

frontier

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On Other Pages

COMMENTS	..	2
CASTE AND CLASS IN VILLAGES		
SHARAD JHAVERI	..	4
THE RIGHT ROAD		
V. MAYEVSKY		
A. FILIPOV	..	5
WHAT'S RUSSIA UP TO ?		
FROM A PINDI CORRESPONDENT	..	6
MARXIST INTELLECTUALS		
SUMANTA BANERJEE	..	8
CHALIHA THE CHARMER		
ARUN KUMAR CHAKMA	..	9
CALCUTTA DIARY		
GYAN KAPUR	..	10
<i>The Press</i>		
TROUBLE AGAIN		
KAJAL SEN	..	12
APPRENTICE ENGINEERS		
JAYANTA GHOSAL	..	13
GURU		
MANIK DUTTA	..	14
ABARTA		
BY OUR DRAMA CRITIC	..	15
LETTERS	..	17

Editor : Samar Sen

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TELENGANA STATE ?

MR Brahmananda Reddy has decided to throw in the sponge. Not to be outmanoeuvred, the seven Ministers in the Andhra Cabinet hailing from Telengana too have resigned, and have pledged to devote their energies towards the task of ensuring the "fullest integration" of the State. This statement has the usual Vedanta flavour, and has no doubt been purposively phrased to meet the exigencies of all situations. The seven gentlemen will be free agents from this week on, but not Mr Brahmananda Reddy. Mrs Gandhi on her return from her overseas trip will have to ruminate over the emerging internal permutations and evolve a quasi-face-saving alternative, before Mr Reddy could be permitted to depart for the present. Apart from everything else, the Reddys, whether severally or jointly, are considerable entities in all seasons: a footloose Brahmananda could turn out to be about as dangerous a proposition as a footloose Chenna.

The tragedy of the Telengana imbroglio has thus aspects which can only make the non-combatants sorrowful and angry in turn. If the murky squabbles of personalities within the Andhra Congress organisation were not involved, the present extremities would perhaps never have been reached. Had not the Syndicate and Mrs Gandhi got engaged in their teeth-gnashing over the selection of the Congress nominee for the Presidential poll, the problem could have been tackled in an altogether different manner. As it is, the way the Congress "High" Command has gone about to contain the agitation in Telengana has merely illustrated once more the wholesale bankruptcy of that non-so-dispensable quality, to wit, imagination. From the bureaucratic stance of hearing no evil to no question of the Chief Minister's resignation or the imposition of Presidential rule to waiting for the award of the Bhargava Committee to ordering the arrest of the Praja Samithi leaders has been akin to a wild St. Vitus's dance. And now there is a prospect that the entire structure of New Delhi's logic in the matter of Telengana might cave in in the wake of last weekend's developments.

For the leaders of the Praja Samithi must by now have scented blood. Even assuming that they have not, there is often a certain inexorability in political processes which it becomes impossible to turn off once a particular point has been passed; from that point on, history, takes, so

to say, an existentialist course. In the beginning, the individuals spearheading the agitation were, for all one knows, perhaps not aiming at much more than a fair share of the spoils and inserting a few malevolent spanners in Mr Brahmananda Reddy's wheel. New Delhi's mismanagement has now driven them to a success which would yet catch all and sundry, including themselves, napping. And the consequences for the nation could be dubious.

For if, from this week, the pace of the scenario suddenly accelerates, a separate Telengana might well be on the map even before Anna Domino 1969 is properly over. But if Telengana comes, can Rayalaseema be far behind? Or Vidarbha? Or Saurashtra? The game of setting athwart what had been so ceremoniously (perhaps a little thoughtlessly, ignoring the suggested alternative of a period of separation) joined together barely a dozen years ago could then be carried to the limits of logical absurdity; in West Bengal, for example, the "people" of the district of Hooghly—or Howrah—or Purulia—might rise in indignant revolt against the excruciating tyranny of the people of Midnapore, and, on the successive completion of the revolt, walk away with their own separate State.

Not that the discontent of the people in Telengana is not genuine: in a social set-up which encourages the exploitative principle, those having the advantages of an early start in education and enjoying the benefits of an inequitable structure of asset distribution will invariably try to put the squeeze on the weaker cross-sections. This exploitation commonly manifests itself along communal or religious lines; but the Andhra case shows that a regional pattern can be easily woven into the model. The solution however does not necessarily lie in the dogma of progressive atomisation. For, in the absence of a social transformation, the small particles will continue to reflect faithfully the exploitative features of the bigger ones, and the hitherto deprived ones will continue to be deprived. The Telengana unrest exemplifies the

relativity of the ease with which a motivated bourgeoisie, in the absence of effective left leadership, can egg on both the petit bourgeoisie and other elements to the brink of an upheaval; but, in terms of social progress, the outcome may indeed be—as the current phraseology goes—altogether "counterproductive".

Naked And Unashamed

Queen Elizabeth II must have enjoyed the investiture ceremony of Prince Charles as the Prince of Wales at Caernarvon Castle on July 1. Her Majesty may not even have thought of the earlier resignation of Sir Humphrey Gibbs as Governor and Crown Representative in Rhodesia. With that resignation Mr Harold Wilson has placed four million black Africans in Rhodesia completely at the mercy of Mr Ian Smith, Prime Minister of the four-year-old illegal régime in Salisbury. No amount of gimmickry on the part of the British Prime Minister will hide the obscene fact that last Friday week's referendum in Rhodesia, which gave Mr Smith's apartheid constitution a semblance of respectability, has the oblique blessing of Mr Harold Wilson, the man with six principles and fewer scruples. The four million black Africans in Rhodesia, still supposed to be a self-governing colony of Great Britain, have been sold down the shark-infested Zambesi; and the auctioneers were Messrs Ian Smith and Harold Wilson.

Let us face it. The Unilateral Declaration of Independence of 1965, November 11, had to have its logical conclusion. Such abbreviations as UDI and NIBMAR (No Independence Before Majority African Rule) had to be spelt out. They have been. There now stands Mr Ian Smith with a mandate, from his woefully restricted electorate, to keep the Africans under his feet indefinitely. And there is Mr Harold Wilson stripped of his six principles, naked and unashamed. We are unable to say that we much enjoy this political strip-tease. It is not that Mr Wilson

has been raped. He had asked for whatever Mr Ian Smith has done to him when he said in advance that there was no question of any British force being used against white rebellion in Rhodesia. Mr Wilson is too intelligent a politician not to know that economic sanctions are mere fig leaves which are useless as a chastity belt.

If the fate of the Rhodesian Africans has only attracted world attention, unaccompanied by any effective action, the state of Britain excites at once anger and pity. Once a rather tolerant country, Britain is rapidly embracing the hateful policy of the obnoxious Mr Enoch Powell. Throughout the period of colonization, Britain somehow managed to preserve liberal institutions at home while pursuing tyrannical policies in the dependencies and the colonies. But colour prejudice is a highly infectious disease. Permitting apartheid in Rhodesia, the British today see nothing very wrong in practising it in their own country. Lack of charity may begin abroad; but its corrupting effect cannot be escaped by those at home. Sorrowing over the injustice in Rhodesia is but natural and not very difficult, especially for people with dark skins; but the degradation of the British people in general hurts nearly as much. A usually decent people have been debasing themselves by disregarding, if not endorsing, debased practices elsewhere. This moral question will remain long after the political question of white and black Rhodesia has been resolved one way or the other.

Boomerang

The Indian Press was all approbation when Mr Dinesh Singh chose to do a bit of plain speaking during his tour of Nepal early last month. But now that Mr Kirtinidhi Bista, Prime Minister of the pigmy State, has paid back in Mr Singh's coin, the Press is shocked. Mr Singh was also praised because he brought out several outstanding issues with Nepal in the open. But now that Mr Bista has pub-

JULY 5, 1969

licly demanded that the Indian military personnel be withdrawn from Nepal, the Press on the whole feels that such Nepalese openness cannot be tolerated. Neither the Government nor the Press in India however questions the right of Nepal to demand certain things which have nothing to do with the Indo-Nepalese Treaty of 1950 which, any way, stands revoked. The military liaison group of 23 in Kathmandu and the wireless operators on the Nepal-Tibet border were sent by India at Nepal's request. Now that Nepal asks for their withdrawal, there ought not to be any further ruminations over the demand.

What provoked Nepal to put India in an embarrassing situation by demanding the withdrawal publicly, can now be traced to the Big Brother attitude adopted by Mr Dinesh Singh. Such Nehruish postures often strain India's foreign relations with countries, not excluding Nepal. Mr Singh, during his talks in Nepal, took a stand that the stationing of Indian wireless operators on the Nepal-Tibet border was not negotiable. Presumably he sought to bribe his way out by the allurements of the Indo-Nepalese Trade and Transit Treaty of 1960, which continues to be more favourable to Nepal than to India because of its utter vagueness. India's stake in manning the northern checkpoints is obvious. No price can be too big if the Indian operators there can go on reporting Chinese movements on the border. But evidently Mr Singh banked too much on the trade facilities offered to Nepal and is now reaping his old oats.

