

frontier

AUTUMN NUMBER

OCTOBER 3, 1970 Vol. 3, Nos. 25 & 29

PRICE: 60 PAISE

On Other Pages

COMMENT ..	2
<i>Kerala</i>	
ELECTION POST-MORTEM RAMJI ..	3
CALCUTTA DIARY GYAN KAPUR ..	5
NAXALITE TACTICS IN CITIES ABHIJANAN SEN ..	9
RETURNING HOME ROBI CHAKRAVORTI ..	12
REVOLUTION IN A CHINESE VILLAGE M. S. ..	16
MEET ACADEMICIAN SAKHAROV DILIP GHOSE ROY ..	24
A NOTE ON GRAMSCI REGIS DEBRAY ..	29
INTRODUCING GRAMSCI PARESH CHATTOPADHYAY ..	30
MARXISM AND ART SUMANTA BANERJEE ..	33
DECLINE OF THE BHADRALOK ARJUN BANDYOPADHYAY ..	35
FILMING IN CALCUTTA MRINAL SEN ..	38

Editor : Samar Sen

PRINTED AT MODERN INDIA PRESS,
7, RAJA SUBODH MULLICK SQUARE,
CALCUTTA-13 AND PUBLISHED WEEKLY
FOR GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS (P) LTD.
BY SAMAR SEN FROM 61, MOTT LANE,
CALCUTTA-13

TELEPHONE: 24-3202

THIN END OF TERROR

IT has started in West Bengal—the Andhra way of tackling the Naxalites; and let not the ominous signs be ignored in the festive mood of the season. If official accounts are to be believed, the Naxalites have suddenly shed their elusiveness and developed an irresistible itch for open confrontation with the police, though the odds are overwhelmingly against them. The reason is unclear; nor does it square up with the known policy of the CPI (ML) to avoid direct clashes with the police. In spite of their sole reliance on violence, the Naxalites do not boast of a well-equipped arsenal. Whether they should go in for sophisticated arms is an issue on which their party is divided, and their official line, as far as it is known, is to depend on traditional weapons of the people. That is why they have taken to hit-and-run methods, or, in their parlance, guerilla tactics. If their object was to unnerve the police, they have succeeded exceedingly well. The whole police are demoralised. Nothing can substantiate this more forcefully than the recent circular to all policemen by the State's Inspector-General of Police. He has talked of the need for discipline and courage to face the situation. Apparently, both are lacking in the police force; there should have been no occasion for such a circular if all was well with the force. In this situation, the Naxalites, unless they are gripped by an overwhelming death-wish, can have no reason to adopt a policy of facing the police with bare arms.

The new strategy of the police has been cleverly laid down in the police chief's circular. He has asked his men to brace themselves up for dangers that face combatants in a battle-field. The West Bengal situation has been likened to that prevailing in Nagaland, Mizo Hills, and the Indo-Tibetan border. In a battle-field, civil norms do not operate. The sole motive there is to kill the enemy; the emphasis is not on the minimum use of force as in civil disturbances, but on its maximum use so that the enemy may be brought to his knees speedily. In the areas mentioned, the police have a subsidiary role, and the primary responsibility for maintaining order is of the army. Whether this is a pointer time alone will reveal; but the prompt denial by New Delhi of a recent newspaper report that troops may be called in if the situation in certain areas does not improve within a few weeks suggests that the

FRONTIER

report may not entirely be a piece of imagination. That it has not been allowed to pass unchallenged is significant; perhaps the time is not yet, perhaps the situation has not reached that stage. The new aggressiveness of the police will hasten the process. Public opinion in West Bengal will be revolted by policies which may have succeeded elsewhere. In a Congress State like Andhra Pradesh, the Government may get away with anything in the name of maintenance of law and order. Genocide in the jungles of Srikakulam may make no stir there; murder may not be out even. But West Bengal is an altogether different proposition. The trouble here, at least at present, is centred on Calcutta, and the police are letting themselves go in this rebellious city. Stories of wanton attacks on police parties by armed marauders and kindly policemen being compelled to resort to firing in self-defence will not wash here.

In the two so-called encounters in the Calcutta university area on Friday last week, not a single policeman was injured, though in one shot were alleged to have been fired at the police and in the other some forty bombs were hurled at a police picket resting in the shade in College Square. On the other hand, the police could shoot down four young men with a marksmanship which is never evident when they are called upon to deal with communal and known anti-social elements. Writing slogans or sticking posters on city walls at dead of night is no offence; the citizens are accustomed to open their sleepy eyes on an abundance of slogans and posters based on quotes not merely from Mao or Lin Piao but also from Vivekananda, Rabindranath, and Gandhi. Maoist slogans may not be in order, but there is no law yet making scribbling of such slogans on city walls punishable with summary extermination. For two of the killed it has not been possible to think up even such flimsy pretexts. One of them was arrested when he went to see a dying friend in a hospital who had been injured in another police firing a few days

ago. He walked into the trap for he possessed the humanity of which those who set the trap are totally bereft. Why he was taken along by a police party going its rounds at dead of night will never be known. Except for the words of the police, there is nothing to prove that he was shot because he tried to escape during the midnight encounter between the police party and the slogan-scribblers. How reliable police accounts on such occasions are can be guessed from the findings of the ebullient Police Commissioner of Calcutta regarding the death of a boy in Shyampukur police station in August. In the other case, the police claim to have aimed their muskets at bomb-throwers on the roof of the multi-storeyed centenary building of Calcutta University, though the victim was a student entering the university. Under what law of projectiles can this be explained may be left to the inventive genius of the police. Their nonchalance knows no limit.

The University Syndicate has demanded an inquiry into the incident. That is no remedy, however. A few policemen may be made scapegoats in incidents over which public indignation expresses itself. Others may be buried in silence as the earlier confrontation in Krishnagar in which the father of the victim has complained in vain that his son was arrested by the police from his house hours before the "encounter". There are many ways for the police to find an arrested person killed in an ambush a few hours later. Only an aroused public opinion can stop such police brutality. But the political parties which have to organise it and give it expression are lagging behind. Every party is in the queue to applaud police action when the muskets are directed against its rivals; no party finds a cause for complaint as long as the police guns are not trained on its own men or those of its allies, though the College Square outrages were an exception to this selective solidarity. The Naxalites may not mind, for they believe that repression breeds resistance. But those who have no faith in such a law of concomitant escala-

tion can ignore it only at their peril. None of the opposition parties will be spared. The Government is prodding how much they are prepared to take; it proposes to proceed cautiously for it is unsure of left-oriented public opinion in the State. Any dithering or compromise on sectarian consideration will expose the opposition parties ultimately to the full blast of government terror. The warning has been sounded; in their own interest the left opposition should take it.

Nasser

The Zionists have every reason to be happy with the month of September. The King of Jordan has decimated the Palestinians in a savage attack while the U.S. armed forces were on the alert for intervention and other powers practised benevolent neutrality. Let us admit it—the commandos are a thorn not in the flesh of Hussein alone. Then came the death of a man whom the Israelis considered to be their arch enemy, President Nasser, soon after he had supervised a strange scene in which Yasser Arafat of the Palestine Liberation Organisation embraced the murderer of Jordan and signed a not-too-honourable agreement.

Of late the reputation of the Egyptian leader had diminished. After his acceptance of the U.S. peace plan, he was criticised even by men who would not have dreamed of doing so. How his action has split the Arab world is evident in Jordan. But at this hour much of the bitterness will be softened and what will be remembered with gratitude is his great contribution to the Arab cause. The time for reappraisal will come when the consequences of the policies of leaders like Nehru, Soekarno and Nasser haunt their countrymen. These were remarkable bourgeois leaders who had endeared themselves to countless men by their talk about socialism but who had not shaken the social, political and economic structure. The maggots of history will soon invade their flowery graves. But today one should give Nasser his due.

Kerala

Election Post-Mortem

RAMJI

FORM and forecasts went overboard with the Congress(R) registering gains which pushed up the Assembly seats of the party from a lowly five in the dissolved Assembly to a dominant 32 in the new Assembly. The results belied the most sanguine expectations of the Congress(R), which ranged between a maximum of 20 and a rock bottom minimum of 12 seats. The Congress(R) is deeply indebted to the Muslim League for this big windfall. Although with 57 candidates in the field, it secured 18 per cent of the total votes polled, it is doubtful if this is an indication of its strength. Not less than eleven seats won by it in the Malabar area are gifts by the Muslim League, in constituencies with predominant League concentration. Outside the Malabar area, the League decidedly

helped to secure five more seats for the Congress(R) in such constituencies where Muslims form a sizable chunk of the electorate. Even in such constituencies like Tripunithura, off Cochin, the thousand and odd votes commanded by the League helped the Congress candidate to scrape through by a narrow majority. The Leaguers worked with fanatical zeal in favour of League and Congress(R) candidates alike. In the southern districts the other parties of the mini-front also helped the Congress(R) to win seats.

The rout of the Congress(O) in the elections with its implication that the traditional Congress voter has swung fully in favour of the Congress(R) after the split was another factor which contributed to the Congress success. Before the elections it was difficult to judge the result of the Congress split among the rank and file of its supporters. Unlike the other parties which mostly fielded familiar old-timers, the Congress(R) had a fair representation of new youthful faces and this along with

the new image of Indira's socialism did help to swing votes to some extent in favour of her Congress. The debacles of the non and anti Congress united fronts witnessed by the State also seem to have induced voters to give the old Congress in the new garb another trial. The middle class sections, rattled by the Naxalite threat, which they associate with Marxist rule, thanks to newspaper propaganda and the tendency of the authorities to arrest known Marxist activists as Naxalite suspects, to a sizable degree either swung away from the Marxists in favour of the Congress or assumed a neutral role by failing to vote at all. The voting percentage of 70 for the State is considerably lower than the general level of voting in the State. Over and above all this, the anomalies peculiar to the Indian system of non-proportional representation, on the British model, this time helped the Congress to win a considerable number of seats, though it did not in 1967.

