have been true in India, especially Maharashtra, where women were extremely subordinated in terms of orthodox caste culture but often had greater freedom—including the abi-

lity to divorce their husbands and remarry—among the lowercaste peasants).

With the rise of capitalism, however, women's subordinate and non-productive role becomes fixed more firmly. Work becomes separated from the family as the man goes out of his house to work in the factory; the woman's role thus increasingly becomes limited to caring for the family and the children, to socializing the children and providing emotional support for her husband. Capitalism is based on "free" wage labour, i.e. the mobile worker who does not own the means of production but sells his labour in the market, or in other words seeks a job wherever he can find it. What makes this possible is the existence, in the background, of his wife (or mother) who maintains the house and cares for the children and thus makes it possible for her husband to be a worker. Thus, more than any other form of society, capitalism institutionalizes a "division of labour" between men and women in which the man's role and identity is defined as a worker, and the woman's role and identity is defined in terms of her husband, home and children. (Even if a woman does work or have a career this is seen as "unnatural"; she is thought to be less capable than the man—and this all-pervading male chauvinism justifies a large amount of actual discrimination and exclusion).

To this it can be added that just as the unemployed worker (particularly in fully developed capitalist societies such as the U.S.) is stigmatized as a person who is not fulfilling his primary duty as a man, so the unmarried woman is stigmatized as someone who has not fulfilled her "nature" as a woman. There is another parallel as well: just as the labourer in capitalist society is "free" to seek whatever job he can get but not free not to work, so the

woman in contemporary western society is "free" to marry whomsoever she wants but is not really free not to marry. In both cases there are economic compulsions: the woman who does not marry faces not only social pressure but, also economic pressure, because of the discrimination against women in the job market and in every well-paid major profession or occupation. "Female-headed families", i.e. divorced or widowed women caring for their children, are among the poorest in the United States.

### "Reproduction"

In other words, the woman's role in the capitalist division of labour can be described in Marxist terms as the "reproduction of labour power": i.e. she raises the children who will be the future workers of society and she provides the emotional support that makes it possible for her husband to return day after day to an often oppressive and alienating job. And in caring for children and husband, within a capitalist society she is taught to pass on the capitalist values of competitiveness, hierarchy and individualism. In the words of one writer,

The family is important both to shoulder the burden of the costs of education and to carry out the repressive socialization of children. The family must raise children who have internalized hierarchical social relations, who will discipline themselves and work efficiently without constant supervision. The family also serves to repress the natural sexuality of its members—an essential process if people are to work at jobs which turn them into machines for eight hours or more a day. Women are responsible for implementing most of this socialization.<sup>4</sup>

The nuclear family is thus crucial to capitalism, and this has been recognized not only by Marxist theorists but also by orthodox sociologists such as Talcott Parsons (*Family, Socialization and Interaction Process*), and Neil Smelser (*Social Change in*

*the Industrial Revolution* a book dealing with changes in the family during industrialization).

Therefore, if ever women in large numbers were to break out of the structure which limits them to family and home, it would lead to a shaking up of society such as has never been seen before.

There is a further complication. "Women's work" has come to mean work within the home—homework (as well as some association occupations that similarly involve socialization and "caring for" activities, such as nursing, teaching, etc.). Yet women have always been also direct producers within the labour force, a part of the proletariat. This is a factor that varies with the period of development of capitalism. With the rise of industrialism, women and children played a crucial role for a short period of time since they were often employed at low wages and under cruel conditions. (Engels, in *Condition of the Working Class in England*, and Marx in *Capital*, both describe the oppression of these early women and child workers). Then, with the development of mature capitalism, women were sent back to the home. More recently, women have begun to re-enter the labour force in large numbers.

What does this mean? First, it can be noted that women, like blacks and other minorities, form a crucial part of what might be called the "reserve army of labour". That is, if there is a shortage of labour they can be easily employed, while job discrimination and the denigration of women as workers help to keep their pay low. At the same time, because they do not primarily define themselves as workers, they do not form union so easily, they are less ready to organize to fight oppressive conditions, and they can be unemployed easily—sent back to the home as easily as they were brought out of it. (As an example, hundreds of thousands of women were employed in the U.S. during World War II; with the end of the war and the

return of male soldiers they were "unemployed" within the space of a couple of months). Divisions between male and female workers—just as much as divisions between the black and white workers—help to prevent the unity of the working class that is essential to the struggle against capitalism.

Second, both Engels and Lenin believed that bringing women into the labour force as fully equal producers would lead to their liberation, their freeing from the bonds of the home. To this it has to be said that *women will not be liberated if they simply become workers but still carry the primary responsibility for caring for home and children*. So far it remains true both in the U.S. and the USSR that the large numbers of women who are working still have to come home from their job and prepare meals, clean up the house and do the "women's work" of the home. Such women are not truly liberated. (This is why the fight for "child care" programme is so crucial). Nevertheless, the increasing entry of women into the labour force does lead to greater independence and a desire for more freedom as well as an increasing sensitivity to sexual discrimination; it helps to generate contradictions that undermine the system.