It is no wonder that the Indian Government sees a Chinese hand behind Mr Bista's interview with the *Rising Nepal*. Mr Bista of course is no lover of China, nor is King Mahendra, whose sole purpose in the governance of Nepal is to keep himself secure on the throne. But Nepal will always play China against India, being a small country strategically positioned between two giants. India herself knows the art too well. What is surprising is her continued belief in the myth of 'special relationship'.

Nepal being situated to the north of India, and there being an open frontier between the two, there has to be a common defence problem. But the problem does not confer on India any special relationship which is a euphemism for special rights,—notwithstanding the hoary ties, traditional affinity and all that joint-communicative bunk.

India has no alternative but to placate all the States north of her border because of her Sinophobia. So long as she continues her irrational and strenuous relation with China, artificially created by Big Business in India and abroad, she cannot afford to reduce her bribes and doles to the smaller border States. She has got to build Karnali hydel project, accept smuggling of third country goods, erect an exclusive Nepalese shed in the Calcutta port, quietly sit down over the Susta, because in the bargain India can watch China. If Mr Singh chose to be uppity by threatening not to renew the Trade and Transit Treaty, he may stew in his juice. India, big because of her bulk, did not observe diplomatic courtesy by informing Nepal of the rapid change of her defence structure since 1962. Mr Bista can therefore well afford to dispense with courtesy by asking India to quit.

Student Power

The phrase most fashionable in recent years is 'student power'. But who are these students? What is their 'power' for? Press reports would generally make them out to be ill-assorted groupings of rampaging hooligans, pot-addict yuppies, crazies and what not bent on mischief and disruption. Flower-power people of course, are there. But what goes mostly unreported is the profound change that the student movement the world over is undergoing. What started largely as a campus based protest against the Vietnam war has now swelled into a bigger force striving for more fundamental and positive goals. It was through struggle that the students could find out who

are the friends and enemies of the people, why the State is called organized violence and where is the headquarters to be bombarded. With these realisations they are waking up to a new responsibility as agents of social revolution.

Although this is the story the world over—from Nihon to Berkeley campus—this change is nowhere so marked as in the American students' organization, 'Students for a Democratic Society'. Seven years ago SDS was founded with the goal of replacing "power rooted in possession, privilege or circumstances by power and uniqueness rooted in love, reason and creativity." But now the emphasis is on revolutionary violence as the means of overthrowing the oppressive "power rooted in possession". And this, they seem to have realized, cannot be achieved by the so-called 'student power' but through a firm worker-student alliance.

There is, to be sure, a contradiction between the working class who are footing the bill for the university education and students (mostly of petty-bourgeois origin) who are later on co-opted into the exploitative system. But the students have a growing realisation that without the decisive weight of the working class they can at best shut down a university but cannot touch the machinery of oppression. Even to achieve their limited academic demands they need bring the weight of the working class to bear. And it is only by integrating themselves with the workers, their struggle, that they can reduce and resolve the contradiction between themselves. This is exactly what the American students have been doing. In Chicago the students manned a picket line when picketing by workers was banned by a court injunction ordering them back to work. In Los Angeles students came out in support of the striking newspaper workers and organized pickets (strikingly similar to what students here did in front of a newspaper office). At Columbia University students battled with the authority in defence of the right of the black workers in Harlem. This summer the students have spread out

into factories taking up part-time jobs and living with the workers. Numerically such students may be insignificant but not the lessons they are learning.

Asia Watchers

Until recently the American Government could add respectability to its Asian policy by drawing the support of Asian experts. But the era of conformism is about to end as young radicals have started challenging the premise of U.S. policy and also the credibility of their professors. The differences within the Association for Asian Studies over some vital issues which were contained for some time surfaced at the Association's annual conference in Philadelphia. The dissenting group, mainly composed of the younger generation of leftist and radical scholars, were denied the platform for a rigorous intellectual exercise on Vietnam. As a result, the dissenters were obliged to form a Committee for Concerned Asian Scholars. Its statement of purpose says, "we first came together in opposition to the brutal aggression of the United States in Vietnam and to the complicity or silence of our profession with regard to that policy ... we are concerned about the present unwillingness of specialists to

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speak out against the implications of an Asian policy committed to ensuring American domination of much of Asia." To this school, the U.S. Vietnam policy is not merely an issue of academic interest, it also concerns their lives because of draft. CCAS has condemned the U.S. war activities in Vietnam as racist and imperialist. Racist because war decisions are oriented toward reducing American casualties, and imperialist because the Government it is backing is intended to serve U.S. interests. The younger generation detests the effort of the old liberals to develop chummy relations with the Government. These liberals, who are the victims of Senator Joseph McCarthy's 'spy hunting', nurture the fond hope that a continuous communication with the authorities will ultimately result in a new set of Asia policies completely different from those pursued by John Foster Dulles and Dean Rusk. Toward this end, scholars who are vocal in affirming that the victory of the Chinese Communist Party is a historic fact which cannot be altered by American might have become sources of information and advice for the Government. In fact, the U.S. Government has been deeply involved in the maintenance of China experts. The research papers produced by various East Asia study centres, which have proliferated in the last two decades, have in most cases supported the goals of U.S. China policy. The result has been, according to five brilliant Harvard graduate students, "supposedly objective research on China which actually accepts the official misrepresentation of the Chinese revolution as a 'tragedy' and of the People's Republic as 'aggressive.'" They believe, on the contrary, that the Chinese Revolution has been immensely beneficial for the Chinese people and serves as an inspiration throughout the world. In their view, the greatest current threat to peace in Asia is America's huge military presence there (including, of course, its aggression in Vietnam), and its hostility to social revolutions like the one the Chinese are carrying out in their own country.

Caste And Class' In Villages

SHARAD JHAVERI

THE myth of Indian rural society as an undifferentiated, homogeneous and egalitarian peasant society has been exploded by many social scientists and economists who have proved beyond doubt that it is a faction society where functional relationships of castes and classes are undergoing reorientation. However, none of the scholars, except Prof Baljit Singh (*Next Step in Village India*), Dr A. Desai (*Rural Sociology*), and Dr Thorner (*Agrarian Prospects in India*) endeavours to comprehend the character, ambit and the direction of this transformation. Except them, very few have attempted to probe the basic issues which underlie the processes of change.

Agriculture in this country is far superior in size to any other branch of the economy, whatever the standard of measurement. This means that land is still the basic means of production. On account of the immense population pressure on land, the man-land ratio is becoming more and more adverse, and land a scarce commodity. This ratio stands at less than one acre per person when all agricultural land is spread over the total population and at about 1.5 acres per person when it is spread over the cultivating population.

Since private property in land exists, land is also a source of income, security and prestige. On account of private ownership, farmers prefer to make lasting investments in agricultural land, which they own, rather than in land which they rent from others. Owned land constitutes the most important single item of assets. It constitutes the basic credit-worthiness.

Hence it may be safely concluded that since (1) land is the most important means of production and a source of income, power and finance, (2) the greatest concentration of land owner-

ship exists and (3) private property till rules in land, the land question must occupy a central position amongst all the factional struggles. It must be recognised that private ownership of land lies at the root of all the factional conflicts and is the crux of the agrarian question.

Apart from Bernard Cohn's and Dr Thorner's observations, Oscar Lewis' findings (cf. *Peasant Culture in India and Mexico*, A comparative Analysis, Mekim Marriot, P. 155-161) that in the village Rani Khera, factions are an old, ingrained pattern in village life and that the major issues involved are quarrels over the inheritance of land are pertinent in this regard. Almost all the intensive studies of individual villages made so far reveal the importance of the land question for an understanding of the dynamics of rural society. In this connection we shall briefly review Prof Baljit Singh's observations and findings. The value of his investigations lies in the methods he employed in eliciting responses from villagers. His survey of six villages in U.P. revealed that the most important cause of factional splits has been the dispute over land; that the dominant factions are those of the higher castes possessing much land who number 42; that the landless villagers belonging to lower castes constitute weaker factions, totalling 57; and that land riots are on the increase.

It can be seen that almost all over India the upper castes are landed castes while small farmers, tenants and landless labour belong to lower, scheduled and untouchable castes. On account of ownership of land, the upper castes (and the upper stratum of the Muslim community also) constitute the dominant factions while the lower castes have weaker factions. However, the landed castes are divided on account of the division of land while the landless achieve caste unity by forming single factions in hostile rivalry against the landed gentry. Thus caste unity in case of the lower castes tends to be tenacious.

The upper Hindu castes dominate over the intermediate and labour

castes, in spite of their numerical weakness and irrespective of land reforms, adult suffrage, establishment of goan sabhas and panchayat raj.