While the Congress(R), in general, managed to secure almost the



BRINGING BEAUTY AND STURDINESS TOGETHER

RALEIGH

INDIA'S BEST LOVED BICYCLE

Raleigh is beautiful. Raleigh is sturdy. Raleigh is India's best loved bicycle.

Manufactured to rigid quality control specifications by Sen-Raleigh, Raleigh is built to go, designed to last and is the fastest moving bicycle in India.

Discover the unbeatable pleasure of Raleigh cycling for yourself.

Fastest selling fastest moving
Raleigh rules the road.

© Regd. User : 

The most trusted name in bicycles

SRG-101

support of the Muslim League, since the League swung its considerable voting strength in favour of the CPI in these constituencies.

The Kerala Congress has emerged with increased strength: from 5 in the dissolved Assembly to 13. Eight out of this 13 have been won from Kottayam district. Outside Kottayam, Ernakulam and Allepy the Kerala Congress has not displayed any strength. The party, like the Muslim League, has proved itself to be a district party at best.

Some features of the election campaign of the parties deserve notice. The Muslim League, banking heavily on communalism, put out baseless stories to rouse Muslim fanaticism. Thus, purely fabricated stories of Marxist attacks on mosques and religious processions were put out by *Chandrika*, the official organ of the League, and these stories were duly relayed by the anti-Marxist press. The Congress relied mostly on the "bloodthirstiness" of the Marxists and their alleged antipathy to 'law and order'. Although the official enemy number one of the Marxists was the Indira Congress and the two other Congresses, it concentrated its fire mostly on the Muslim League and the CPI, leaving the Congress comparatively alone. The fire against the CPI at least was wasted, since the party is no force in the State and the seats won by it are solely due to the support of the Indira Congress and the Muslim League. The Marxists lost nearly 14 sure seats in this exercise and almost all of them to the Indira Congress. The Marxist campaign was not sufficiently effective as it failed to project convincingly the shortcomings of the Congress at the Centre, while the memory of Congress rule in the State itself has become dim and a revival of it could not have been of any effect as a propaganda weapon. The League had its tactics cut out: it relied purely on calls to the Muslim community. The Kerala Congress, trotting out "Democracy" as its forte, secured the support of the Church and the Nair Service Society, although it has to be admitted that, this time, the

Church did not officially enter the campaign through the usual pastoral letters and similar incursions of religion into politics.

Fresh Battle

The battle is over and a fresh one started over the formation of the Ministry. Among a big section of the Congress, now basking in its victory, there is a strong feeling against the CPI. This section strongly feels that the Congress should assume power and make the mini-front support it. The prospect of a stable Ministry till the next general elections is remote. And Indira's plan for a coalition at the Centre through an election fight by a Congress-led united front at the all-India level is likely to founder since the Kerala experiment could very well stand discredited by the time the general elections come round.

Calcutta Diary

GYAN KAPUR

IT is a sign of the times that the police in West Bengal through their Association have come out with a plea to the people to help them in their fight against the so-called "anti-social terrorist elements," by which of course they mean the Naxalites. The people, whose memory is short, but not so short as to forget the terrorism of the police, are not likely to oblige by fighting the battle of the police for them. What is happening in West Bengal is nothing short of an undeclared war on sections of the people in which the police do not spare anybody on whom their wrath falls. They cannot, therefore, at the same time plead for being allowed a special status to enjoy a sort of immunity to carry on their attacks and live in peace. If they break a few heads happily in the course of their daily activities, they must be prepared to accept a similar fate for some of them as part of the risks of the job.

Undoubtedly the police have gone

MACHINERY MANUFACTURERS

CORPORATION LIMITED

Manufacturers of

Revolving Flat Card • Speed Frame

Crosrol Varga High Production Units

Crosrol Web Purifier • Draw Frame

Sole Selling Agents for

'Whitin' Textile Machinery

Head Office :

Gateway Building, Apollo Bunder,

Bombay-1.

Calcutta Office & Factory :

P61B, Circular Garden Reach Road,

Calcutta-43.

Telephone: 45-5311-16

Gram—Carding: Telex Cal. 211

berserk, not in Krishnagar alone. Their reactions are out of all proportion to the provocation. Mostly, their rampage is without the excuse even of any provocation. But then this can work both ways, with a large number of young men about who also sport a few weapons. If the police should do some heart-searching they would get the answer as to why some of them and their families are being subjected to suffering. God, on whom they seem to be pinning their last hope, will help them only if they help themselves.

The statement of the Association wants the people to think of the police as part of society. It also gives the people the advice that it is wrong to murder somebody for any wrong which might have been done by another in an excited moment. All this is begging the question. Or perhaps the long dormant conscience of the policemen has started stirring with the proddings of the angry young men. The police forget that if they are to be treated as part of society, they must also do their duty to the people which is not the same thing as carrying out the orders of whoever may be in power, for the time being. If they want a halt to be cried in the attacks against them, they themselves must come forward to show that they deserve some consideration.

They must make up their minds one way or the other. If they want to be treated as part of society, they must through their Association come out openly against the terrorist outrages ordered by their bosses and also perpetrated independently by some of their members. They must condemn all this and refuse to be willing partners in the oppressive machinery. Then perhaps they may hope for some respite. They would do well to remember that for far less, the life of policemen became a lot of misery during the independence struggle against the British.

For the present, whatever the rank and file may be thinking, the police appear determined to let in a fascist rule with a mixture of brutality for those who oppose them and petty

rewards for those who help them. The pretence of curbing violent extremist activities, as our Left leaders should have known, is now wearing pretty thin and even slogan writing has become the target of their murderous attacks, as on Friday in the College Street area. Whether one agrees with the Maoist slogans or Deshabrati or does not, the boys who write them or paste pages of Deshabrati on the walls of the Presidency College have certainly the right to do so and must decide the issue themselves. It is not for the police to tell them. But the police bosses have gone further. In their rank arrogance and brutality, they have been forcing, if their reports can be taken to be correct, arrested students to wipe out the slogans and tear off pages of their party journal. If actually some students were made to do it, we can well imagine the third-degree methods by which the unfortunates were 'persuaded', as the police euphemistically put it, to do the dirty job against their conscience.

All this, of course, leaves the parties of the Left Establishment cold. They could not care less, so long as they are not involved but whenever this happens they cry themselves hoarse, forgetting that it is all one piece. Or perhaps each one hopes, secretly, that in the internecine war the police will pull out a few chestnuts for them.

Who says the Victorian art of letter-writing is no more? Mr Jyoti Basu is doing his best to revive the lost art. The amount of letter-writing he has been doing since the last UF Government started tottering has been considerable. In due course, perhaps, all this may come out in the form of 'Collected Letters of Comrade Jyoti Basu' to add to the volume of world Marxist literature and adorn the shelves of devout Marxists in West Bengal, Kerala and some other parts of India. Maybe a few copies may be exported outside also to be studied in other countries as India's contribution to parliamentary revolution.

Apart from all this, however, this

The Next Issue of Frontier will be dated October 31

letter-writing must have some purpose. So far as the people are concerned, a statement would serve the need of informing them of the Party's viewpoint much better. The conclusion, therefore, is inescapable that Mr Basu and some among his colleagues have fallen a prey to a common failing in movements against authority of all types. This is to suppose that the instruments for carrying out the repressive policies forged by those in authority are exceeding their limits and are the real culprits and not those who plan out the repression. This, of course, is a deliberate illusion created by those who control the strings to which their puppets dance and they do not hesitate to discard them when the need arises.