### Women Workers in the U.S.

We can understand this more concretely if we look at the evolution of the American labour force.

It is sometimes said that the true "industrial proletariat", the blue-collar worker, is declining as a percentage of the labour force in modern capitalist societies. This is not true. If we look at *male workers* only, in 1900 manual workers made up 37.8% of all employed workers, while in 1970 they represented 46.8%. Managers, officials, proprietors and farm owners (i.e. the capitalist class, roughly speaking) made up 29.7% of the workers in 1900 and 17.2% in 1970. Professional and technical workers made up 3.4% in 1900 and 14.1% in 1970;

clerical and sales workers were 7.4% in 1900 and 12.8% in 1970; service workers were 3.1% in 1900 and 6.6% in 1970, and farm workers were 18.7% in 1900 and 2.5% in 1970. In other words, looking at men only, the manual workers, professionals and technical workers, clerical and sales and service workers have all grown in percentage; while independent small businessmen and farm workers have declined. Both the "blue collar" and the "white collar" proletariat are on the increase.

But this pattern is only true if we look at men. The other major trend is the overall increase in the percentage of women in the labour force. Women who are working have increased from 18.5% of all workers in 1900 to 24.4% in 1930, 33.2% in 1960 and 37.9% in 1970. Today, in 1973, women represent forty per cent of all employed workers in the United States.

These women are not becoming manual workers: they are going primarily into clerical and sales jobs (where they made up 66.5% of all workers), service occupations (where they are 67% of all workers) and to some extent into low-level professional and technical jobs such as teaching, nursing, social work and so forth (where they are 38.2% of all workers). (As a result, considering men and women together, the total percentage of manual workers to the entire labour force is declining but only slightly; it is now 34.9% of the total. But since many working women come from working class families whose males are manual workers, and since the husband's position generally determines the social class of the entire family, it is fair to look at the figures for men only in understanding social class in America).

Clerical and sales occupation, service occupations and low-level professional and technical employment are white-collar jobs that are as much "proletarianized" as manual labour; workers do not own the means of production, they are sub-

ordinated and controlled on the job, and so forth. Furthermore these occupations are usually not unionized; for many reasons: the past white-collar workers have not seen themselves as "working class"; women who make up large numbers of such workers have not defined themselves as "workers", and male-dominated unions have been little interested in organizing these occupations. As a result, such positions are often paid less and involve more oppressive working conditions than the skilled and unionized blue-collar jobs.

Only about 25% of all American workers are at present in unions. These have become male-dominated institutions whose leaders are highly anti-communist and conservative labour bureaucrats. Further, racial minorities—blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans—have by and large been excluded. In recent years, however, there has been somewhat of a beginning of new unionizing efforts. Among the most outstanding new unions are the farm workers union involving mainly Chicano (Mexican-American) farm labourers; teachers' unions, and unions of government employees (AFSCME, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees is the fastest growing and one of the fifteen largest unions in the U.S., as well as one of the most liberal). The unionization of racial minorities and of women is inseparable from the fight against sexism and racism within the U.S. as a whole. If women or Chicano farm workers are to organize they have to struggle not only against their employers but also against male-dominated union bureaucrats and against the ideology central to American society. Their struggle thus inevitably becomes politicized.

A good example of the interweaving of the struggle against company bosses with the struggle with labour bureaucrats is given by a friend of mine, a Malayan-born woman of South Indian descent. She organized union of women office workers in

the legal publishing firm in a large city with an economy based upon military service. They decided to join the Typographers Union, but found that they had to confront not only their employers but also the male union leaders who could not understand what these "wild-looking young women in blue jeans" were all about or why they wanted to be unionized. Her union work has been, for her, an aspect of her involvement in the women's movement in general; she has been one of many women contributing to a working women's newspaper in the city and has recently taken a job with the legal extension department of a university—where she faces indeed one of the toughest bosses in the State.

(To be concluded)

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# China-Cambodia : A Study In Peking's Diplomacy

SUBROTO SEN

THE rightist coup d'état in Cambodia and subsequent American invasion were considered by a well-known Indochina specialist to be Nixon's "historic gift" for Mao. The American adventure, he wrote at the time, "constitutes, first a moral, political and perhaps strategic victory for the Chinese revolution. The turn of events not only confirmed the nature of imperialism, it underlined the role of arbiter, the protector of the Indochinese revolution that the Peking Government had assumed since the reception to Prince Sihanouk, the pan Indochina conference of April 2, 1970 and Mao's message of May 20, 1970, "Never", he concluded, "had the influence and the radiance of China been so great." The three years that have elapsed since have only confirmed the correctness of this assessment.