Caste disputes and factional strife regarding the land question are not restricted to the village of their origin. By the very nature of such struggles and by the mechanism of caste structure, land disputes tend to engulf many villages in the region. The landless castes favour redistribution of land and radical agrarian reforms while the upper castes oppose such reform. Also, individual land hunger is increasingly being associated with group land hunger.

Form of class struggle

Since land, which is the basic means of production, is owned by an insignificant fraction it is obvious that the content of the factional struggle which is ravaging the Indian agrarian structure must be economic in character. It must acquire class character. However, because of the peculiarities of caste hierarchy in India wherein almost all the upper castes own land while the lower castes do not, the absence of a class organisation of landless castes, and the oppression and exploitation of the lower castes by the higher having assumed the character of caste exploitation, the class struggle of the landless castes against the landed gentry has also assumed the character of caste struggle. Caste struggles and factional disputes are, in a majority of cases, basically land disputes.

Agrarian reforms, by their unequal treatment of different castes, have further aggravated caste and hence class struggle. Non-fixation of ceilings, absence of distribution of surplus land, non-acquisition of surplus land, all this has in practice buttressed the rights and privileges of the upper landed castes at the expense of the lower. Entire castes and social groups have been subordinated and relegated to low positions on account of evictions, voluntary surrenders and conversion from tenants into paid hired labourers. The gap between them and the other villagers frequently widens rather than dimini-

shes on account of development projects. Elections, adult suffrage, panchayat raj all have provided an outlet for contending castes to ventilate their grievances. Even H. D. Malaviya (*Village Panchayats in India*, P. 705-715) goes to the extent of asserting that the new co-relationship of class forces today expresses itself in the panchayats which seem to have become the centre of these conflicts.

So the struggle of the landless castes against the upper landed castes is economic in character and historically progressive and revolutionary. Even in the absence of a class outlook and class leadership, these struggles and the down-trodden participating factions have a tenacity of purpose—the landless castes are more united on account of their basic common objectives than the upper castes.

On a socio-cultural plane, the struggle of the lower castes has assumed forms which sociologists have collectively designated as the process of "Sanskritization". The lower castes, in order to remove their stigma, have begun to reject their traditional rituals, customs and practices and adopt to an ever increasing extent the habits of life and behaviour patterns of the upper castes. The latter, on account of their urban contacts have begun to westernize themselves. Thus two concurrent processes of "Sanskritization" and "Westernization" are seen operating on the socio-cultural plane in rural India. In themselves the process of "Sanskritization" and casteism and caste unity are reactionary. But in the absence of a vigorous Marxist-proletarian leadership of the landless strata, the trend of class struggle assuming the form of caste struggle, generating in the process an intensified caste-loyalty and unity, is likely to persist in the foreseeable future.

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V. MAYEVSKY

A. FILIPOV

DURING his visit to Pakistan, Alexei Kosygin had an exchange of opinions with President Yahya Khan on relations between their countries and on international problems of mutual concern. The two leaders reaffirmed the desire to expand cooperation in the economic, cultural and other spheres. This cooperation furthers the interests of the two countries, the cause of strengthening peace in Asia and the world, and is not spearheaded against any nation.

The situation in the Middle East and the Indian sub-continent is inseparably linked with the international situation as a whole. The stand adopted by India, Pakistan and Afghanistan on crucial world issues is of great significance. These countries favour a political settlement in Vietnam, elimination of the aftermath

of the Israeli aggression in the Middle East and of the freedom and independence of the Asian and African nations, peace and international cooperation.

The Soviet Union, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan have chosen peace as the main principle of their policy. Other countries are also guided by this principle, and it is quite evident that peaceful means should be sought for the solution of disputes between some or other States.

It is on the basis of this policy that the countries of the given region may become an even more impressive force on the international arena and may use their resources for advancing the economy and living standards. The closely related historical and cultural development, common interests in the struggle for social progress and peace, imperatively call for the cooperation of the neighbouring States in the tackling of tasks that are facing them. The Soviet Union has been doing everything to promote this cooperation. We can recall here the friendly contacts of Soviet statesmen with the statesmen of India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, the exchange of opinions on important questions, the contribution made by the Soviet Union towards the conclusion of the Tashkent Agreement in 1966, and other steps aimed at establishing understanding between the Soviet Union and each country of the region and between all the neighbouring States.

However, the situation in the Middle East and South Asia remains complex and unstable. This is explained by a number of reasons. It should be remembered that most of the countries of that region were, for many decades, an object of colonial annexations and the unceremonious domination of monopolies. The colonial powers recarved more than once the borders of one country or another regardless of their geographical or historical conditions. In this way delayed-action bombs had been laid, and the situation in that region led to serious complications and conflicts.

Imperialist States have invariably sought to disunite the neighbouring

countries, entice them into military blocs, push them off an independent course, and restore, in one form or other, the influence they had lost. This is evident from the position taken by the United States and Britain at the last CENTO session in Teheran. Imperialism is assisted by right-wing, reactionary parties whose ideology rests on rabid chauvinism and bourgeois nationalism.

At the same time, new hegemonistic forces in Asia are conducting dangerous subversive activities in an attempt to set Afghanistan and Pakistan, and India against one another, and to create an atmosphere of extreme tension in this area to achieve their great-power aims. This hegemonistic course plays into the hands of imperialism since it fans hatred and animosity among the peoples, draws the countries into the arms drive and hits at the economic development plans of the independent countries. The perfidy of the Maoist instigators consists in the fact that with the aid of loud "left" phrases they may, sometimes, deceive people who have not passed through the school of political struggle and make them unwitting participants in adventurist actions that have no prospects. But events have frequently shown that adventurism has never led to anything good.

It may be said that two tendencies are now influencing the situation in the Middle East and South Asia.

On the one hand, the need is arising and objective pre-requisites are being created for the cooperation of India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and other States both in the economic field and in the struggle for the preservation of universal peace.

On the other hand, certain forces are trying to whip up chauvinist hysteria, resort to threats, aggravate tension and create a deadlock atmosphere which, sooner or later, may give rise to an armed conflict dangerous to peoples, to peace in the given area and universal peace.

A great deal depends on which of these tendencies takes the upper hand.

(From Novosti. Abridged)

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What Is Russia Up To ?

FROM A PINDI CORRESPONDENT

IS the Soviet Union trying to impose a military pact against China on Afghanistan, Pakistan and India? This is the question that intrigued diplomatic observers here in the wake of Soviet Premier Kosygin's remark that co-operation between these three countries was "essential".

True, he did not mention China specifically because of strong Pakistani feelings on the subject, but he did attack China while in Afghanistan. And lest the message was lost, his remark was followed by a tirade in *Pravda*, the CPSU organ, accusing China of "carrying out a policy designed to lead to hegemony over Afghanistan, Pakistan and India."

Another charge levelled by *Pravda* was that China was trying to set Afghanistan against Pakistan and Pakistan against India. Perhaps *Pravda* does not know that Afghan rulers adopted their hostile attitude towards Pakistan at the instance of the Indian Government soon after independence in 1947, when the Chinese were fighting the Chiang Kai-shek regime. It appears that it is *Pravda* that is trying to set Pakistan against her friendly neighbour through such wild charges in order to grind its own axe.

As regards the second charge, the basic cause of the strained relations between India and Pakistan is the forcible occupation of Jammu and Kashmir State by India and the intransigence of Indian rulers in trying to deprive us of our rightful share in the Ganges waters. By levying this charge, *Pravda* has tried to kill two birds with one stone in that it implies the non-recognition by the Soviet rulers of the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination.

However, one must pay compliments to Mr Kosygin for his frankness in leaving no doubt as to the position India occupies in the joint strategy of the U.S. and the Soviet Union for this part of the world, the first manifestation of which was the Tashkent Conference, bulldozed to success by none

other than Premier Kosygin himself. It is in pursuance of this strategy that the U.S. and Soviet governments, followed by their satellites, are collaborating to build up a huge war machine in India. The aim is to set up in India a big arsenal of the latest and most sophisticated weapons of offence for ensuring ready supplies within the region as well as outside, in South-East Asia, East Africa and the Middle East.

Consequently, during Mr Kosygin's recent visit to New Delhi, according to Indian Press reports, an emergency meeting of Indian officials was called to prepare a list of requirements for "modernising the Indian Navy." This is the latest in the series of Soviet contributions to an arms build-up in India as a result of which the latter has been able to set up aircraft factories, steel mills and other plants to form part of a formidable war machine.

However, it appears that the Soviet rulers have come rather late into the field to play the big power game. The European colonialists swallowed up vast territories in the name of "teaching civilisation and giving good administration to the natives." They were followed by the ruling monopoly capital of the U.S. who imposed their political, economic and military hegemony over many countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America and Western Europe claiming to be the defenders of "freedom and democracy." But by the time the Soviet rulers came on the scene they found that they had been left with no slogan other than "peace." Accordingly, Mr Kosygin said here that "no solution can be found through war."