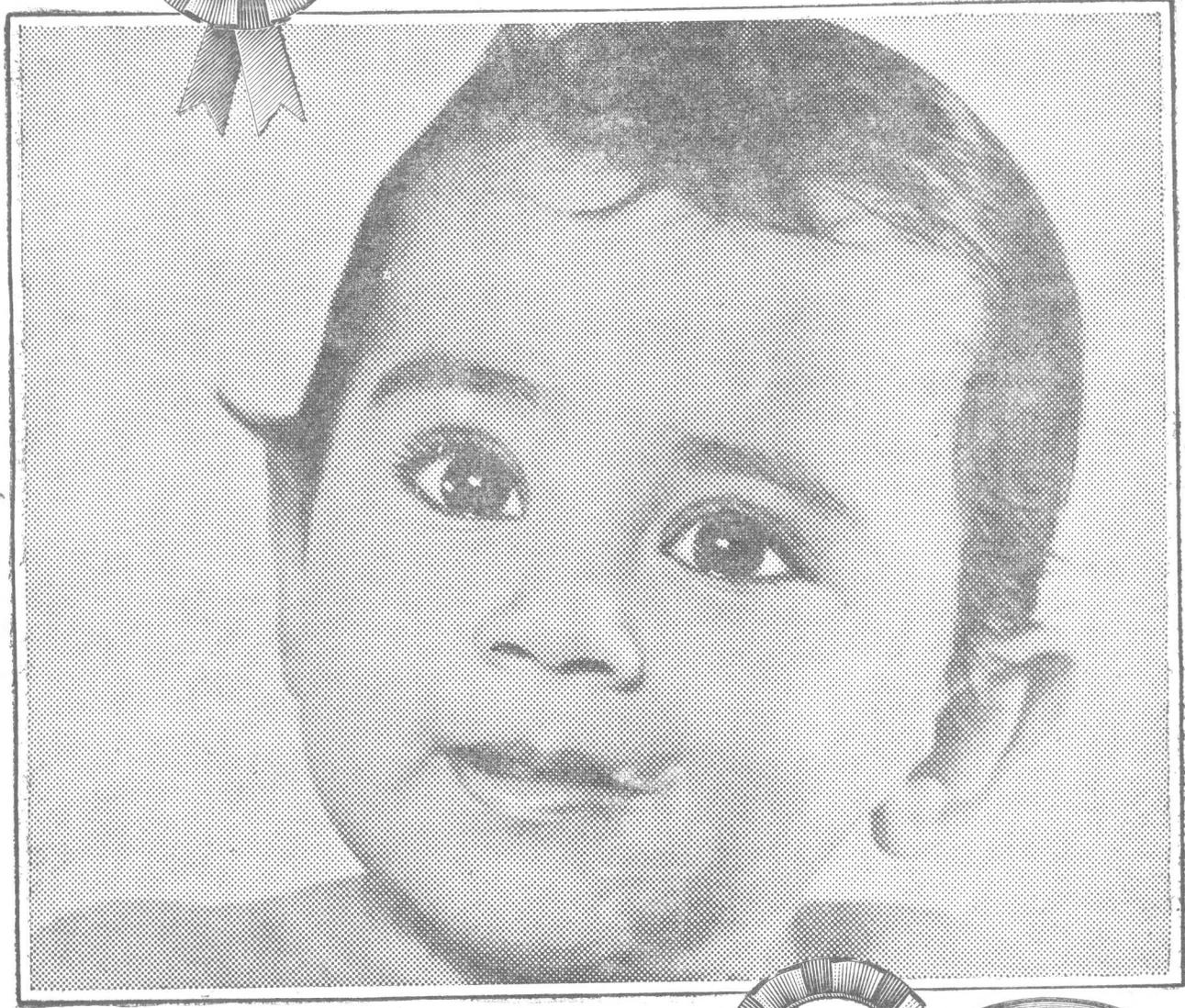
In all the correspondence of Mr Basu with the Governor, there is an implied acceptance of the idea that Mr Dhavan may not actually be aware of what is happening and may not really want all this. This, of course, is what suits Mr Dhavan and his bosses in Delhi very fine. On the one hand they can go on rolling out the machinery of repression to ride rough-shod and on the other they can entertain polite correspondence on various isolated incidents and, where this policy of blowing hot and cold dictates, issue orders for sundry enquiries which are like post-mortems. It is small comfort for the victim's family to know how he died. As for the victim, he knew well enough what was killing him.

FRONTIER is available from
CENTRAL NEWS AGENCY
23/90 Connaught Place
New Delhi-1

OCTOBER 3, 1970



Gireesh pulled himself up and stood at seven months. He has sturdy bones, glowing skin, shining eyes. A winner if ever there was one. The big secret of his health and vigour: a special baby food.



Within two years of introduction, Amulspray shot up into first place among baby foods, out-selling every other brand. It is made by a special process (spray-drying), to a special formula, for special nourishment. For *your* special baby. Easy-to-digest Amulspray offers balanced nutrition. Essential vitamins and minerals. More and better-quality protein for brain and body growth.



Amulspray
an ideal substitute for mother's milk

“HOOLIGANISM

***DEFEATS
ITS OWN PURPOSE”***

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose



Naxalite Tactics In Cities

ABHIJAN SEN

THE Naxalite talk of using the liberated countryside to encircle and finally capture the cities is well known. And so is the much more simplified slogan of "armed agrarian revolution". The fact that in the scale of strategic priorities liberation of the countryside comes first and in popular slogans revolution is mainly concerned about agriculture might well have created the impression that the revolution the Naxalites aim at is purely a business of the peasants. But despite the CPI(ML)'s major emphasis on organising the landless and poor peasants and talk about a "rural-based party" the work in the cities—among the working class, petty-bourgeoisie and students—has never been totally neglected. In the present article an attempt is made to trace in bare outline the evolution of Naxalite, to be more precise, the CPI(ML), tactical line in cities.

Back in 1967 when no tactical line had yet taken shape the Naxalites vaguely stated that their task would be "to develop militant, revolutionary struggles of the working class and other toiling people, to combat economism and to orient these struggles towards agrarian revolution." (Declaration of the revolutionaries of the CPI(M) in *Liberation*, December, 1967). In conformity with this line attempts were made to organise students and to some extent workers for demonstrations in favour of the Naxalbari peasant struggle. About the same time Charu Mazumdar spoke in greater detail about their task in the cities. He was most enthusiastic about the students whose lack of self-interest, courage and dedication "make them an asset for the revolution." First of all he wanted them to integrate themselves with the peasants and propagate revolutionary politics. But "those who are unable to go to the villages at present," he said, "should engage in doing propaganda work among the workers in

the cities. Their aim should be to organise democratic struggles in the cities in support of the peasant struggles in the villages." (*Liberation*, December 1967, p. 87) There was as yet no programme for their own or for workers. At the Democratic Convention in Calcutta on March 22, 1968 the nature of the democratic struggle in the cities was spelt out in greater detail. Apart from waging struggles in support of the peasants the workers were called upon to build militant organisations for the defence of their own class interests. It was decided to launch struggles against the PD Act, automation, retrenchment, lay-off, lock-out and police repression and for food and trade union rights. Charu Mazumdar, however, put the greatest emphasis on propaganda work by the students and youth whose political organisation "would inevitably be Red Guard organisation". Their task would be the widest possible dissemination of Quotations from Chairman Mao. (*Deshabradi*, 2 May, 1968)

Nevertheless, throughout 1968 and up to the birth of the CPI(ML) the students supplemented their agitprop work with movements for partial demands, of their own and the people in general. Processions and demonstrations were organised against the tramfare rise and rise in food prices. The draft political programme of the revolutionary student-youth movement published in *Deshabradi*, February 20, 1969 elaborated the reasons for waging partial struggles. Revolution, it said, cannot succeed with the help of a handful of advanced elements of students and youth. But it is difficult to draw in numerous backward elements by simple political propaganda. To unite and lead this section of students and youth into joining a revolutionary movement it is necessary to wage struggle for "food, employment, education and culture" and direct all the discon-

tent and anger of the youth to the path of long-term revolutionary struggle. At every stage of such struggle they would follow such tactics and carry on propaganda in such a way that there is a mass participation by students and youth and they become more active and politically conscious.

But as the Naxalites were moving in the direction of forming a party there was a noticeable tendency to make a distinction between the work of the ideologically advanced activists and students and youth in general. Replying to the charge of neglecting mass organisations and trade unions made by breakaway Naxalites like Parimal Dasgupta, Charu Mazumdar said, "if everyone concerns himself with building mass organisations, who is to build the underground party? Do we expect the mass organisations to organise the agrarian revolution?" (*Ghatana Prabaha*, May 1969). Elaborating further on the tactical line among workers he said that if one has to imbue the workers with revolutionary politics it has to be done through the propaganda activity of party units from outside trade unions, for "the working class will never realise the necessity of agrarian revolution through its movement for economic demands". Trade unions, he said, become a school for political education when there is no revolutionary situation, when the capitalist class appears very powerful and the working class considers itself to be very weak. At this time the trade union movement creates self-confidence among the workers and they also learn about tactics of struggle. But when the situation is revolutionary, when every struggle is fast turning into a violent clash trade unions are not enough to tackle such a situation. In a revolutionary situation the party is the class organisation of the workers. Particularly in a country like India, Mazumdar said, where the principal centre of revolution is in the countryside, the responsibility of the party is greater and the task of building party organisation among the workers extremely urgent. For, without this party organisation the

working class cannot perform its duty of leading the revolution.

A new line about the students was given by Mazumdar in an article entitled 'Party's call to the youth and students' (*Deshabrati*, August 21, 1969). In this article he recalled the glorious tradition of the militant youth of the country. "At every stage of India's struggle for national freedom, the youth and students of India made enormous sacrifices, carried the call of freedom to the villages, resisted police repression, and discontinued their study and voluntarily destroyed the prospects of building a career for themselves in order to become wholtime political workers". Now, it is the task of the revolutionary student and youth to shoulder the important task of propagating revolutionary politics. But one obstacle in the path of their taking up wholeheartedly the revolutionary cause is the college union. "These college unions", he said, "cannot solve any problem of education that confronts the students. On the other hand the college unions fail to provide leadership to the youth and the students in their revolt against the existing education system". By encouraging a sort of economism the student unions blunt their revolutionary edge. As a result "the union leadership, in most cases, is found to sink deep into the mire of opportunism and careerism begins to develop among them while the temptation of staying on in leadership drags them into all kinds of opportunist alliances and thus destroys their revolutionary morality." The article ended with an impassioned call to the students and youth to integrate themselves with workers and peasants.

The tactical line in cities as it had evolved in the past two years was very briefly noted in the draft organisational report circulated after the formation of the CPI(ML) in April 1969. Since the party was to be a secret organisation, launching of mass or democratic struggle was by implication ruled out. The draft said that "though the party should learn to utilise all possible legal opportunities for developing its revo-

lutionary activities it should under no circumstances function in the open". Whether front organisations should be created for this purpose was not made clear either. It was briefly noted that the party will give first preference to work by which the working class could be prepared "to assume the role of leadership of our revolution, rather than carry on economic and cultural activities in the cities."