Today GRUNG (Gouvernement Royal d'Union Nationale du Cambodge), recognized by over 35 countries, controls 90 per cent of Cambodian territory and about 80 per cent of its population, thus enormously expanding the frontiers of Asian revolution. Observers have noted that this success has boosted China's prestige as one of the principal supporters of the Cambodian struggle. But what has not been adequately analysed is that the fast emergence of a radical Cambodia is, in certain ways, the fruition of a long-term Chinese policy towards Cambodia. By this we do not, obviously, mean that the Chinese policy has brought about the coup d'état, American invasion and the resultant telescoping of history. It was a success of the Chinese policy in a sense that in a decisive hour of history the head of state and a large section of the administration, who have so long enjoyed Peking's support, chose to join the side of revolution and thus provide a new dimension to the struggle. Unlike

other liberation struggles, from the very beginning it was not an insurgency against any legal government whatsoever, but an established government and a people fighting against foreign aggression and usurpation. In short, the presence of Prince Sihanouk at the head of the Cambodian struggle has been an asset for the revolutionary cause. And the transformation of a Sihanouk led Cambodia from a staunchly anti-communist State to one of the vanguards of anti-imperialist struggle is in a great measure due to successful Chinese foreign policy. This is more significant in view of the fact that in pre-coup years China pursued a warm State-to-State relation with Cambodia while maintaining a discreet silence over leftwing activities inside the country.

The question might well arise, how could Cambodia's transformation be attributed to skilful Chinese diplomacy? Doesn't country's development follow basically from its internal contradictions? Nobody would ignore the internal factors. But because of her special geographic situation foreign relations played an unusually decisive role in Cambodia's political evolution. If the bullying and pressure tactics used by the U. S. since 1954 progressively alienated Cambodia from the West, it is the comprehensive and friendly Chinese policy that helped to prevent her from knuckling under and encouraged her instead to take an increasingly active anti-imperialist posture. After the coup, Prince Sihanouk's decision to lead the anti-imperialist struggle rather than retire into exile, as the Americans expected him to do, was just the logical culmination of the process the Chinese had consistently encouraged.

As she emerged from French colonial rule Cambodia under Norodom Sihanouk was considered a part of the "Free World". Pressed by the

Khmer Issarak and Vietminh guerillas, who accused Sihanouk of being a "puppet" of the French, the latter too spoke of "the struggle we are leading against communism in Asia." During the Geneva conference (1954) defending the right to seek arms aid from the U.S. the Cambodian delegate said the U.S. only wanted to provide Cambodia with the means of preserving her independence and prevent her from becoming a colony of communist imperialism.

## Genuine Nationalist

Such bellicose, anti-communist declarations notwithstanding, China made a realistic assessment of the Cambodian situation. It did not take much time for Peking to discover that despite his anti-communist reflexes (due to his class origin as well as the menace he sensed from the left) Sihanouk was a genuine nationalist, with a sharp sense of self-respect and independence of mind. While Sihanouk remained tremendously popular among the country's peasant masses, the relative weakness of the left movement in a society lacking in sharp social contradictions did not provide any alternative focus which could enjoy Chinese support. It was evident that it would take years before social contradictions in Cambodia could mature and result in a struggle for socialism. The principal task meanwhile would be to maintain her independence and prevent her from falling a prey to neo-colonialism. So the minimum the Chinese seem to have set up as their foreign policy goal was to keep Cambodia out of the SEATO bloc and nurture her young nationalism. It was through tactful and systematic encouragement to Cambodia in her effort to preserve territorial integrity and political independence that Cambodia could be finally won for the anti-imperialist camp, the ultimate objective of Chinese foreign policy.

APRIL 7, 1973

And Peking set out to attain its short-term and long-term objectives with a rare finesse and understanding.

Cambodia's first contact with China at the Geneva Conference (1954) left a favourable impression on the former. As Sihanouk recalled later, "in Geneva the Chinese Prime Minister had completely seduced any delegation although it was very anti-communist." Later on during the Afro-Asian conference at Bandung Chou En-lai succeeded in dispelling much of Sihanouk's suspicion and distrust about China, accumulated through ignorance and Western propaganda. Chou En-lai offered total support for Cambodia's neutral policy but impressed on Sihanouk the need to make it more real by opening normal relations with the socialist bloc.