But the heroic people of Vietnam, who are giving blow after blow to the aggressor are not going to believe that their war of liberation is useless. The Arab people who have already been betrayed by the Soviet rulers more than once and who have now taken the path of armed struggle for

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the liberation of Palestine will not be taken in by them.

Similarly, the people of Pakistan too have seen through the thin veneer of "peace" worn by the Washington-Moscow-Delhi axis and would foil

every attempt, from whatever quarter it may come, that endangers their national identity or jeopardises their independence.

From *Holiday*, Dacca. Abridged.

Marxist Intellectuals

SUMANTA BANERJEE

THE intelligentsia differs from the working class in that it talks more than it acts. But the importance of the intellectual lies in this—when the hour comes, the toiling masses will have at their disposal cadres of an intelligentsia ready to offer help.

In this context the recent meeting of Marxist intellectuals at a seminar in Trivandrum—probably the first of its kind in India—was significant. It provided the participants with an opportunity to assess their achievements and measure their potentialities of rising to the occasion when the hour comes.

But before judging the seminar, we should remember the background. The communist movement in India is now about half a century old. One never expected it to produce—considering the parasitic cultural background of the modern Indian middle class—an intellectual of the stature of Gramsci.

The Indian intellectual has perhaps suffered too long from the overriding fascination with the West, from the tendency to speak and write in a borrowed language. When he was introduced to Marxism, instead of trying to think on his own, out of habit he again turned outward to Moscow or Peking. The result was the craze to seek Russian or Chinese parallels in our social developments, to create socialist realism in literature and the arts.

Such being the case, it is refreshing to find that at least some among the Marxist intellectuals here are trying to break new grounds. Even if sometimes their views might seem erroneous the attempt is praise-

worthy. In this connection, the controversy that developed at the Trivandrum seminar over Marx's interpretation of Indian history was interesting. The discussion on India's agrarian economy also proved stimulating because of the glimpses it afforded into the changing rural societies of our country. Although in concrete terms the seminar did not achieve much, it at least provided intellectuals of the two communist parties a chance to come together after many years.

But coming to brass tacks, the seminar re-emphasized the fact that—whether Marxist or non-Marxist—Indian intellectuals in general are yet to imbibe the courage which leads people to act according to their convictions.

This became evident on the very first day of the seminar when it took up for discussion the subject of the role of the intellectual in Indian society. Many participants referred to the danger of U.S. imperialist infiltration in academic life, to the lure of travel grants and aids in other forms. But few had the courage to follow this up with an operative measure. The least that a seminar of Marxist intellectuals could have done to show its solidarity with the Vietnamese fighters and protest against U.S. influence in India, was to take a pledge refusing to accept invitations to the USA and to have anything to do with U.S. aid. In fact a small group of teachers from Delhi University, who participated in the discussions, sought to bring forth a resolution to this effect. But while canvassing support among the participants they found that no one,

not even the firebrand Left Communist college teachers of West Bengal who were fulminating against the neo-colonialist depraved culture of the U.S., had the guts to support such a resolution.

This is not surprising. The beneficiaries of U.S. aid in the educational field are the college teachers. I would not be surprised if I hear that some of the participants in the Trivandrum seminar had already had their share of invitations to the States while some others are expecting.

The inclination to fight shy of actions stems from a basic estrangement between words and deeds in the Indian intellectual's life. While the Trivandrum seminar underlined the need to fight the rise of obscurantist and communal forces, the participants failed to delve into their own minds in an honest effort to root out obscurantist actions in their daily life. There was no reference, for instance, to the growing trend of communists accepting dowry for marriage, to the sight of communist Ministers giving out their sons and daughters in marriage in the traditional expensive manner, to the passive encouragement given to communal forces by communists of all brands by holding joint rallies with the Jana Sangh either on May Day in Delhi or against the Malappuram district in Kerala.

"Justification"

A theoretical justification for avoiding such basic issues, like the need to boycott U.S. aid or to fight obscurantism on the personal and political plane, was put forth in a paper submitted by a CPI leader from Hyderabad. According to him, there were "inconsistent trends" among intellectuals. But, he felt, the basic approach to such intellectuals should be "one of alliance, not only at the intellectual level but also at the personal."

The calculated effort by the CPI delegate to play down the need for militant action was matched by the irresponsible indulgence by a CPI(M) delegate from West Bengal in militant rhetoric. A college principal

of some repute, he pontificated on the pattern of revolution in India. The speech was a ridiculous and monotonous conglomeration of historical inaccuracies which made many of us wonder whether the Bengali intellectual world had nothing better to offer.

The two approaches perhaps sum up the essence of the Marxist intellectual crisis in India today. One, in its desire to rehabilitate spiritual liberty in Marxist activities, is erroneously led to condone dishonesty and opportunism among a section of intellectuals. The other, in its eagerness to rehabilitate militancy in Indian Marxist politics, ignores the intellectual heritage of Marxism and degenerates into party journalism. Both have one thing in common—a tendency to shirk action.

It is about time Marxist intellectuals pondered over this problem. As intellectuals, they should retain the right to think independently, to question old dogmas, to bring forth fresh ideas undaunted by party dictates. For, only in that right lies the future development of Marxism and of the pattern of revolution in our country. Although they must not fail to avail themselves of the expressive devices worked out in the highly developed countries, neither must they let themselves be carried away by the intellectual frames of reference of the creators of consumer societies.

The problem was wonderfully posed by the Chinese author, Han Suyin, when she described the role of the Chinese intellectuals immediately after the success of the communist revolution in 1949. "When the New Order came in with benevolence and marvellous flags, with heart-stirring words and unity, with coherence and love of country, giving purpose to living, making death negligible, dazzling Today with song of glorious Tomorrows, we had to choose.

"It is not easy too cut out great pieces of oneself. For whatever the West had done, some of us had loved it for one thing: that delicate reality, frail and hard to handle, gentle and

strong in tenderness : spiritual liberty.....

"And thus many of the best, the more honest among the Westernized intellectuals of China, chose. They forsook individual personal freedom for a larger self than their own, although it meant a control and discipline, stern and repugnant to a part of them. They chose what might overwhelm them, not through cowardice, nor through opportunism, but because they had a social conscience, they loved their people, and they had a deep need to be whole again, unfrustrated in service to a

land so much in need of them.

"They chose against themselves, renouncing the small liberty of one, so insignificant seeming when faced with the spiritual challenge of communism in lands where freedom from hunger has never been known. They relinquished a difference which had made them alien among their own people for an oppression which would free their energies for the good of mankind" (Han Suyin—*A Many Splendoured Thing*)

Will our intellectuals be able to make the choice when the time comes ?

Chaliha The Charmer

ARUN KUMAR CHAKMA

THE candelabra almost quivered during the APCC session at Tinsukia last month and the weeks following it provided a splendid opportunity for gossip-mongers, both professional and lay, to manufacture stories about the 'fate' the Chaliha Cabinet was going to meet. But, alas, to the disappointment of those who hinted at the 'great danger' involved in the probable coming into being of a 'West Bengal or Kerala type United Front in Assam' if the Chaliha Ministry was toppled, nothing happened.

The whole farce was put up by 31 Congress legislators when they submitted a memorandum at the Tinsukia APCC session suggesting reorganisation of the Cabinet. Contrary to their expectation, what they suggested did not have any roaring effect on their fellow Congressmen, but turned out to be a whimper. The terms on which they wanted the reorganisation were not categorical. All that they seemed to want feebly was to put their house in order and to make things move faster, but they did not make clear what disorder their house was in and in which direction they wanted to move, except vaguely suggesting that the administrative machinery should be toned up, and to do that well, they thought, the

Chaliha Cabinet needed a reshuffle. In order to strengthen their case they also brought in the question of the minority community, which was not 'properly looked after'.

To see the affair in perspective one has to go back. It was some disgruntled party men, kept clear of the Cabinet by Mr Chaliha on a previous occasion, who made yet another bid towards the gaddi through these 'rebel' Congressmen and, if necessary, it seemed, in coalition with some so-called left political parties. That the Assam Congress is torn by incessant personal feuds is not in doubt, but it is forgotten that the internal power struggle has always paid in Mr Chaliha's favour. Whenever his opponents in the party tried to discredit him they provided him with an opportunity to indulge in mock heroics and emerge securer than before. But the schism between him and his opponents in the party this time gave birth to some minor issues. Unlike previous occasions, his opponents, instead of proving the unworthiness of his leadership, blamed the bulk of 'office unworthiness' on others, of course without naming anybody. That is why the 'rebels' suggested a reshuffle, so that a provision could be made for those discredited ex-Ministers for whom they had

taken so much trouble, no matter even if it was under Mr Chaliha's leadership.