The most clear-cut and comprehensive statement about the CPI(ML) tactical line regarding the workers was made only in March this year. The reason why the central leadership had been so long silent on this, Charu Mazumdar explained, was that unless politics was firmly grasped by the workers the new tactics of working class struggle could well degenerate into militant economic struggles. After the comrades have gathered some experience through political work time was now considered opportune for laying down the new line. This new line marked a departure from the earlier position of total rejection of trade unions. Charu Mazumdar of course reiterated his stand that the party would neither build nor capture trade unions. "But trade unions are there and will be, mainly under revisionist leadership. Struggles would also be waged through trade unions and since struggle is the nature of the worker he will also join in this. We cannot oppose any struggle whatsoever waged by the workers against the class enemy. That would be petty-bourgeois idealism. We will not make them dependent on us in any struggle waged by the workers for economic demands or against any attack by the employer; we will encourage them with politics to take independent initiative," (*Deshabrati*, March 12, 1970). The party cadres would concentrate on building secret party units through propaganda work. If this work succeeds in developing self-confidence and initiative among workers some of them would go forward to give able leadership to the trade union struggle and also fight the revisionists there.

but it should be ensured that the workers themselves do not develop revisionist tendencies.

Blunted Tools

Although the party would "encourage the workers in any struggle we will always have to tell them that today tools like general strike or strike in factories have become largely blunted for tackling the blows of the organised employers (like lock-out, lay-off, closure etc). Today we will have to advance not in a peaceful, bloodless way but in paths such as gheraos, clashes with the police and the employer, barricades, liquidation of enemies and agents—according to the situation". The workers will also learn new tactics through such struggles. The party will pay special attention to the organisation of agitation or other kinds of struggle in support of the workers if they are attacked. They will not clash with fellow workers if they raise revisionist slogans in such a movement. It will help to cement the solidarity among the workers.

Another thing, Mazumdar wished the party to do, is to develop self-respect among the workers. Whichever party he may belong to, the worker always has suffered from the humiliation of slavery. If through political propaganda a sense of prestige can be rekindled in him he will grow into a daring firebrand revolutionary. He will transcend the fear of losing his job and even his life. If retrenched he will become a good organiser in the city or will join the peasant struggle in the village.

However, after the CPI(ML) tactical line in the city began to take shape by March this year, Calcutta and other towns of West Bengal saw scenes that did not seem to tally with the line. The students started hit-and-run attacks on educational institutions, burning pictures of Gandhi and hoisting the red flag atop schools and factories. Although there was no published theoretical justification of this movement *Deshabrati* continued to support the students' actions. It was only in a

special edition of *Deshabarti* (August 15, 1970) that Charu Mazumdar came out with an explanation of this line of movement. The way he has justified the attacks on Gandhi and other bourgeois leaders and the hoisting of red flags indicates that these were more a spontaneous movement than something chalked out and led by the party. The students, he said, are making "a festival of breaking statues" and in factories the workers are making a "festival of hoisting the red flag, enjoying the sense of fear among employers and helplessness among the police and military". The students and youth, according to him, are doing a correct thing. A revolutionary education and culture cannot be created without destroying the colonial education system and the statues erected by the comprador bourgeoisie. But he has taken care to remind that this movement is neither unique nor self-sufficient. It is not a movement like the Chinese Cultural Revolution

for demolishing the superstructure. It is born out of the revolutionary tide that has been created in the countryside. "The students and youth have become restless for the sake of the agrarian revolution and they are striking blows at the statues of those who had always tried to pacify the armed struggle of the peasant masses. So this struggle of the students and youth is a part of the agrarian revolution." The peasant armed struggle is striking at the base and in the process encouraging attacks on the superstructure which in turn is helping the destruction of the base. In short, Mazumdar says that the present movement is an offshoot of the peasant struggle and though not a permanent feature, "in this age of inevitable collapse of imperialism", he said, "the revolutionary tide would swell and burst again and again into India's countryside". While thus approving the students' actions in the cities Charu Mazumdar has warned them against neglecting the primary

task of integrating with the workers and peasants. In an oblique reference to their city action he said it is easy to do one or two revolutionary things but very difficult to remain a revolutionary for ever. This can be done only by integrating oneself with the poor and landless labourer. Thus, while taking an approving notice of student innovations, he asks students and youth to go back to their primary task, that of agitprop.

However, a most serious aspect of Naxalite activities in cities—"annihilation" of police and military personnel—has not so far been adequately explained in CPI(ML) publications. But the course of events since April this year leading to the death of more than a dozen policemen indicates that this programme enjoys top priority on the Naxalite agenda in the city. It is not possible to determine at which stage this type of action in cities was planned but it can be seen as a sequel to clashes between the Naxalites and CPI(M)

KERALA STATE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LIMITED

RENDERS PROMOTIONAL AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
in setting up medium and large
scale industries in Kerala

Discover industrial opportunities in
KERALA
through

KERALA STATE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LIMITED

Vellayambalam, Post Box No. 105,
Trivandrum-1, Kerala.

Chairman and Managing Director:
DR. RAMA VARMA

and Naxalite attacks on educational and other institutions leading to encounters with and torture by the police.

It was in March that Charu Mazumdar while talking to a group of students and youth urged them to be "always alert to retaliate against" any party that dared to attack CPI (ML) comrades. As to the methods of attack he said that in order to break the morale of "fascist gangs" they should go in a group of 5 or 6 and launch "swift, guerilla-style attacks from a very close quarter." (*Deshabrati* March 5, 1970). The slogan that henceforth became very frequent was "Take revenge for every murder of our comrades". Following the death of some leading Naxalites in Srikakulam, peasants were exhorted to take revenge for this by murdering landlords. Finally in July it was announced that the "Calcutta District Committee has decided to take revenge of the murder of the heroic comrades in Andhra and West Bengal by annihilating police, CRP and blackmarketeers and capitalists". (*Deshabrati* July 9-16, 1970). In his latest instructions to the CPI(ML) Charu Mazumdar has approvingly noted that "students of cities and workers...are striking at the police force and killing police officers".

Thus the present action against the police in the cities is presented more as one of supporting action for struggle in the countryside and resistance to police repression in the cities than one designed to achieve a particular strategic objective. Although blackmarketeers and capitalists have been included in the list the party has not explained how this would be fitted in with the tactical line evolved earlier. However, the fact that intelligence agents and Special Branch police are special targets of Naxalite attack indicates perhaps a desire to shut off the "eyes and ears" of the state power—a thing which is being attempted in the countryside. But so far there has not been any call to develop guerilla units and wage war against class enemies as in villages.

Returning Home

ROBI CHAKRAVORTI

I think it was Thomas Wolfe who once wrote, You can never go back home. It was a partial statement as I soon found out on my return to Calcutta after five years abroad.

My home was as I'd left it; only, the signs of stagnation have multiplied. There was a touch of eternity, as it were. As I noted the layers of dust on the books on the shelves, black soot on the ceiling fans, the bathroom floor desecrated, with psychedelic designs of moss and discolouration, I felt like walking into a museum. No wonder, I thought, we always talk about the eternal and seldom about the temporal; we enjoy to think of things afar and neglect matters at hand.

My relatives, I noticed, have followed the same old rhythm of life. It has become more desperate; the daily miseries have increased in scale and so has our eternal capacity for adaptation. People, I noticed, follow the same, old, miserable routine—waking up in the morning, cursing amoebiosis, drinking steaming cups of tea, eating 'brunch' in a hurry and then, going through the marvellous calisthenics of boarding a crowded bus or tram. Like tides of the Hooghly, the outgoing masses of people return in the afternoon from their places of work to various street points where they break into trickles and puddles. The size and the expanse of the human tides have increased. The tides are now bores.

After having lived a life of different rhythm in the Western world—fast, individualistic, crisp and tense while the rhythm here is slow, cloying, ponderous and germinally alive—I've had to reinitiate myself into the old Calcutta style of life. After the first burst of annoyances were over, I found myself at home again and became soon a part of the vast seething masses, struggling, cursing and yet laughing and loving. Calcutta, in this sense, has not changed much. It

has turned worse for the majority; one can see physical breakdowns increasing in frequency and scope. But, despite all the hazards that an ordinary Calcuttan faces, there is in him a magnificent element of flexibility for survival which I'd always admired and which I admire all the more in these troubled times.

The pattern of social life in Calcutta has not changed much; but this does not mean that Calcutta has remained static. Behind the apparently unchanging flow of life which defies hazards, old and new, there is a change. I perceived it dimly, and I've often wondered whether millions in Calcutta following their daily pursuits are not also vaguely conscious of this change.

If I'm asked to explain this change in simple terms, I would say that the old politics is dead and the new politics is struggling to be born.

The political character of Calcutta in particular and West Bengal in general has changed unalterably during my sojourn abroad. I talked with people belonging to the right, centre and left bands of the political spectrum. Their analyses of the political change differed. But the fact that a major change is occurring which marks a break with the past, none disputed.

I met Congressmen who still dream of returning to power, CPM sympathisers who believe in the correct line of their policy and programmes, and Naxalite fellow-travellers whose faces glow with theoretical fantasies. They may curse one another and often come to blows. But, nonetheless, they agree on one point: there indeed has been a change in the political pattern of the State.

What is the character of the change? As an outsider who is also an insider it seems that the political upheaval of the past few years has injected a sharp, if also harsh, sense of reality among a vast number of people. Naxalites may have overdone their "festival of iconoclasm"; and I fear, their movement will lose momentum as the instruments of the State slowly yet steadily establish

control over this brand of politics. This is my analysis and it is no better or worse than other people's.

But whether or not Naxalites succeed in Mao-style revolution or the CPM returns to power either alone or with a consortium of parties, the fact of a major change cannot be denied, and to this change the Naxalites appear to have made a substantial contribution.