Soon the American pressure on Cambodia to accept the "protection" of SEATO took a very crude form, blatant enough to hurt, the sensitive leader of a new-born nation. Sihanouk's reply to this pressure was a trip to China—a country he had not yet officially recognised. He saluted China, which, he said, "has shown to us, especially after Geneva, a perfectly correct attitude". In the joint communiqué he asserted his faith in peaceful coexistence among different social systems—an idea considered heresy in the eyes of Washington. Cambodia also accepted Chinese economic aid, which, it was noted with gratitude, was "without any condition or counterpart". China eventually emerged as one of the biggest aid-donors. But what marked out the Chinese aid was not the amount but its nature. Contrasted with American aid which was mostly military and never meant to develop the economic potential of the country, the Chinese aid was designed to put Cambodia on the path of self-reliant economic development. By aiding Cambodia on the path of industrialisation, as a Western observer has shrewdly noted, China also satisfied the former's "sensitive national pride".

### Sharp Reaction

Cambodia's hesitant opening toward China brought a sharp riposte from the U.S. and its satellites. While the U.S. threatened to cut off aid neighbouring Thailand and South Vietnam started economic blockade and military harassment. In this critical hour China was ready to support Cambodia in resisting imperialist pressure. Reassured, Cambodia then categorically rejected the "protection" offered by SEATO and accorded diplomatic recognition to China. Since then China has stood firmly behind Cambodia in her struggle to preserve independence and territorial integrity. During his second visit to Cambodia in 1960 Chou En-lai even evoked the possibility of military support in case of aggression against Cambodia. After Sihanouk rejected all American aid in 1963, risking the weakening of his army, the Chinese came out with sizable military aid. By this China was not only helping to defend Cambodia's independence but by the same token ensuring the invaluable assistance the Vietnamese revolutionaries had started drawing from Cambodia.

During his several visits to China Prince Sihanouk was highly impressed by the Chinese system—the way a poor and backward China was fast transforming herself through her own effort. Inhibited by his class limitations as well as by his belief that Marxist ideology was unacceptable to Buddhist Khmers, he instead instituted a "Khmer Socialism" by nationalising the country's major industries, banking and commerce. Never very enthusiastic about this 'socialist' experiment, the Chinese nevertheless respected Sihanouk's courage and encouraged his desire for economic independence.

It is a measure of the success of Chinese policy that within less than a decade China came to be considered as the "number one friend" of Cambodia. Explaining the reasons for it Prince Sihanouk wrote in 1965: The People's Republic of China above all aids Cambodia in two domains vital for her: The search for econo-

mic independence through industrialisation and national defence. Thanks to her unconditional aid, given with tact and majesty China has earned the gratitude of our people. The most important concrete benefit that China on the other hand reaped from her Cambodia policy was her moral support in the anti-imperialist struggle. From demanding China's entry to the UN to offering material and political support to Vietnam Cambodia played a leading role among the struggling Third World countries.

One of the reasons Prince Sihanouk had developed great confidence in China was the latter's scrupulous non-interference in Cambodia's internal affairs. A minor episode during the tumultuous days of the Cultural Revolution was quickly resolved. While praising Sihanouk's anti-imperialist stand China maintained a discreet silence over the peasant uprising in the provinces or repression of the left by Sihanouk's police. Was it opportunism? Or treachery to proletarian internationalism? There is no way of knowing whether China had secretly been encouraging the Cambodian communists, as she has done in other cases. (I) But the rapidity with which contacts were established between Prince Sihanouk in Peking and Khmer Rouge leaders in Cambodia leads one to guess that in her anxiety to maintain friendly State-to-State relation China did not neglect the party relations. What, in any case, is evident is that the silence of the Chinese media has not hindered the growth of a genuine, grass-roots movement which was capable enough to immediately assume the leadership of a nationwide struggle when called upon to do so after the coup. The repression of the left notwithstanding, Cambodia's anti-imperialist involvement, especially in Vietnam, and China's favourable image in Cambodia provided a congenial ground for the growth of a leftist movement. And once imperialism had struck its blow, a nationalist, anti-imperialist Sihanouk, firmly supported by China, made the

only logical and honourable move—join the national liberation struggle, thus investing what could have been a small leftist movement with legality and prestige. The benefits of Chinese diplomacy were finally being reaped by the Cambodian revolutionaries.

(1) See for example the letter the CPC wrote to the East Pakistan Communist Party (ML) in 1969 while China had excellent state relation with Pakistan. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 16, 1972, p. II.

The group performs the play at Curzon Park (opposite Raj Bhavan) every Saturday at 4 p.m.