But this liberal attitude on their part seems to have upset those critics of Mr Chaliha who have never dared to oppose him openly on any domestic issue. This is quite evident from the queer tactics they have now adopted to defend rather than oppose him. They regret that the 'rebels' should have given primacy to such 'trivial issues' as 'reorganisation of the Cabinet' and 'safeguarding the interests of the minority community' when there were so many important issues to be dealt with, such as 'Mr Chaliha's failure to prevent reorganisation of Assam', 'his Government's failure to make out a strong case in favour of setting up the proposed railway division and a second oil refinery in Assam', etc. These, according to them, would have been the most effective weapons to outmanoeuvre Mr Chaliha. Why did the 'rebel' Congressmen keep quiet about these things? Their move must have been the upshot of a conspiracy hatched up by the 'anti-nationals' to which the 31 Congress legislators fell easy prey. Some of the editorial writers of the local press have picked up the cue and called it a move to topple the Chaliha Ministry and replace it by a 'dangerous' West Bengal or Kerala type United Front. Finding their darling Mr Chaliha in 'danger' many became panicky and shuddered to think what would happen to Assam if a 'dangerous' UF like West Bengal or Kerala captured power!

No Crack, Please!

But Mr Chaliha is not so naive. He gave 'serious' thought to the memorandum; he called an emergency meeting of the Congress Legislature Party and discussed the issue in 'close detail' so that he and his colleagues could face the 'crisis' with an open heart and in good spirit. In a choked voice Mr Chaliha declared that during the fifteen years of his Chief Ministership he had travelled far enough along the path of accommodation. He appealed to the good sense of the 'rebel' Congressmen not

to allow any crack to weaken the Congress monolith and reminded them of the 'dreadful moral dangers' they were beset with on all sides. Of course the administrative machinery needed toning up, but for that no Cabinet reshuffle was necessary. Mr Chaliha appreciated the 'genuine' concern of the 'rebels' and thanked them for pointing out the shortcomings of his leadership 'before it was too late'. Awe-struck, the 'rebels' looked at one another. It was, by all accounts, a bizarre occasion for them. Much to their chagrin, they had to eat the humble pie for what they had sought to do and to reaffirm their unshakeable faith in Mr Chaliha's leadership.

Mr Chaliha's declaration immediately after the Congress Legislature Party meeting that his party now stands behind him more solidly than ever before has no doubt delivered an unexpected blow to those who were dreaming of a 'grand coalition'. The talk of a 'grand coalition' is no longer so widely heard, but the spectre of a 'dangerous UF' is still haunting many. Even the sprightly and cheerful Mr Chaliha does not seem a guarantee against it. All that he has now got to do, it seems, is to tell his people that so long as he is alive there shall be no UF in Assam, let alone a 'dangerous UF' like West Bengal or Kerala.

Calcutta Diary

GYAN KAPUR

AS the United Front Government in West Bengal goes along its creaky way, it is becoming obvious that bold thinking is not one of its strong points. The guiding principle seems to be that what the Congress has professed we shall put in action, which of course is the Bangla Congress ideology. In its way it may be all right. With the Chief Minister coming from the Bangla Congress, the general tone of the Government, in spite of occasional fireworks from others, is bound to be set by Mr Ajoy Mukherjee. The United Front, of course, means all things to all sorts of people. And in trying to live up to these expectations the poor Ministers find themselves in quite difficult situations. To woo the capitalists on the one hand to open up more industries and invest a little more in the State and on the other to insist that the more militant forms of workers' struggles like gherao will continue is a bit of tight-rope walking which cannot last long.

All managers are not angels. Some of them can be pretty nasty. But they happen to be a necessary evil in production as it is organised now. Un-

less an alternative form to do away with their role is found and shown to be effective, they have to be tolerated at least so long as a unit is to run. Beyond a certain stage of uncertainty, however, they can lose their capacity to manage, caught as they are between the cross-fire of the owners who must have their profits at all costs and the workers who refuse to be cheated any longer of their rights. The results are a gradual loss of tone of the industrial units, with no one except probably the owners caring, but all losing into the bargain. Gherao may rightly be called a workers' weapon in certain cases. It developed as a weapon of limited offensive power and use against nasty managers who could not be made to behave in any other way. But does elevating it to the position that strikes enjoy as the weapon of last resort do much good to the workers' cause? If it is resorted to on a sufficiently wide scale the result is the same. There is a lockout. While this may give a propaganda handle by putting the blame for the closure on the owners, it does not make all the workers participate and in that way is much inferior to the strike, should

it be necessary. It is also much easier for a minority section of workers to carry out a gherao and force the hands of the majority.

Money is another point on which there is much muddled thinking. The resources available for development of Calcutta and West Bengal are certainly a drop in the ocean of want. But then no one has all the money he wants and States are no exceptions. And without the will and determination to make the most of what is available no success is possible. There is as yet not much thinking about the maximum utilisation of what little is there while at the same time trying for more money from internal sources or from the Centre.

Another major policy decision on Secondary Education has been announced by the Education Minister. All going well, after 15 or 16 years school leaving will be after 12 years instead of the present 11. The only merit for this innovation is that it will provide a few more jobs for teachers; otherwise it is difficult to find any merit in running three different types of schools at the same time having 10, 11 and 12 classes. Already the confusion in secondary education is a bit too much. This may be the last straw which breaks the education camel's overloaded back. Incidentally, it is amusing to find that these new schools will be called Central Higher Secondary Schools. Anyone thinking that the schools are under the Central Government would of course be wrong; but then they are inspired by the recommendations of the Kothari Commission which after all was set up by the Central Government.

One curious result of setting up these central schools will be that examinations by any Government agency will be abolished at Class XI stage. Students will enter Pre-University Classes or presumably technical colleges straight on the basis of school examination results. That of course would be an open invitation to all

sorts of funny business and logically the demand may follow from some schools to hold their own Class XII examinations sufficient for all practical purposes.

What is surprising is that the main purpose is to lengthen the period of schooling by one more year and thus putting off the evil day when the boys demand jobs and keep some of them out of the degree colleges.

This of course is going to be an expensive, wasteful and completely useless exercise. Adding one more year to those already necessary to be spent in schools is not going to make life easier for those who look to the United Front to do something for them. On the other hand higher education will become a little more extensive. In spite of scholarships, parents of even students of merit find it difficult to see their sons through unless they have means well above the average.

After much discussion about whether it should be a high or low one, the new Howrah Bridge will be a high one after all, though Mr Somnath Lahiri remained unconvinced till the last and preferred a low-cost low one. The technical experts finally succeeded in getting over his objections. Personally I have a feeling that we should not be too overawed by technical experts as, usually, rare exceptions apart, they cannot see beyond their noses.

With all the more urgent needs of Calcutta for drainage and sanitation I have my doubts on the need for another bridge so close to the old one. In principle of course, it would be very convenient if we could have a few more bridges across the Ganga near-about Calcutta. After all London has a dozen or so. But the question is, given the resources whether it is all that urgent and who is going to benefit from it.

We have got another, the Vivekananda Bridge, crossing over to Bally and this remains largely under-used. Because of the toll charges, where distance by the other bridge is the same, this is avoided. The traffic on this bridge is not heavy by any account.

Some at least of the traffic on the Howrah Bridge could be made to go over Vivekananda Bridge compulsorily. There is no need for trucks engaged in inter-State trade to pass over the Howrah Bridge at all. Then again the traffic jam on the Howrah Bridge when it takes place is actually a result of bottlenecks on its approaches and not on the bridge itself. If steps are taken to widen approach roads on either side of the bridge where bottlenecks actually occur the present bridge could well serve nicely. Furthermore, the congestion is mainly caused by goods and not passenger transport. With a little imagination and planning it could be possible to arrange things in such a way that goods are despatched and released from Howrah and Shalimar outside the peak periods. But then this might mean a little inconvenience to the business houses. It might also mean a little extra expense. So we shall have another bridge at the cost of much needed services.

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Trouble Again

KAJAL SEN

THE West Bengal United Front Ministry was in trouble again last week. The State's police force and industrialists were once more up in arms. Only with a slight difference. This time there was no Inspector General Mukherjee; the 'movement' allegedly started by that individual in 1967 seems now to have spread among the "masses" as over the weekend the West Bengal Police Association announced a mass hunger-strike by its members, numbering over 40,000, for July 15 in protest against the Government's action against the Association Secretary, Mr Subodh Dutta. In its wake came the Press conference by Presidents of four leading chambers of commerce who thoroughly condemned the Government for "failing to maintain law and order, making things extremely difficult for investors."

Thus the ball has been set rolling once more. In 1967 the Union Home Minister had been heard to say, more than once, that the UF Ministry had made the police force inactive. This time, with policemen themselves saying it, the propaganda is likely to sound more convincing and there might be some interesting developments in next few weeks. Industrialists on the other hand are consolidating their forces and together with the jotedars in the villages, might launch their counter-offensive any time now. And with the Centre willing to lend support, their "struggle" is sure to embarrass the Government in a big way.