They have triggered off a set of realistic questions about Bengali life and society which had always been there but seldom noticed. To use a Freudian term, but in a different context, the "reality principle" has been introduced into Bengali politics. The extremist, violence-prone youth, admittedly in a minority, are asking deliberately and consistently questions which their elders give vent to sporadically and unsystematically in occasional moments of anger or in comic repartees on card tables.

The questions may take different forms and, frequently, they are rudely asked. But they are often telling in their Socratic simplicity. The questions probe the principles of social bond which keeps the Bengali society together. To use a sociological concept, any society is held together by two broad forces. One may be described as Authority; the other as Force. The Authority is established by creating a series of beliefs which are taken to be immutable; as the child grows up, he learns these beliefs from different sources and these beliefs guide his actions, as he becomes an adult, along predictable lines. These beliefs, again, are fostered by a series of symbols, such as the flag or the folklores about heroes, or words like patriotism or family, which are taken for granted. These symbols are powerful tools of social control and, by their very nature, vague.

In times of crisis, these symbols are questioned. People ask themselves and one another what do these symbols stand for in actual reality. To the extent this type of questions is raised more and more frequently, cracks appear in the pillars of Authority. And, as Authority is gradually

weakened, more and more reliance is made on Force. The instability in a society, thus, can be measured from the degree to which it depends more and more on the application of Force which is physical and less and less on Authority which is moral.

The Naxalites may be crude, they may even be neurotic, and I am tempted to, go along with their critics who argue that their strategy and tactics are wrong. But, as a sociologist, I would like to venture a simple statement, which is not tied to any political ideology. The Naxalites, I would argue, are challenging the symbols of Authority and to that extent, acting as agents of social change. For, some of the questions they are asking crudely and, if you prefer, wildly are being unsystematically asked in many middle-class, lower-middle class and poorer homes in Calcutta and West Bengal. The Naxalites are merely dramatising these questions; their methods of dramatisation may be disputed, but it would be a mistake to dispute the relevance, validity or statistical spread of these questions among the populace.

In lieu of a better word, I would like to describe this development as a sense of reality. Marxists would, I assume, like the phrase political consciousness. I prefer my terminology to the Marxists', because the phrase political consciousness indicates the inevitability of revolution. I do not believe in the latter; revolution may or may not come off in the long run; but in a shortrun analysis, a high-level prognosis, not bound by time, becomes pointless. Here, Keynes' famous statement comes to mind—after all, in the long run, all of us will be dead.

The rising sense of reality which I noticed does not necessarily mean that West Bengal politics has become more rational. The factional quarrels and murders, which we are witnessing today, are substantively no different from the traditional fights between political factions in undivided Bengal, between the Jugantar and the Anushilan or between J. M. Sengupta and Subhas Bose, to give two instances.

What has changed is the scale and ferocity of the factional conflict and the rhetoric of justification.

I do not foresee a revolution occurring in West Bengal in the near future. The sense of reality or political consciousness which the political upheaval in general and the Naxalites in particular have generated is still of an existentialist nature. I foresee this spreading and jelling in isolated groups; but I doubt whether it will gather such a momentum as to make a successful revolution. What will happen twenty years from now no one can forecast. I'm thinking in terms of five to ten years.

My impression is that Calcutta in particular and West Bengal in general will continue to remain in a no man's land between the lost Congress dream of a liberal-capitalistic State and the Naxalite dream of a cataclysmic revolution preceded by a series of guerilla activities. West Bengal is in for a long period of mixed politics, which, like mixed economy, will be neither here nor there. Instead of reaching a tolerably stable parliamentary democracy or a revolutionary utopia, Calcutta and West Bengal will experience a brand of politics which will take on features of both the models. There will sooner or later be elections and a party system of government. At the same time, there will continue various acts of violence, sporadic and isolated, but unable to tear up the fabric of society. The theoretical justification for these acts of violence will be grandiose and theatrical; the acts, in themselves, or in combination and over a period of time, will fail to fulfil the claims made on their behalf.

Just as the theoreticians of the extreme left will blow up the significance of the acts of violence, so will their critics and opponents. The former's behaviour will be caused by a romantic enthusiasm that lies at the heart of a revolutionary movement; the latter's by the search for a rationale to justify a reign of preemptive police action.

Meanwhile, the same old rhythm of life in Calcutta will go on—ebbing and flowing like the murky tides of the Hooghly River.

A Survey Of Friendship



India and Germany—Partners in Progress

Revolution In A Chinese Village

M. S.

HINTON'S work is massive, and not merely in size. It is an account of less than six months' stay in a small village in Shansi province in North China, between March 6 and August 24, 1948, and his observation of and participation in some of the most significant and conscious revolutionary steps taken by the villagers of Long Bow during that period. Hinton, an American, was in China with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) as a tractor technician, and when the UNRRA closed down towards the later part of 1947, he applied for a job to teach English in the Northern University in South Shansi. He started teaching towards the end of 1947, just at the point when the Kuomintang was on the run, both militarily and politically, during the period of the final overthrow of counter-revolution represented by Chiang and his American backers. It was by any account a very 'fluid' period. And Hinton's joining the faculty of the University coincided with the promulgation of the Draft Agrarian Law by the Chinese Communist Party in December 1947; this in course of time was followed by the dispatch of 'work teams' into hundreds and thousands of key villages and hamlets in the liberated areas, to investigate the application of the provisions of the Draft Agrarian Law, and to assess the progress of land reform measures. Hinton found that almost immediately on his joining the University, half the faculty and the students left to join the 'land reform movement', and he longingly watched batches of young people marching off into the countryside, with bundles on their backs, waving staffs with little red flags fluttering atop them.

He applied for permission to join

FANSHEN

By William Hinton

Vintage Books (Paper back), \$2.95
New York.

a work team as an 'observer', and after a little hesitation on the part of the President of the University, is allowed to study land reform at a village just one mile south of the Kao Settlement, the headquarters of the Northern University. Hinton, accompanied by a young woman instructor, Ch'i Yun, leaves for Long Bow on March 6, 1948; what follows is less than six months' stay in the village, not even continuous. Six months; one might ask, what can one know of a place, a people, of a problem in six months? Well, for such sceptics, this book should come as a surprise for the depth of understanding it shows of the problem, for the charity, for the uncompromising honesty, even, at a very crude level, for the sheer labour of observation and recording that has gone into the making of the book. Till I read *Fanshen*, I never realised that even sociology could be a creative, positive discipline. Hinton of course combines in himself the role of an orthodox Marxist, a creative sociologist, a very human person (not that the roles are mutually exclusive). But in the final analysis what is significant, even more than Hinton's observation of land reform in Long Bow, is the implied transformation in the observer himself, who, under the dynamic impact of the events he is observing and recording, himself becomes a participant: he begins with 'them', and ends with 'us'.

The book, as I said, is massive; but even then, it can be grasped in its essential details. At one level, it is simply the *story* of a village and its people, and traces in exhaustive detail how the pattern of ownership of land and goods substantially changed during a period of a few weeks, and how this change was brought about *consciously* by the villagers themselves, under the guidance, sometimes correct and sometimes faulty, of the Communist Party branch in the village. Thus, we can trace the changes in the fortunes of

individual men and women, how they *fanshened* (i.e., 'turned over', overthrew landlord domination, in fact changed completely), the mistakes they committed on their way to *fanshen*. The story is far more gripping and fascinating than many novels, fascinating in the drama and conflicts it presents even when the characters seem pretty drab and ordinary. Intensely moving too are some of the stories, like the one of Hu Hsueh-chen for instance (a beggar-woman whose evolution into a leading communist cadre is just one of the many remarkable instances of real 'turning over' depicted by Hinton), or that of Shen Hsien-e, the daughter-in-law of Yu-lai, a character who causes no end of trouble in the course of the events described in the book.

A gripping story no doubt; but if it was merely a story, there could not have been this massive book. But these characters, extremely ordinary people, lot of them coming from broken homes and not very 'nice' backgrounds, collectively changed the pattern of land and property holding in their village. Even this, by itself, would not have been remarkable if it was a case of 'spontaneous' seizure of goods not belonging to one. Here, on the contrary, every act of seizure is preceded by intensive mass discussion; each act is not merely consciously undertaken, but is itself a step further in the development of the peasants' own consciousness.

A Microcosm

But first, it would be useful to have an idea of the contents of the book. The book, as I said earlier, describes the way in which the peasants of Long Bow *fanshened* over a very brief period, in fact, *fanshened* from being a bastion of reactionary forces (Long Bow was one of the villages occupied and fortified by the Japanese) to a storm centre of revolution over a matter of a few weeks. But before