## Lambakarna Pala

Nakshatra's production of Abanindranath Tagore's *Lambakarna Pala* (based on Parasuram's story) at Rabindra Sadan combines the archaic simplicity of a jatra performance with modern stagecraft. The effect is somewhat bizarre and not entirely pleasing. Some of the rare delightful moments in an otherwise tedious play are, however, due sometimes to the jatra techniques and, at other times, to improved stage effects wholly alien to the older tradition. The play suffers from its inordinate length, loose, rambling construction, and profusion of songs and speeches. The simple core of the funny situation in the original story is lost in Abanindranath's fanciful dramatic extravaganza. The latter remains, in effect, too literary to be successfully put up on stage. The director, Mr Shyamal-Ghosh, does little to give it a truly dramatic form. He merely reproduces the original operatic fantasy with little attempt at stage adaptation. Mistaken notions of modern stagecraft may have led him to take Abanindranath as an anticipator of modern theatre linking jatra with the 'epic' stage. Some such notions prevail in regard to Tagore's unactable plays too. Abanindranath's is a highly literary play, as are Tagore's and none have any connection with modern trends in European theatre. They read better than they act.

The Nakshatra production is, however, remarkable for the individual and group acting of the performers. They create some unforgettable moments. The songs add to this impression. One can only wish the group would use its superior comic talents and mastery of modern stagecraft in the direction of social satire instead of wasting them on obsolescent literary extravaganzas like this.

## Plays Old And New

HITEN GHOSH

**SILHOUETTE'S** *Abritt, Dashamik*, a new, original Bengali play, written and directed by Mr Bir Sen and produced at Muktangan, is to be welcomed for many reasons. For one thing, it gives some authentic theatrical experience away from the tradition of literary theatre. Here is some of the essence of Brechtian theatre without the usual underworld setting and its appeal to pruriency which alone seem to attract and appear promising to our Brecht enthusiasts. A bitter social commentary informs the artistic experiment and lends it a validity so conspicuously lacking in similar theatrical efforts in this country.

The accent is on physical acting—marked gestures, patterned movements, acrobatics. Songs and dances alternate with dialogues whose satirical intent is too broad to be missed. The elements of parody are adapted from Brecht, but with the use of well-known Bengali folk tunes and dance patterns they produce a devastating effect. Dialogues and declamations are copied from life, exaggerated and given a satirical twist. The same is done with public postures and proclaimed views of men in public life. Part of the burlesque may be intended for some Brecht productions in Bengali, for mocking echoes from songs and speeches have been used in them.

The play consists of scenes from real life with comic distortion and exaggeration: the university, college, publishing agency, street corner youths, religious salvation, closed factory and toddy-shop. Each scene

becomes at moments intensely lively and full of grotesque absurdities which are yet so deeply real. The characters and scenes are portrayed with a ruthless economy and simplification. Throughout, a comic detachment is maintained, stimulating an amused, critical response. The audience is sought to be purged of its own illusions by effects of alienation through mockery and burlesque. Never have the techniques of Brechtian theatre been employed to such sensible and legitimate purpose on the Bengali stage. An ironic frame of mind is thus created in respect of social realities by presenting them through the distorting mirror of comedy. There is no cheap emotional diversion to be found in this vision, nothing of the lying myths of both radical and conservative variety (cf. Messrs Rashbehari Sarkar, Sombhu Mitra, Utpal Dutt, et al). This is a very, well-acted, well-produced play and yet one wishes it were free from even such imperfections as might seem natural and pardonable in any other of its kind. The last two scenes tend to get sloppy in parts but they soon resume the tone of violent lampoon with songs and dances. The impression they finally leave is one of mockery and in tune with that of the rest of the play. The fifth scene (religious salvation) is really splendid, finally rising in a crescendo of extreme foolery. There is perhaps a certain triteness and banality in places but, all in all, it is a fairly good play, so modern and yet deeply traditional in techniques.

## The Pyramid Era

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

**J**ERZY Kawalerowitz's excursion into the splendours of ancient Egypt in his lavishly-mounded film *Pharaoh* has brought off some interesting treasures. There are some brilliantly-observed moments of subtle personal emotions which stay alive in our memory despite the whirlwind of massive spectacle and it is here that the film stands out as something special among its own breed. Set in the reign of the Ramesaide dynasty, the film concentrates on the study of young Ramesis the Thirteenth imbued with the ideals of modern statehood, who is out to crush the domination of the priests over the affairs of the kingdom. In a series of memorable sequences charged with high dramatic force, the conflict between the temporal and the religious authority leads up to a tautly-built climax. The focus is always on the individual level and the characters do not outgrow their human proportions, nor do they lose their own identities in an amorphous assembly of faceless masses. The director's grip over the medium is never at fault and he shows his metier both in handling big scenes and in his treatment of intimate drama. The only discordant note in the film is the director's fascination with exotic details at places (especially in the scenes in the temple of Isis where the old Pharaoh is being mummified) which intrudes on the main theme of the film and vitiates its total effect.