Reporting of these events has been rather strange in the Indian Press. There seems to be a deliberate attempt to twist things in a manner which would cause discomfort to the Government. One also notices an inclination, specially among the outstation papers, to leave out anything that does not suit their purpose.

On the very same day the big four industrialists lashed out at the UF Government, there was also another Press conference by the Merchants Chamber of Commerce, a representative body of the small and medium industries. And its President, Mr Kothari, had quite a different thing to say. According to him the State's economy had never been so buoyant since 1962 and gheraos posed no serious problem to the MCC members. Coming from a chamber of commerce, one should have thought it to be news. Yet none of the outstation papers carried the item—none of their representatives had been present at the Press conference.

There are other instances also. Newspapers all over the country roared at the events at the Jaykaynagar township of the Aluminium Corporation of India Ltd. It was an addition to their list of labour trouble. The next day the State Government issued a Press Note stating that the reports did not give a correct picture of the state of affairs. The Note pointed out certain suppression of facts by the management whose version, naturally, had been published in the Press. The Note was carried by very few papers. The rest, it seemed, just couldn't care less.

What the papers can write and do write frequently are long editorials on gherao. Last week two such pieces appeared in *The Hindu* and in *The Statesman*. *The Hindu* refers to the incidents at Jaykaynagar and elsewhere to say that the drift towards industrial standstill and anarchy seems to be accelerating. Despite a Calcutta High Court ruling, gheraos continue unabated and it is surprising that even the non-Marxist constituents, including the Chief Minister, should be unable to check the spread of this virus. The paper wants that either he should prevail upon the Front to deal with gheraos firmly or quit. Continuance in the Ministry as at present would be abetting misgovernment. It should also be remembered that the bulk of the nation's investment being in West Ben-

gal, the Centre might have to intervene if this state of affairs is allowed to continue.

Same Tactics

It is just as it was in 1967. Raise a hue and cry about gherao, about flight of capital, about industries closing down and the ground will slowly be prepared for some high-handed Central action. Not only editorials. A Bombay weekly for women, *Femina*, has gone to the extent of carrying a story on gheraos, the anxiety and uncertainty of womenfolk in this State. The weekly, it might be mentioned, belongs to *The Times of India* group. Incidentally it was also a Bombay weekly which had raised a scare about Rabindra Sarmah incidents in a big way.

The Statesman wonders whether the United Front can claim that it has also a mandate to restrict economic expansion in the State. There has been a deliberate promotion of class conflict (communists in the Ministry might like this conclusion of *The Statesman*) and the Labour Minister has made no secret that the conciliation machinery will remain biased against employers. And though Mr Ajoy Mukherjee has taken a "clear stand" that gheraos were detrimental to the State's and workers' real interests, much damage has already been done. The Deputy Chief Minister, Mr Jyoti Basu's estimate that while there had been no flight of capital, new capital was shy to come in, was a gross understatement of facts.

As with the industrialists so with the police. The Press weeps for both. When the police went wild at Durgapur, that was maintaining law and order—after all the students are also to blame. But when Mr Jyoti Basu took disciplinary measures even against a single policeman, up went the cry: The United Front Is Making The Police Inactive. And all for what? Because action has been taken against a Government employee who had left his station without informing anyone and who had made certain speeches detrimental to the interest of law and order.

It is *The Hindustan Times* which

has led the chorus this time. In a despatch from its Calcutta correspondent, the paper says that the United Front Government is trying to evolve a police policy which would serve party purposes and at the same time help it maintain a public posture. Thus while suspending the West Bengal Police Association Secretary, Mr Dutta, on June 14, the Government on the same day announced the confirmation in their services of the Inspector General of Police and the Commissioner, Calcutta Police. The latter was done perhaps to assuage any possible resentment among the police ranks.

Referring to Mr Jyoti Basu's statement that the Government will not tolerate any act of indiscipline on the part of any member in the police force, the correspondent recalls that it was the same Mr Basu who had decided to reinstate 202 policemen who had been dismissed by the Congress Government in 1955 for gross indiscipline—they had participated in a hunger-strike. "Indiscipline has different connotations in the UF dictionary", the correspondent remarks.

The confirmation of the police chiefs had been planned to take place on that date for quite some time; the suspension certainly wasn't. If it took place on the same day it was a mere coincidence as the Government could not have known that the Durgapur events would take place and that it would have to take the action it took.

As for his bit on indiscipline, he seems to have confused the issues. In 1955 the policemen had been dismissed by the late Dr B. C. Roy for participating in an agitation for the realization of certain legitimate demands. When they were reinstated it was in accordance with the Front's policy on such matters. As for the indiscipline which Mr Basu talked about, it was an act of defiance against authority, a defiance guided by political motives. Policemen who were responsible for the Durgapur incident had acted without the Government's permission and as such were guilty of gross indiscipline. *The Hindustan Times* might shout itself hoarse but a difference there is and will remain between the two cases.

Apprentice Engineers

JAYANTA GHOSAL

FEW of us know anything about the miserable plight of those lucky few engineers who have somehow bulldozed their way into different industries in the country. Their case has not been brought to light for we are far too busy creating employment opportunities for the jobless and rightly so, and also because the sufferers themselves are ashamed to speak out lest they are considered over-ambitious. But the problem should be thrashed out so that the young engineers who form the backbone of India's industrial development find their rightful place in industry and society.

Engineers fresh from college are required to serve an apprenticeship period, generally limited to two years, before being permanently absorbed by any organization. Till then they are called "management trainees", "graduate engineers", "engineering apprentices", "graduate apprentices" etc.

The young engineer enters his professional life with optimism and vitality and an urge to do something worthwhile. But within a few months all his energies ebb out and the thrill of participating in India's technical revolution is gone. His employer too finds him useless, even worse.

The reasons for this serious wastage of money and manpower are numerous. The apprentice engineers are not given any task of real responsibility and are denied all opportunities for employing their technical skills and showing any initiative and drive during their training period. Left to themselves, in cold neglect, they rust in due course.

The would-be subordinates of the apprentice engineer do not take him seriously as they do not have to take orders from him. In some industries the trainee has to beg for data and know-how from people whom he is supposed to lead later. His own bosses also coldshoulder him,

sometimes unconsciously, since they know that during the training period the apprentices are rather unproductive. Sometimes this indifference is due to another factor. There are many industries where people far less qualified than these engineers hold higher positions. So, some of them suffer from an inferiority complex and leave the apprentices severely alone lest their superficial knowledge is exposed. For the situation the apprentices are also partly responsible, as some of them are pedantic and pompous. Then there are people who hold positions just below or above the apprentice engineer in the hierarchy who consider him their potential rival out to mar their prospects of promotion.

Besides, in most of the industries, particularly in the public sector, these future officers are not allowed to join the officers' clubs and associations and they rarely get any opportunity to mix with people in the management cadre where they actually belong.

Thus deposed, disowned and relegated more and more to the background, the young engineer is gradually demoralized and drained of all sense of pride and participation in the industry which employs him. He starts shirking even his routine duties and ultimately becomes a drag and a burden. But even then no one in the plant takes any interest in him and does anything to rehabilitate him.

At this stage he would certainly like to try his luck in another industry. But, alas, even that way out has been blocked by the so-called "bond". This is an agreement to undergo training for a specified period and to serve the company for a few years thereafter which the apprentice engineer is required to execute before he joins the organization. One would not dare to violate it as in that case one has to pay a lump sum amount to one's employer as compensation. Apart from a few prosperous industries in the private sector, this system prevails practically everywhere. While the bond compels the young engineer to serve the organization

for the stipulated period, he can be easily eased out of the job for some vague reasons.

The impact of this system on industrial development cannot be denied. Time and again it has been pointed out that wrong and unsuitable men in managerial positions are the bane of our industries, particularly in the public sector. By preventing these would-be managers from taking up jobs suited to their own tastes, skills and aptitudes, we help the above-mentioned trend to continue. Moreover, the employer is shrewd enough to understand that the shackles of the "bond" are too strong to be broken, and this is, in fact, the remote cause of his complacency.

Correctives

As a corrective, some suggest that the training scheme should be totally abolished. But this is a remedy worse than the disease. Should we cut off the head when it pains? Without practical experience, the engineer fresh from college will never function efficiently. Nor can he, as a raw graduate, make himself acceptable to his subordinates who are generally much older and allergic to him. A training period of about two years does help to lick him into shape and soften his relations with his subordinates and overcome their resistance.

To my mind, a fresh engineering graduate must put in a reasonable period at a training centre which must have a well-equipped laboratory, a well-stocked library and, above all, well-qualified staff. Already this step has been taken in many industries. In the training centre regular classes should be held to impart the practical know-how to the apprentices. Apart from plant details, subjects like industrial psychology, work organization and management should be taught. This will enable the engineers to tackle their subordinates more effectively and might relieve the tensions of gheraos and strikes to some extent. The training programme should also include periodical interviews and tests so as to assess the progress of the apprentices. And most important of all, the officials of the training centre

should keep a sustained watch on their activities and maintain close contact with them at every stage.