Hinton describes the events of those weeks, to facilitate an understanding of the revolutionary process in Long Bow, he provides a brief history of the village, a history which is a microcosm of the rural landmass of China during many centuries. The first part of the work (the work is divided into seven parts) presents this history, both of the past and the immediate present. The physical appearance of the village, the chief households, the important commercial centres (in this case a grocery shop which was also a kind of village gossip headquarters)—these are described with swift and firm touches. The portrait presented by Hinton is very real, and includes all aspects of the village (including the individual shithouses, for instance, which are situated in the front of houses, whose economic importance to a land economy can hardly be exaggerated. The privy pops up again and again in the course of the book, being part of the problems in a variety of ways. Hinton follows his description of the village with an analysis of the various classes in Long Bow; and considers the question of the seemingly perpetual rule of one class of people. In Long Bow, only 7% of the population comprising landlords and rich peasants owned 31% of available land and 33% of draught animals, while at the other end of the scale, the poor peasants and hired labourers owned less than 1% of draught animals and 24% of land, though they constituted 53% of the whole population. Hinton's portrait of individual villagers and their households is fascinating; so is his analysis of the economic, sociological and cultural background to the form of exploitation that prevailed in Long Bow. For instance the fact that Sheng Ching-ho was the richest land-

lord of the village was not entirely due to a conscious and intensive exploitation of the villagers, both direct and indirect. The seven-member household of Sheng Ching-ho was not merely 'populous' (the average strength of the family of a poor peasant or hired labourer was three); he owned 23 acres of fertile land (the per capita holding of a poor peasant was less than half-an-acre, and even an average landlord held only 17.4 *mou* (about three acres); so, on the basis of his landholding alone, Ching-ho was an extremely wealthy man. He had plenty of livestock (many poor peasants did not own even 'the leg of a mule', that is, only a few of them owned a draught animal collectively); he owned the distillery in the village and he converted his abundant surplus into silver which he buried in the back of his courtyard, apart from lending money levying an interest of 50% a month. The latter sounds incredible; but Hinton cites many individual instances of the kind of pauperisation the poor peasants suffered on account of borrowings of extremely small sums. Ching-ho had his finger in other pies as well; he managed the affairs of *Pei Lao Shah*, a Buddhist religious group devoted to 'charitable' work, and also headed the village Confucian association, both providing instances of 'enlightened self-interest' at work. He also managed sessions of spirit-talking (i.e., for a fee, he would arrange a séance during which one could talk to one's dead parent), and was active in village politics as well, occupying the 'unsalaried' post of the Village Head, who only took a cut on all taxes extorted. For a man of such varied interests, it was but natural that he should also be an active member of the Kuomintang as well; altogether, a fair specimen of the ruling élite of China's vast countryside in the years before the liberation. At the other end of the scale, Long Bow consisted of a large majority of poor peasants and landless labourers constituting about 63% of the families in the village (157 out of a total of 251 households), a fairly typical member of this class being the poor peasant Shen, who borrowed \$4 from Ching-

ho in order to buy medicine for his sick wife, indentured his son to the landlord for seven years, at the end of which period the son still owed many times the original amount, and had to tear down part of his house and sell the timber to secure his release. The third chapter, *Eating Bitterness*, cites many similar instances. But were the landlords and rich peasants really prosperous? Well, yes, but only in relation to the utterly degrading poverty in the midst of which they lived. Shen Faliang, indentured for seven years to Ching-ho as guarantee for a \$4 dollar loan, Wang Ch'ung-lai's wife, sold at the age of nine as a servant into the family she was going to be married into—these are but a few of the many cases of total degradation the poor peasants of Long Bow had to endure. Descriptions like the following should not seem strange to us:

I and the children worked for others thinning millet. We got only half a quart of grain. For each meal we cooked only a fistful with some weeds in it. The children's stomachs were swollen and every bone in their bodies stuck through their skin. After a while the little boy couldn't get up. He just lay on the *k'ang* sick with dysentery and many, many worms, a whole basin full of worms crawled out from his behind. Even after he was dead the worms kept coming out. The little girl had no milk from me, for I had nothing to eat myself, so, of course, she died.

But the real horror of it all was not in the individual instances. As Hinton says, "The most terrible thing about the condition of life in Long Bow in those days was not any single aspect of the all but universal misery; it was that there was no hope of change. The fearful tragedy played and replayed itself without end. In so far as things did change, they changed for the worse as the crisis of China's social system deepened." People said: "The debts of the poor begin at birth. When a boy is a month old the family wishes to celebrate; but they have to borrow money in order to make dumplings and so, before the child can sit up, he is

For Frontier contact

People's Book House

Meher House,

Cowasji Patel Street,

Fort, Bombay

already in debt to the landlord. As he grows the interest mounts until the burden is too great to bear."

'Three Pillars of Heaven'

Hinton follows this description of the village with a swift, incisive analysis of the 'Three Pillars of Heaven' which had supported the system of exploitation over many centuries. The oligarchical rule was perpetuated by tradition, in this case, a debased form of Confucianism according to which exploitation and misery became a 'moral law'; a more practical pillar which consisted of the village government (never popularly elected, the office remaining in a few families always) with power to enforce the system of exploitation; and thirdly, the constant threat and use of physical force to keep the discontented masses in check. "Better to kill one hundred innocent people than to allow one communist to escape". Apart from these traditional Three Pillars of Heaven, there was still another pillar, alien and new, but nonetheless a very strong supporter of the system; the Catholic Church which claimed slightly more than 20% of the families of Long Bow (64 families out of 257). Hinton's analysis of the role of the Church in rural China is very perceptive, and an Indian reader is continuously reminded of parallels in his own rural society. It was the Italian Franciscans who started saving the heathen, almost immediately following the defeat of China in the First Opium War in 1840; they were followed by other European saviours, Dutch and French, and in the course of saving the heathen, the Church became a substantial landholder in its own right, directly as well as through a 'charitable' organisation it controlled, the *Chin Hsing Hui* ('carry-on Society', the Catholic counterpart of

the Buddhist *Pei Lao Shih*). The system of exploitation thus acquired the sanction of tradition, and was considered part of the scheme of things. Even to question it was as foolish as asking the question, Will the Sun Rise in the West? No doubt there were revolts; Hinton discusses the phenomenon of the fairly frequent peasant risings in rural China and shows how, being born out of a kind of spontaneous and individualistic kind of despair (quite natural under the circumstances), they were all doomed either to failure, or to degenerate into individual careers of banditry, a profession which had a lot of romantic folklore attached to it. The peasant uprisings were often very violent, no doubt; but the extreme and often misdirected violence of these uprisings was an indication of certain basic weaknesses of the peasants as a political force; these being, first, an all-pervading individualism; second, a lack of vision which was the result of genuine lack of an understanding of larger social issues (the links that connected the individual moneylending exploiter in the village with the imperialist exploiter of a nation were not always easily understood); three, a kind of 'village idiocy', natural, considering the total isolation of the village from national and world events; and lastly, an impetuosity of action, which led, even when the revolt was directed by the Communist Party, to various kinds of excesses (which, more later).

Hinton concludes his survey of the village society by swiftly passing over the period of Japanese occupation (Long Bow was strategically important to the Japanese, situated as it was in the path the Japanese planned to follow in their attempts to link up two columns of armies, and so was occupied and fortified by them); the instances of collaboration in the village, the majority of collaborators being naturally from the gentry class, with a sprinkling of 'front men' from among the peasants; the establishment of a puppet administration and its exercise of authority with an incredible cruelty with an even more than usually severe extortion of grain and labour; the

ruthlessness and rapacity of the local collaborators surpassing even that of the occupying forces. The organisation of resistance within the village follows. Then, the triumphant march of the Eighth Route Army from Yen-an in North Shansi; the corresponding growth of the Chinese Communist Party; the gradual evolution of liberated areas; the setting up of coalition governments in the liberated areas which initially included communists as well as patriotic elements from the Kuomintang and independents; the temporary abandonment of 'Land to the Tiller' slogan and the adoption of 'double reduction' (i.e., reduction of rents and reduction of interest rates) as the immediate goal. These, now part of history, are graphically described by Hinton. Throughout, his concern is with the impact of these events on a little community; he describes the establishment of the resistance in the village, the way it seized the opportunity and moved in when the Japanese army surrendered in August, 1945, and the liberation of the village itself by the Eighth Route Army and the Peoples' Militia of Lucheng County. The four 'days' 'gap' between the Japanese surrender to the allies, and the collapse of the occupation forces in individual areas of China, incidentally, was the result of a diabolic policy adopted by Chiang Kai-shek, a policy of trying to block the advance of the Red Army all over China, sometimes even with the help of the Japanese, and during the later stages of the civil war, with the active help of the Americans. Long Bow, of course, lay directly in the path of the Eighth Route Army and was one of the earliest liberated areas of China. But even in Long Bow, there was a brief, but futile attempt at counter-revolution; it collapsed. (Chiang's 'Trojan Horse' in Long Bow was an important member of the resistance, and later he becomes an active member of the village branch of the CP, and is even promoted to fulltime district work).

The second part of the work presents the phenomenon of the Sun indeed rising in the West. It is the Year of Expropriation, a process that

Frontier is sold by

PROLETARIAT BOOK

AGENCIES

22/6, S. B. Raha Lane,

Asansol

OCTOBER 3, 1970

went on in a rather chaotic manner over the liberated areas. It culminated in the 'May 4th Directive' (issued by the Central Committee of the CPC on May 4, 1946), which reversed the wartime policy of 'double reduction' and called once more for 'land to the tiller'. This part of the book describes the first attempts by the peasants of Long Bow to organise a public meeting, the first 'anti-traitor meeting' in which justice is meted out to the most notorious of collaborators; a brief period of terror follows. Well, one could hardly call it a period of 'terror', for about half-a-dozen people are killed during this phase. In this connection, the quotation from Mark Twain which is used as an epigraph to the second part of the book deserves to be noted:

There were two "Reigns of Terror" if we would but remember it and consider it; the one wrought murder in hot passion, the other in heartless cold blood; the one lasted mere months, the other lasted a thousand years; the one inflicted death upon a thousand persons, the other upon a hundred millions; but our shudders are all for the "horrors" of the minor terror, the momentary terror, so to speak; whereas, what is the horror of swift death by the axe compared with lifelong death from hunger, cold insult, cruelty, and heart-break? What is swift death by lighting compared with slow death by fire at the stake? A city cemetery could contain the coffins filled by the brief Terror which we have all been so diligently taught to shiver and mourn over; but all France could hardly contain the coffins filled by the older and real Terror—that unspeakably bitter and awful Terror which none of us has been taught to see in its vastness or pity as it deserves.