War means a heavy toll of human lives, that everybody knows. But that it can create wide cracks in human relationships may escape our notice. This is the message which *Darar* seems to transmit to its viewers. The Indo-Pak war of 1971 provides the background to the story of a young peasant in a village on the north-western border who is faced with a dilemma whether to leave with or stay with his pregnant

wife, when the village is about to be overrun by the enemy. This is quite an exciting idea to explore, but the director's attention is more on the conventional song-dance routine than on psychological probe. The setting is quite authentic, but the characters and situations are totally false.

## Rabin Mondal's World

SANDIP SARKAR

**T**HE paintings of Rabin Mondal are on view at the Chemould Gallery from April 4. The exhibition will continue until April 13.

Rabin, one of the most influential painters of Calcutta today, has worked out a rich and distinctive style and is the hub around which the now famous group of artists called the Calcutta Painters revolve.

There are artists whose works make an immediate impact, while there are others whose canvas gradually enslaves the viewer. Rabin's work attracts immediately and yet allows for growth.

A critic discussing Rabin's work has remarked somewhere that in his earlier paintings he was mainly concerned with the group identity of men, for he had chosen to paint fisherfolk and industrial labourers working joyfully together. Later on Rabin became dissatisfied with the professional identity of men and turned towards the problem of the individual. With certain reservations, one can agree with this.

Rabin finds no coherence or rationality in the medley of events related to individuals, as well as those that have national or international importance. It seems to him that man has lost control. The complexity and the inhumanity of the human situation, without religion to justify and sanctify it, is ghastly and nauseating. Modernity has forced man to cut off his links with the historical past. Man lives in isolation, an alien among aliens, without

any root or faith. Rabin wants his work to be an expression of this total experience, to relate how this affects the psyche—how it makes for his joy, pleasure, anxiety and neurosis. He wants to translate the devastating disintegration of society into picture-language of the subconscious and to give a myth-like dimension to his experience. He started by glorifying human endeavour but now he is trying to probe into the future of human destiny. He suspects old forms and basic tenets of old aesthetics, yet he wants to confront the past and selectively include it in his art.

He has gone back to the world of primitive man, the tribal world with its totems and taboos, myths of eternal recurrence, the sagas of pre-literate man as a means to comment on the conflicting tendency and complexity of the present situation. He tries to use primordial, archaic and archetypal imagery. He shows us how basic human relationships have broken down, how individual man is lonely, sometimes rejected and even mutilated. Even where men get together to celebrate a festival the individual remains a shipwrecked person. In two large canvases Rabin has tried to bring this out. Men and women are totally alone, unable to communicate, not sure about their role in society, their identity. His men have a tortured and bewildered look. Rabin has taken various aspects of the subordination of women in man's world as his subject to emphasize human alienation. His women, whether 'Queen' or 'Fertility Cult' image, are symbols of the rejected. 'Mother and Child', done in primeval green, shows us the isolation imposed on woman by motherhood. Rabin wants to add to man's intuitive conception of himself, to trace the effects of the modern world in the primitive regions of the mind. As Joyce had used Homer to find order and meaning in the confusion of modern life, so Rabin uses primitive imagery to understand its complexity. His colours spill out as a

violent contrast to each other, pure and tropical, burning with forceful texture.

On a canvas or two Rabin has not differentiated between the spurious and genuine inspiration. As a result these look like bad copies of his own work. An artist of his stature should be more selective.

## Letters

### Mine Mishaps

This time it was the Noonudih colliery, Jitpur, Dhanbad district, a colliery which was taken over by the Central Government from IISCO last year. On the night of Holi, March 18, 47(?) miners died in an explosion and 13 were injured. An enquiry is to take place. In the meantime, on the spot enquiries revealed certain facts.

In the mines, an organic gas named Methane is found. It is a non-poisonous gas and is much lighter than air. But if the gas burns in the air with a non-luminous flame, it forms a highly explosive mixture with air. With excess of oxygen, the products of combustion are carbon dioxide and water. The carbon dioxide is not poisonous, but it does not support respiration; animals die from suffocation. In the later stage of the reaction the carbon dioxide forms carbon monoxide (CO). This carbon-monoxide is very poisonous. To check these reactions, there are some exhaust fans in mines. These drain out Methane oozing in the underground tunnels of the mines.

The exhaust fans of the Noonudih colliery are very powerful, with a capacity of 23000 cubic ft/minute. Alas! The exhaust system was reported to have been stopped, and as

### CORRECTION

In "Teachers in Travail" (March 17), the teachers were called বদতমীজ by the Chief Executive Councillor (line 4) and not vice versa.

a result Methane in the mine ignited.

We know that 5% concentration of Methane in the atmosphere makes it explosive. The air with explosive Methane is known as "fire-damp". When coal dust is present near such an explosive mixture, it becomes doubly dangerous, behaving like gunpowder, in the case of ignition. But the Noonudih colliery is equipped with sophisticated mining arrangements and the accumulation of too much coal dust was prevented, rendering the explosion weak.