The apprentice should be given enough rope but somebody should be there to check and point out his errors and prevent possible damage to machines and equipment. Also, during the training period, both the manage-

ment and the employees should accept them wholeheartedly as their colleagues and comrades and should not treat them as aliens and second class staff. They should be thoroughly integrated into the life of the organization. In short, they should be given adequate status in the industry and in no case should be sneezed at.

Guru

MANIK DUTTA

WHAT a tedious film!

A talented team, the mighty resources of 20th Century Fox, the photogenic and dramatic possibilities of India (not to mention the sitar) and the end product is just a mouse. A rather boring one at that.

Not that they didn't try hard. In fact you can smell the sweat and hear the joints groan, but to what purpose? Ivory, the director, at best, is a blind imitator of our very own Satyajit Ray. Not in concept or attitudes, but in cinematic style. Essentially narrative, rather unhurried, visually elegant, even lyrical, and eye for revealing details building up to credible characterisations. The only point of correspondence seems to be the excruciatingly unhurried pace of this film.

Take visual elegance. The colour is good, Subrata Mitra's photography is competent. Yet the only memorable shots are really a couple of static painterly frames. The blue grey shot of the boat disappearing into the misty dusk. The guru's guru with his hookah, composed on a durree of strong black and white stripes. Very miniature like. But these visual analogues are like Follies Bergère tableaux—mere exercises in verisimilitude. Painterly analogues are relevant where they are integral parts of a total visual dynamic—as for example, in Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet*. In fact Ivory's *Guru* is visually disappointing. Who can forget the Banaras of *Aparajito*? Many of the visual elements have been borrowed here—the alleys, steps, ghats, river,

boats, riverside architecture—in beautiful colour but with inexplicable dullness. I must say it takes talent to make Banaras look dull. Yet this very team of director-cameraman had turned out impressively pleasing visuals in *Shakespearewallah*. Is it colour then which creates the difficulty? I am inclined to think so, as there are far too many pretty picture postcards—lush sunsets looking like pages of the *Illustrated Weekly*. Both Utpal Dutt and Michael York work their way through hundreds of dress changes until you start feeling this film must have been designed as subliminal propaganda for the Handloom Export Corporation. But half that attention is not given to Utpal's face and make-up. Agreed that Utpal is no Valentino, but is that any reason why the audience should be given the unpleasant sensation, that, maybe, he has strayed in from a horror film?

Only Madhur Jaffrey and Aparna Sen look reasonable, particularly the former: her face perpetually framed in dark scarves.

No Identification

The feeling that the characters seem somehow lost—sommambulists without will—is definitely heightened by the total absence of dramatic progression. I wonder if any of the actors, including the foreigners, had any identification with or faith in what they were doing. It is sad to see an actor of considerable comic talent (which Utpal undoubtedly is, at any rate, on stage) desperately trying to

make his role come alive at the level of correct fingering of the sitar. Who is this guru? Is he Alauddin or his son Ali Akbar or the pop-star Ravi Shankar or, for that matter, Vilayat who has composed the music for this film? Is he even anyone we know or can imagine?

Ruth Jhabvala has written some clever stories about the Delhi middle class. The stories lack depth and understanding, but they are good fun within their limited frame of appeal. The trouble is, in this film, the characters are somewhat outside the geographical orbit of the old and new secretariats in the capital of India. The collaboration of the itinerant American director as script-writer seems to make the muddle worse. At least in *Shakespearewallah* the English characters appeared more credible than Indians. Here the Westerners are just as unconvincing as the rest. If they do not look like sleepwalkers it is because they seem to be troubled, brainwashed victims reluctantly trapped into this film. The less said about the actual nightmare of Rita Tushingham the better, or for that matter her day dreams. The motivation for the nightmare seems to be at the same bogus level as that of Miss Quested's celebrated ordeal at the caves. And the understanding of India and Indians is informed by the archaic and ethnic notion "East is East, West is West". Why curse Enoch Powell? I am all for Indians, Americans, Mars-men, even Hottentots making fun of India, getting angry, disgusted, furious, what you will. It is necessary, all to the good. But I am against ethnic triviality, pretentious lifelessness, archaic irrelevances, and above all pointless boredom. The sound of the film is also curious or rather the absence of it. In spite of temple bells (which inspire Michael York, playing Tom Pickle, to mumble some moronic lyrics—a far cry from the sophisticated Beatles), Indian sounds are strangely silent. Aural inspiration seems to have totally collapsed, most of the speech of Indian characters hardly registers and there is very little use of

the wonderful noises that make India such an earful. Except of course the sweet sound of Vilayat's sitar. Small consolation for a big film!

P.S. If the film makes so little sense for us in India, how can it make any sense abroad at all? More,

it tarnishes our red triangle image! The guru took a second wife because his first one only gave him five daughters. This is Naxalite sabotage of our Ek-do campaign successes. I hope the USIAD takes it up with Fox (whoever he may be).

Abarta

BY OUR DRAMA CRITIC

MEN are not gods. Thank God they are not, for imagine the responsibility—so many suns, so many stars, so many moons to guide and control, on our planet alone millions of people with their joys and sorrows, their hunger and their aspirations. Any limited intellect must recoil at the prospect.

In Chaturanga's *Abarta* at Muktagan, Raja Mondal achieved that rare synthesis when actor and character become one. His deep understanding, his sympathy for his character, his rapid change of mood and tempo and the spontaneity of the performance must have made many in the audience forget that he was a man. The more the play progressed the bigger the character grew. And when he achieved the impossible by producing a bumper harvest on some idle land I for one exclaimed "Here is a God". Raja Mondal had transformed himself into a legend right before one's eyes—another peasant hero to join the cavalcade of those already sung about in our folk songs. But soon the God failed. Raja's return from the police station revealed the man. Not only in the actor but in the producer and the playwright as well. Actually the fault lay mainly with the playwright, who presented the collapse of a character whom he had himself built up to the size of a giant. *Abarta* borrows its manner of presentation from Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, and as such the playwright must have been aware of the play and the Father's line "... a character has a life which is truly his, marked with his own special characteristics. . . ." After

setting up a giant how could the author expect the audience to reconcile itself to a shattered and deflated Raja Mondal returning from the police station after having been severely beaten? Does the author forget that the peasants perhaps are the toughest among men, constantly battling the elements and living under the shadow of calamity? Actually the play went wrong here not because of any other reason but the playwright's basic attitude towards the poor peasant and the landless labourer. This was revealed through a sarcastic reference to gheraos and Naxalbari in an English commentary that preceded the play. It gave a clue to the underlying trend of thought. That reference was in utter bad taste, considering that the play was about peasants and that it ends in a manner which could very well have led to the first Naxalbari. However, to save the day the author had to bring back the retrenched elder brother (with niggardliness!)—again out of character for he had already "ratted" against his own class—to lead the villagers. And it is nowhere hinted that this was a result of his proletarianisation.

It must be borne in mind that the average amateur is not trained to abandon himself so completely to his role that illusion becomes reality. Occupations and pre-occupations in the actor's private life impinge both on his interpretation and his execution and prevent reality from growing out of the illusion. Perhaps it is this state of an actor's existence on the stage which Grotowski has been experimenting with and trying to achieve. Yet seeing *Abarta* one must have been

Industrial production gains momentum... and Dunlop keeps the wheels turning

A measure of a country's development is its rate of industrial growth. The rise in industrial production during 1968 reflects the upward trend in India's economy.

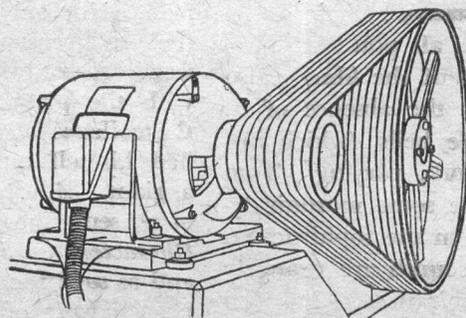
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convinced that this stage is possible to attain. The entire team—even to the supers—put an excellent performance. One, however, failed to understand the necessity of providing “unrealistic” make-up for the two women in the play.

The play opens to a set comprising the fronts of two huts clearly done with paper cut-outs while the maroon backdrop has a huge paper circle representing the sun and paper cut-outs representing a village. The set designer was able to convey the right atmosphere. In front of the backdrop was a ramp with bamboo fencing. Two flower pots carried stylised paper cut-outs of a flower and a plant that could have been a cactus.

The entry of villages would have been down the aisle, but as the entrance at Mutangan is by the side of stage, the actors entered first the auditorium and then climbed on to the stage. One of them addressed the audience direct, pleading for justice. He introduced the leading characters and proceeded with demonstrating on the stage the content of the drama. During the action within the action the cawing of a crow was most effective. It gave one an eerie sensation of scavengers waiting in the wings.