The Rotten Root

The anti-traitor movement is only the beginning of an investigation into the whole village organisation, an investigation into the question as to why the majority of the villagers are so poor. "Dig out the Rotten Root of Feudalism". Thus, the slogan, "But where are the roots? How to find

them? The answer lies in the forming of a Peasants' Association in the village and the beginning of the campaign to "settle accounts" with the landlords. The richest landlord of the village, Sheng Ching-ho, runs away never to return, but other landlords and rich peasants are there, chief amongst whom is Wang Laihsun, a drug addict, not the less rapacious for his addiction. Hinton's account of these 'investigations' is quite objective, and he does not hesitate to highlight instances of unjust severity on the part of the peasants, which sometimes resulted in the destruction of whole families, like the one of Wang Kuei-ching (the manager of the Catholic Carry-on Society who was himself beaten to death). The campaign to "settle accounts" which began in January 1946 lasted about four weeks; this, with the earlier "anti-traitor movement", completed the destruction of the feudal class, or at least broke its back. The gains even on a practical plane were not insignificant; in all, 211 acres of land were confiscated from individuals, and 55 acres from institutions, amounting to more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the total of 951 acres of land which belonged to the village. About half the total number of 800 houses also were confiscated. The total value of goods and land seized was about \$100,000, in the context of Long Bow, a huge sum, amounting to about five years overall income for every man, woman and child in the community. The expropriation of land and goods is followed by distribution, and the result of the redistribution can be summed up in a few figures. A hundred and forty families with 517 members 'turned over' economically; the per capita holding of land (of per person) increased from .44 acres to .83 acres. The fact that in the course of the confiscation and redistribution, many errors were committed (as is made evident in the course of the book) did not affect the significance of these first moves towards affirming the peasants' right to equality. For the first time, the ordinary peasant of Long Bow felt that he had some control over his destiny. "In place of the age-old greeting, 'Countryman, have

you eaten?' many poor peasants now asked one another, 'Comrade, have you turned over?'

The liberation of the peasants of Long Bow is accompanied simultaneously by the liberation of 'Half of China', the liberation of the Chinese woman. A Women's Association is formed in Long Bow, and this theme of women's liberation is present throughout the work, with many instances of conflict between even party cadres and women, the older and the younger women, mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, on the women question. Wife-beating was yet another of those 'charming old practices' in Old China, and it is amusing to note the different ways in which even a Communist Party member (male) and a non-CP peasant (female) react to the question of wife-beating. The attempts on the part of the gentry to sow confusion are defeated, and a Communist Party branch is founded. Hinton's description of the organisation of the party branch in the village is very instructive; the party at that stage had still to operate in secret; at the same time the need to have a party branch in the village was also great, to do the very important job of co-ordinating the activities of the four major 'associations' operating in the village: the village government which was now more democratically chosen, the Peoples' Militia, the Peasants' Association and the Women's Association. The party, by the time it makes itself 'open', has already members in all these associations of the village, though it never tried to dominate them (by having too many members in any one association). The class composition of the party in the village is also interesting; of the 30-odd members, 80% were land-poor peasants, landless tenants or hired labourers; 20% were land-owning peasants, such as Shih Fu-yuan, the new head of the village government, a middle peasant who was active in the resistance against the Japanese. The party had no members of rich peasant or landlord origin. That the party, even with about 30 members, occupied key positions in all the organisations of the village becomes evident when we consider the fact that

Kuo Cheng-k'uan, the chairman of the Peasants' Association, Hu Hsueh-chen, the ex-beggarwoman mentioned earlier, and now secretary of the Women's Association, Li Hung-er, captain of the People's Militia and Shih Fu-yuan, head of the village government, were all party members. But the fact that party members occupied strategic positions in the various organisations of the village does not prevent many of the abuses that characterised the initial phase of the revolution in Long Bow. (Li Hung-er is especially guilty of 'commandism', a failing he is repeatedly accused of in the later part of the book). Here too, Hinton makes no effort to gloss over. Some aspects of the earlier revolutionary process might be of interest to us in the present times. Part of the campaign against superstition, described by Hinton, consisted of the smashing of gods and their images, and include 'settling accounts' with Ch'i-t'ien, a very powerful Buddhist deity alleged to possess the power to cause dysentery. The Peasants' Association calculated the money spent on him over the years and discovered that the money was enough to have saved many lives in the famine years. The result of this discovery was ceremonious smashing of the deity.

The May 4th Directive which called for "land to the tiller" instead of "double reduction" resulted in sharper and more violent struggles in the liberated areas. The County Committee of the Communist Party gave a call for *san t'ou, szu yu, wu pu lieu*, i.e., "three things through, four things possessed, five things resolved"; this in turn stood for (1) To accuse thoroughly, to struggle thoroughly, to *fanshen* thoroughly; (2) Food to eat, clothes to wear, land to till and houses to live in; (3) Let no poor peasant remain poor, let no backward element remain backward, leave no question between the people unresolved, leave no feudal remnants in the peoples' thinking, and leave no landlord in possession of his property. It is not difficult to see how, in the course of the detailed application of the campaign, more 'excesses' are going to be committed, as indeed they were. Simultaneous-

ly, due to the immense prestige of the CPC, a premium is laid on membership, and the first instances of the abuses of this prestige and power appear. The case of Wang Man-hsi, who from being the 'scourge of the gentry' becomes the 'scourge of the average man', is only one of the many. The most notorious of course are Wang Fu-lai, the vice-chairman of the Peasants' Association, his son Wang Wen-te (whom his father manoeuvres into the immensely powerful position of the head of the police), Li Hung-er, captain of the militia, and Wang Hsi-yu, deputy head of the village administration. These four repeatedly fail to pass the *gate* (a general meeting in which party cadres are expected to take part in sessions of self and mutual criticism and convince the rest that they have rectified their behaviour). Incidentally, one might note that most of the abuses presented by Hinton seem to be of a sexual kind, coming under 'rascal behaviour'; evidently, even in China, sexual aggression was considered the most serious kind of abuse that threatened to dislocate the revolutionary process. Another of the abuses Yu-lai specialised in was branding all those whom he did not like as Kuomintang agents and compelling them to wear 'agents' caps'.

By the time the work team made its appearance in the village, one could say that there was growing alienation between the revolutionary cadre and the militiamen of Long Bow, and the ordinary people. There was too much of "commandism" and hedonism", and the future of the movement was far from certain. An old class had been overthrown, the whole village society was very much in ferment, but what was lacking was a sense of direction. There was a new class of leaders on the scene, mostly young and ambitious, not tempered either by active and actual participation in a revolution outside the village, nor having sufficient discipline. In other words, there was a fluid, revolutionary mass, which had lately broken its shackles, but which lacked a correct, revolutionary leadership. Of course, the leadership had to evolve from its own ranks,

through experience, yes, even through errors. The work team was not sent to provide leadership. Its function was mainly to observe and participate, and in the process learn and perhaps help teach.

The rest of the book, the remaining five parts, is given over to an almost continuous account of the happenings in the village, from the time of the arrival of the work team till its departure 170 days later. We follow the careers of individual peasants, are face to face with 'gut issues', as it were, and realize what *actually* is involved when one class overthrows another, not merely by symbolic and individual seizures of goods not belonging to one, but by depriving the old ruling class of the roots of power which it once held. "A revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another". "It is not a dinner party, writing an essay (indeed it is not!), or painting a picture, or doing embroidery. It cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restricted and magnanimous". There cannot be a more apt description of the process of *fanshen* in Long Bow. The account of *fanshen* in the village starts with a brief summary of Mao's strategy as presented in the address of December 25, 1947, entitled "The Present Situation and our Tasks", Mao's emphasis then (before the final overthrow of Chiang Kai-shek's clique) was on a mixed economy and a multi-class government. In fact, that is the burden of the writings and speeches of Mao throughout the period (including the phase covered in *Fanshen*), and Mao returns to attack "Left" tendencies, particularly in land reform, in "On Some Important Problems of the Party's Present Policy" (January 18, 1948), and about half-a-dozen essays that follow, culminating in the important "Speech At a Conference of Cadres in the Shansi-Shiyuan Liberated Area" (April 1, 1948). But even while Mao was uttering continuous warnings against "Left" deviations, the first conscious steps taken by the peasants of Long Bow and the work team were "Left" almost to a suicidal degree.

Thus, the work team had to inves-

investigate not merely the actions of the peasants, whether they had *fanshened* sufficiently; they had also to subject themselves, as also the leading party cadres of the village, to intensive self and mutual critical examinations. In fact, the rest of the book is taken up with three inter-related themes; one, intense self-mutual critical examination at the two sessions of the *gate* all the party members go through; simultaneously, the work team assists the villagers in reclassifying themselves after the appropriations and distributions that have taken place; and lastly, the work team is confronted with a mysterious attempt on the life of one of its members, Chung Ch'uei, and in the process of investigating the attempt, unearths various unsavoury elements of the village, consisting in the main of the four rather notorious members of the party (Yu-lai, Wen-te, Hung-er and Hsi-yu) who are all suspected to be involved in the murder attempt. They are all dismissed from their posts and put under arrest, though their complicity is never clearly established. Their 'crime', and the punishment meted out to them, the way they are confronted in the self-mutual criticism sessions—these are shown as having a significance going beyond what happens to them as individuals. We can trace definite stages in the course of the emergence of a 'revolutionary consciousness' in the village. The preliminary phase during which the earlier 'misdirected enthusiasm' continues (only less 'misdirected', but even more 'enthusiastic'), this phase is described in the third part of the book, a phase marked by a pursuit of extreme equalitarianism. The 'line' followed here has since then become famous as the 'Hired and Poor Peasant Line'. That is, the members of the work team and