Newton's third law of motion states, "every action has its reaction". After the explosion, emaciated but infuriated mine workers, around the Jitpore coal-belt, assembled in large numbers in front of the colliery office. They demonstrated, shouted slogans against the officers, and challenged the engineers and managers. A few days ago, the miners of Karagali colliery of Giridih district (newly formed) attacked the administrators with bows, arrows and spears. When the police came to rescue the authorities they met the police (though seven workers were killed by the police). The workers were being deprived of their legal emoluments and so the reaction followed. A grave reaction is imminent in Noonudih also, as the situation there remains tense.

SIBAJI BHATTACHARYA  
Calcutta

### Statement

It is a great shock to the legal world that the Attorney General should have sought indulgence from the Supreme Court that the judgment in the MISA case should be reserved, pending amendment of Section 17A of the Act. Such indulgence was sought when it appeared that the Section might be struck down. It is a greater shock that the Court should have acceded to the request.

The highest tradition of the bar demanded that the Attorney General should not have asked for postpone-

ment of the case to "save" the Government and the highest standards of the judiciary equally demanded that the court should not have extended such indulgence.

Needless to say, the administration of justice has little in common with the administration of the affairs of State. It would be a mad day for India if the Courts begin to adjust their decision, even its timing, to the administrative exigencies of the State.

A. P. CHATTERJEE,  
Joint Secretary, W. Bengal  
Association of Democratic Lawyers,  
Calcutta

### Prisoners In Kerala

When I see many of the top theoreticians and leaders of the CPI like Mohit Sen and Bhupesh Gupta in the forefront of the "struggle against injustice" done to the Naxalites, I cannot but point out how their colleague and the well-known "gentleman communist" Mr Achutha Menon, the Chief Minister of Kerala, is treating the Naxalite prisoners in his State.

In Kerala there are now only about 100 Naxalite prisoners, 45 of them in Trivandrum Central Prison. Among these 45 a few have been sentenced to life imprisonment. Others are implicated in various false criminal and conspiracy cases. The trial has been postponed for the last two years on one or the other excuse. All this while they are locked up in dark, 6' x 8' single cells without sufficient ventilation. Though they were allowed later to read non-political newspapers and books, they were never given writing facilities. After a hunger-strike for 38 days (in two batches) they got the sanction to use notebooks and pens at their own expense but writing politics was strictly prohibited. Mr Achutha Menon has revealed in the introduction to his Malayalam translation of H. G. Wells's *World History* that this translation was done in 1941 while he was a prisoner in Viyyoor



Jail (Kerala) and that he got the writing facilities only after 5 days of hunger-strike. (Who is better—the imperialist master or this lackey of imperialism?)

Following an incident in October last year when the prisoners protested against the 24-hour lock-up, the prisoners have not been given even newspapers. They are denied writing facilities. They are not allowed even to speak loudly from one cell to the next, let alone political discussion or anything else.

This is the "imaginative and humane" treatment of Naxalite prisoners by the CPI Chief Minister.

A SYMPATHISER  
Trivandrum

### For Prisoners

We, the undersigned students and youths of Shillong, have been mortified by the disclosures in the "Letter from Dum Dum Jail" by a Prisoner and "A Memorandum" by mothers, sisters, wives and other female relatives of political prisoners in West Bengal (March 10, 1973). The continuing torture and inhuman oppression of political prisoners (most of them students and youths) in West Bengal jails is not known by a large section of our people and it is not at all surprising to us. When a good number of our brilliant young friends were mercilessly murdered by the fascists and their hoodlums either in jail or outside, most of the newspapers, journals and periodicals remained silent. The left political parties did not show even the least sympathy and it is too much to expect them to launch a campaign to mould public opinion. When the Pakistan military junta killed the people of Bangladesh, the Indian press and propaganda machinery were so outspoken. But it is a matter of regret that the so-called left intellectuals, who were so vociferous about the victimised students and youths of Bangladesh, have not taken any initiative to launch

any movement on this issue in Indian jails.

Today we must not ignore the basic force of mass struggle by students and youths because they are active, energetic and the least conservative. There's no denying the fact that the student and youth forces in different parts of India are being used for destructive and anti-people purposes by the reactionaries. In Assam and other parts of north-east India all sections of students and youths are being used by the reactionaries for communal riots and other chauvinist acts, thereby to serve the purposes of the ruling classes. The conscious section of the youths and students must not allow themselves to be used so. We appeal to the large number of conscious students and youths of West Bengal to mobilise the broad masses and the intellectuals and launch an effective mass movement against the injustice and atrocities perpetrated upon the prisoners. We are waiting for able leadership from the West Bengal students and youths who are destined to create again a revolutionary atmosphere throughout India and advance the Indian mass democratic struggle towards the victory of socialism.