A directional lapse was the overdramatisation of the elder brother's first entry. It was quite unnecessary particularly for what followed and succeeded only in giving the audience a wrong impression. The dialogue was in dialect and well sustained throughout. Despite the lapses the play had to proceed to its logical conclusion and in spite of the way the end was arrived at, is a must for most audiences.

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JULY 5, 1969

Letters

Rationing

Like romance in the medieval period the talk on rationing blossoms. The familiar figures—blackmarketeers, hoarders, profiteers and smugglers—have been exhumed. The age-old policy of deception practised by grandmothers to lull children to sleep by invoking ‘jujus’ is at work again. But to dupe children is one thing, to dupe intelligent people is quite another. A sophisticated mode of deception has to be elaborated to lend credence to the virtues—of rationing.

Statutory rationing has been introduced in Calcutta and other cities to help the rural people of West Bengal. This needs to be explained. Lest the crushing power of capital (the urban people have high purchasing power) suck all the surplus food of the countryside into Calcutta and deprive the rural population of their cereal—rationing has been introduced in Calcutta, mark you, not in the villages.

It is easy to see that to help the rural people, modified rationing in the affected rural areas would have been the most direct, expedient and effective remedy, for Calcutta with its higher purchasing power could fend for itself. There was no need to carry coal to Newcastle.

No, the reasons for introducing rationing in Calcutta may be quite different. That there should be any rationing of cereals in an agricultural country in peacetime is by itself suspect of ulterior motive, none other than that of profit. Let us examine the matter from this point of view.

After abolition of zamindari, arable land was grabbed by the jotedars who produced the bulk of the surplus cereal. To ensure a good price for their yield a market—blackmarket to be precise—had to be created. Calcutta with its huge residential, floating and newly arriving population offered the best prospects.

To create a chronic want rationing was introduced, making sure that (a) the quantity supplied was less than the required amount; (2) the quality was poor, inedible or contaminated—the donor State could be blamed for that; (3) Supply was offered piecemeal so that harassment of collection from the ration shop could be multiplied; and (4) the distribution of ration cards was controlled with puritanical frenzy. Successful implementation of this programme could ensure a steady blackmarket. Lest there be open competition in this steady market cordons had to be set up. The cordons were manned by a force endowed with the qualities of Nelson. They would see (or not see) that a certain section of ‘smugglers’ got through the cordons while others would be made to taste the might of law. Confiscation (just to save one the drudgery of marketing) and physical oppression to the extent of prodding full-term pregnant females on suspicion would be used freely to terrorize the unwanted. Thus competition in the loot would be eliminated.

With the State Railways’ participation in free travel facilities to smugglers an army of hoodlums could be maintained at the expense account of the blackmarket.

That this system in which the police, the administration and the railways participate can be highly lucrative, is shown by the speed and thoroughness with which roadblocks, bumps, check-posts and dropgates were constructed in every conceivable stretch of road leading to Calcutta. It was perhaps easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for an honest man to enter the dropgate without being molested.

I hope the UF Government will abandon the rationing scheme in Calcutta and introduce modified rationing in affected villages instead. Let it not pursue the policy of extracting A’s tooth to relieve B’s toothache.

P. BHATTACHARYA (MRS)
Kenduadihi, Bankura

Romeo And Juliet

Mr Maitra rounds off his review of *Romeo and Juliet* (June 21) with the remark: "All in all, an unorthodox treatment of a familiar theme." I think it is here that he misses the point. It is more a serious than a familiar theme and any treatment that fails to recognise this is unlikely to have any impact on the audience. Zeffirelli has failed to breathe life into the characters of the young lovers. An aura of subtle agony and the tender pathos of forbidden love is absent almost all through. Romeo miserably fails to give a lively portrayal of an intensely passionate lover in agony. Frequent kisses are a poor substitute and smack only physical strain evoking nothing but revulsion from the audience. Besides, the movement of the film is much too fast to show the intensity of love.

The bed-room scene of the Capulets' has an element of crass realism. It is about day-break when Romeo and Juliet are shown sleeping in the same bed with obvious signs that they had had a tempestuous night. But the director does not stop there. As Romeo withdraws from the bedstead, he pulls up his under-garment! Again, the scene in which Mercutio is slain has something of morbid crudity. As he receives the fatal thrust from Tybalt he staggers on the steps of the building, muttering something. But what is unbearable is that his friends, together with Romeo, keep laughing for quite some time, in a chorus almost to the tune of Mercutio's staggering steps. And what Mr Maitra calls "a passionate outburst of love" in the church produces a comical effect with the Friar desperately dissuading the lovers from kissing each other. To sum up, whatever his intent, Zeffirelli has disappointed us.

KAMAL KANTI ROY CHOUDHURY
Calcutta

"Pop Tagore"

The popularity—after the Tagore Centenary—of Rabindrasangeet is proving dangerous for Tagore music as a whole. Jazzy-music-oriented deviations (with instruments like saxophone, drums, bongo), from the traditional style of singing (the "gayaki") have, I believe, led to the present popularity of Rabindrasangeet. Mushroom music institutions, springing up here and there and offering "pop-style" made-easy lessons in Rabindrasangeet from star-artistes, are mainly responsible for its rapid degeneration. They could not be bothered about Tagore's tradition or ideals. In short, what has emerged after the Tagore Centenary is a "pop" version of Rabindrasangeet. What is baffling is the callousness of the Visva-Bharati Music Board. Don't they ever listen to the records before approving them?

SHIVAJI ROY
Calcutta

"Culture"

The other day I boarded a train at Barrackpore to attend a youth rally in Calcutta. Some cheerful youngmen got into the train at Khardah station and started raising slogans "DYF Zindabad", "Resist Yankee Culture" etc. As the train picked up speed, the scale of voice as well as the physical movements of each member of the group became much too boisterous, creating a disgusting atmosphere in the compartment.

Culture is needed for a normal and mature development of mind. But what is the use of a movement against Yankee culture if it reduces the agitators to Yankee-like gestures?

B. DOSTIDAR
Barrackpore

Bengali Primers

While I appreciate Gyan Kapur's point (June 21) that the State Education Minister's enthusiasm for dis-

tributing free copies of *Sahaj Path* (books I & II) to all students of Classes I & II may turn out to be an empty gesture, if only to camouflage the possible failure of a still bigger project—making of education up to Class VIII free, I cannot but disagree with what he says about the 'dull drawing' in the proposed text-book. One does not need to be a devotee of Tagore to see that the drawings were left without colour to encourage the young ones' creative imagination. The drawings were done in outline so that the users could give free play to their raw imagination and fill the lines with colours of their choice. Would Mr Kapur look at those drawings once more? They are not really dull. Without intending any disrespect to Vidyasagar, *Varna Parichaya* was put to test for generations and is being replaced by *Sahaj Path*. I am not even sure if the latter is pedagogically a better text-book. But the slim volumes surely merit a fair trial.

Lastly, to quote Mr Kapur, "if the West Bengal Government is to foot the bill for Bengali primers why can they not get the books from some modern writer, buy them for good and produce a low-cost colourful primer in keeping with present trends?" One wished all that were really as easy. The name of Sukhalata Rao may come easily to mind in this connection. But perhaps she herself would shudder at the prospect—the distinction between a piece of creative writing and a commissioned one always remains.

SOURIN BHATTACHARYA
Calcutta

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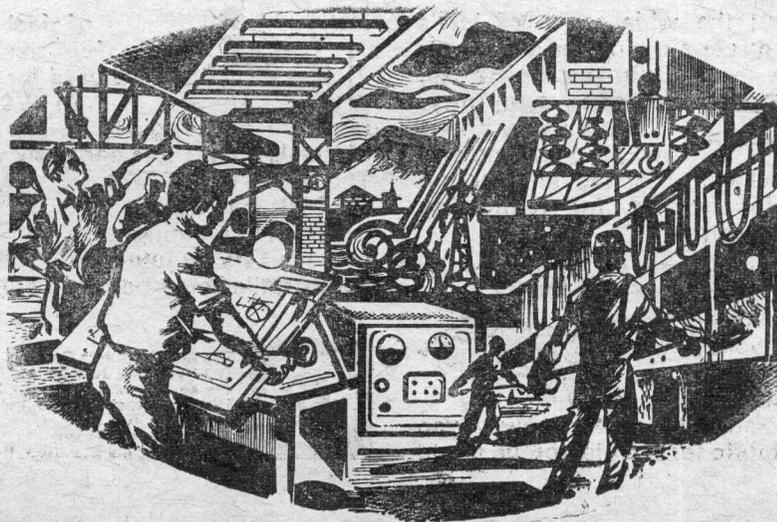


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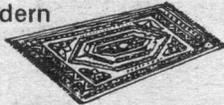
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