Shakuntala Mitra, Pranab Hazarika, Indrajit Lahiri, Man Bahadur Thapa, Gold Flower Lyndoh, Leena Burman, for "Progressive Students Union"

Shillong

### Bangladesh Election

The debacle of the left parties in the Bangladesh elections can be attributed to the disunity in the left camp. Had these parties fought the election from an undivided platform, the result might not have been so disastrous for them. Another major factor that contributed to the collapse of the left was their unwise policy in relation to India. That India had no pious intention behind helping the Awami League is clear to people who are concerned with

politics. But the great majority of the people of Bangladesh think India to be their saviour. It is not reasonable to expect the common people to become disillusioned overnight about India's designs. The Hate India campaign boomeranged. It can be pointed out that communists and workers parties in various Afro-Asian countries have sustained serious setbacks for their incorrect handling of situations. The parties of Bangladesh are no exception.

ASHIM K. RAY  
Calcutta

### False Brother

Between December 16, 1972 and February 24, 1973, 28-29 pages of *Frontier* were devoted to a discussion on the nature and mode of production in the Soviet Union, the writers being Arun Majumdar and Moni Guha. Both agree on the basic point that there is no socialism in the mode and character of the present-day Soviet production, yet they differ on details. According to Moni Guha, Mr Majumdar is not only completely ignorant of dialectics but also completely ignorant of history and especially economic history of the development of human civilisation. On the other hand, Arun Majumdar writes, Mr Guha with all his declared vanity about his own understanding of dialectics should try to understand the dialectics of operation of a mode of production.

This mutual bickering is a symptom of our left thought and action: no difference of opinion on the basic issue, but we cannot be united for details.

At the same time, Moni Guha and Arun Majumdar are so academic in the usual sense of the term that reading their essays is really wearisome. Neither is up to date in their references and readings. Besides, the Russians use almost the same arguments used by Mr Guha and Mr Majumdar against the economic theories of Ota Sik, the Czechoslovak economist.

The present state of the Soviet economy is not the result of post-Stalin reforms only. It had its origin in the Stalin era. In the centre of all economic organisations, reforms and mode of production is man in society, and economic structure must be linked with superstructure. The most valid criterion of a socialist economy and society is whether it creates or not socialist man. Without this, there is always the danger of reversion to capitalism. Here Stalin failed lamentably. He wanted to solve the problem from above by bureaucracy and state power. It is true that he was in a hurry, and yet the net result of his gigantic effort was to build up a socialist mode of production without creating a socialist man; the mentality of consumer society remained. The Stalin model also included substantial bonus payments to managers but they were paid for plan fulfilment (i.e. obeying orders from above. But the fault was not of Stalin alone. It was the fate of a city-based revolution in a backward country. In Russia the peasantry staged an uprising independently and in course of the uprising they consolidated and spread traditional organisations in the countryside. As a result Lenin had to go back one step backward to NEP, after moving two steps ahead in 1917. But in the case of Mao Tse-tung the story was just the opposite.

ARJUN BANDYOPADYAY  
Calcutta

## GRAND POPULARITY CONTEST

NO ENTRY FEE—YOU MUST WIN A PRIZE


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## Defend Prisoners

The Legal Aid Committee has been organised to defend all those who are being victimised for holding political beliefs dissimilar to those of the party in power. Our object is to defend such cases irrespective of the political ideology of the victims.

Following publicity in newspapers we have been receiving donations from different parts of India. We thank all the donors, most of whom have preferred to remain anonymous. (We make it a point to send acknowledgements but we cannot help if they do not reach the donors.) With the assistance of these donations as well as sincere co-operation from a number of lawyers we have been able to take up many cases.

There are about six thousand detenus and undertrial prisoners in West Bengal only. Innumerable cases have been pending since 1968-69. Despite reminders the police are reluctant to submit chargesheets and bail is being opposed stubbornly. If one is granted bail he is tagged to some other cases. Thus the prisoners are virtually denied any defence.

There is great need to expand our work and the task before us is huge. We can hope to tackle it adequately only if greater co-operation is forth-

coming from all democratically-minded people not only in this State but in the whole of India.

We appeal to all democratic people:

To contribute generously to this Committee;

To communicate to us all cases of political victimization in need of legal aid.

Cheques (drawn in favour of Amar Prasad Chakraborty) may be sent to either of the addresses given below; money orders, cash and communications to the office (2).

1. Amar Prasad Chakraborty  
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2. Jayasree Rana  
Legal Aid Committee  
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Third Floor,  
Calcutta-1.  
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