the local party cadres went out of the way, only to favour the poor peasants and hired labourers, even at the expense of the middle peasants, not to speak of the rich peasants and the landlords. The work team, of course, was sent out with specific instructions to seek out the poor; Secretary Ch'en himself, the secretary of the Lucheng County Committee of the Communist Party, sent out the work team with the following exhortation: "He who cannot find poor peasants in the village doesn't deserve to eat!" What follows is predictable; the primary task is taken to be the creation of Poor and Hired Peasants' Leagues, which in turn are persuaded to take a lead in the Reclassification of Classes sessions. Hinton's description of these sessions is very vivid, and one is agreeably surprised at finding 'sociology' come alive; study of social change need not always be a mass of sterile statistics. What is even more interesting is the change that comes over the American observer himself. It is difficult to imagine anyone more completely alien in every aspect in a village in North China than an American tractor technician. But the process of a whole class consciously setting out to 'turn over' is so tremendous that even the observer becomes infected. In this case, the 'infection' might be, on the face of it, lice; but a far deeper transformation takes place in every member of the work team, Hinton included. The members are not always conscious of the change in themselves; it might be merely a subtle shift in the use of a personal pronoun, but still there it is. In the course of the sessions of reclassification, horrifying accounts are given, of families enduring a kind of life utterly unimaginable; the portrait that emerges of the family in rural China is one of total alienation; people like Chang Lao-pao and his wife, or Li Pao-yu and his brother, or the young girl Li Hsin-ai who has eloped with her cousin—these present in varying degrees stories of intense suffering and exploitation. The reclassification is completed by the end of March, but curiously enough, hardly any poor peasant claims to have *fanshened* to his satisfaction.

Evidently, since the 'Poor and Hired Peasant Line' was being followed, there was some advantage in retaining the classification of 'poor peasant'.

Two-Way Process

The first reclassification session is followed by the first *gate* held in the village, a session of open self-mutual criticism which a party member had to pass through. These sessions too are marked by very severe criticisms of various party cadres, which are followed by equally severe self-critical reports by those attacked. Man-hsi, the militiaman, for instance, engages in a kind of self-critical examination, which is both abject and arrogant. All the important party cadres present full self-critical reports, but the cumulative impact of these sessions, was, surprisingly enough, positive: "Truth, no matter how terrible, met with better response than evasion", though the lapses and faults confessed to by these party cadres hardly seem deserving of such an abject confession. During these eight days of hearing, most of the cadres who came before the *gate* passed, with the notable exception of Man-hsi; here again, as one reads the book, one is struck by the intense kind of mass involvement that characterised every phase of the Chinese revolution. The balance, of course, is delicate. In this case, for instance, clearly, the party was 'thrown to the people', as if affirming Mao Tse-tung's view that the true heroes are the masses, "while we (the party members, presumably) ourselves are often childish and ignorant; and without this understanding it is impossible to acquire even the most rudimentary knowledge". But the party is after all the vanguard of the working class, and it should lead, as well as be led. And throughout the Chinese revolution (and in fact, ever since then), the party is passing through this dialectical process of leading, and being led by the masses. This two-way process means, to quote Mao, "summing up the views of the masses, then taking the resulting ideas back to the masses, explaining and popularizing them until the masses embrace them as their own, stand up for

For FRONTIER contact

S. P. CHATTERJEE

Statesman Office

Steel Market

Durgapur-4

them, and translate them into action by way of testing their correctness. Then it is necessary once more to sum up the views of the masses and once again take the resulting ideas back to the masses so that the masses give them their wholehearted support . . . and so on, over and over again, so that each time these ideas emerge with greater correctness and become more vital and meaningful." (quoted by Hinton). But in Long Bow, clearly, criticism of the party cadres was too severe. The conference of all the work teams in 11 basic villages of Lucheng County, held over a period of ten days towards the end of April, clearly found the Long Bow peasants as well as the members of the work team guilty of "Left" deviation on two counts: first, on following the "Hired and Poor Peasant Line" to the exclusion of middle peasants; secondly, of following a line of "extreme equalitarianism" to the extent of faulting even sincere party cadres who might have momentarily strayed. The sessions in Lucheng are in the nature of a higher form of self-mutual criticism sessions, exclusively for the benefit of the members of the work teams. The result of this conference in which the "Educators are educated" is the adoption of a new line, rectifying the errors of the earlier line: Unite the Poor and Middle Peasants, against the Rich Peasants and the Landlords. One recognizes the correctness of the new approach even as it is being formulated, particularly in a country like China which is overwhelmingly an agricultural country. As Mao said: Depend on the Poor Peasants, Unite with the Middle Peasants, Join with the anti-feudal forces and destroy the feudal land system and institute the system of land to the tiller. The adoption of the new line brings along with it a new category of the peasants—the New Middle Peasant—i.e., the Poor Peasant who has *fanshened*. The work team is also criticised for the severe treatment meted out to the erring party cadres like Yu-lai and Wen-te; they are ordered to be set free, and face the *gate* like all the rest, confront an open session of public criticism and secure an opportunity to vindicate their behavi-

our. It is these two tasks—both involving radical shifts in 'line'—that the work team is occupied with on its return to Long Bow on May, 1948.

The fifth part of the work describes the way in which this task was accomplished by the work team, even though it had to face a lot of criticism from the villagers, and had to come to terms with discontented elements in the work team itself, who naturally felt that the County committee of the party had repudiated them for consistently following a line set by the County Committee itself. The second reclassification meeting does not present much of a problem; but the same is not the case with the second *gate*, and the problems regarding the public examinations of Yu-lai and his son seem insurmountable. Following the directive of the County Committee, these have all been set at liberty, and the villagers are all afraid of bringing any charges against them. Ultimately, it is Hsien-e, Yu-lai's daughter-in-law, who musters enough courage to come out in the open and expose her husband and her father-in-law; her story, exposing the sordid deeds of Yu-lai and Wen-te encourages others to speak out, and the old sins of the father and son catch up with them. Innocent people forced to wear 'Agents' caps', meekly enduring the beatings and 'rascal behaviour' of persons and afraid to protest because of the moral authority of the Communist Party behind them, now come out and speak. The arrogant party cadres are fully exposed, but the 'punishment' meted out to them is not over-severe. Bearing in mind the exhortations of the County Committee to carry the maximum number of people with them, Wen-te and Hung-er are recommended for enrolment in the special school for rejected cadres, and Yu-lai's case is deferred for consideration before the Village Peoples' Congress.

The establishment of a Village Peoples' Congress was the final step in the evolution of the peoples' government in the village. At the meeting of the work team members from eleven basic villages, instructions had been issued to proceed along a three-tier path. These, in outline, were:

(1) Establish a solid Poor Peasants' League and have the league membership classify the village; (2) Establish a strong Provisional Peasants' Association and have the members of the association classify the village again; (3) Establish a Village Congress and have the Congress classify the village for the third and final time. One can see the gradual enlargement of the village organisation—starting with the poor and hired peasants, then including the middle peasants, and finally including all sections of the village. The sixth part of the book presents what one might describe as a theoretical defence of the reversal of the 'Poor and Hired Peasants Line'; and the gradual broadening of the base of the representative bodies of the village. Many of the errors committed by the villagers of Long Bow are seen to be the result of a pursuit of a wrong policy of absolute equalitarianism. There is a second County Conference in Lucheng, during which Secretary Ch'en makes further self-critical reports; we can see now, with the advantage of hindsight, that almost contemporaneously with the changes that were taking place in Long Bow and thousands of similar villages in the liberated areas, Mao was sounding repeated warnings against a "Left" deviation, a very natural swing on the part of a people who had suddenly found themselves free. The most important utterance of Mao against these deviations is the speech made to the cadre of the Shansi-Suiyuan area on April 1, 1948. In the light of that speech, and in the light of the experience acquired during the working in the villages during the past months, the County Committee concludes that the poor peasants can be taken to have, in the main, *fanshened*; and one may add, that though the usual kind of self-critical remarks are made about the 'errors' committed by the cadres, and about the excessive emphasis laid on the poor peasants, the attainment of *fanshen* on the part of the majority of the poor peasants was itself a consequence of following the so-called 'sectarian' line. Abuses no doubt were committed; there was an excess of attack on rich peasants and land-

lords, and even the middle peasants were perhaps alienated. But out of all this 'ultra poor peasant line', some good came out.

Following the Maoist method, it was now time to pause and bend a little in the opposite direction. Thus, the importance of the final *gate*, and the final classification of the village by the Village Peoples' Congress. This body, unlike the Poor and Hired Peasants' League, the Peasants' Association, The Women's Association and the Communist Party branch in the village—all having a restricted membership—would include *all* classes of the village. Its classification of the village, in a sense, would be a classification of itself, and would provide the final and conclusive proof if all the earlier 'turning overs' have been in vain, or if they have had any impact on the consciousness of the villagers.

The villagers, the party, the work team, all these are indeed confronted with a task which seems quite insurmountable. The poor people should not merely be convinced that they, in the main, *fanshened*, but the middle peasants whose lands and goods have been unjustly confiscated are to be restituted. It is indeed a ticklish problem, and the problem is not made any easier by the arrival of a new leader of the work team, Ts'ai-chin, one who has himself suffered during the "settling of accounts" period, having had a brother beaten to death, mother and grandfather driven away, having had his whole family destroyed as a result of "Left extremism". Under his (if somewhat temperamental and difficult) guidance, the final *gate* is managed; the final classification of the village is undertaken by the Village Peoples' Congress elected democratically. The effectiveness of the political education the villagers have acquired is seen in the reaction of the

of the widow Yu Pu-ho, who has been classed as a rich peasant in the final classification, and whose excess goods they decide to seize. The widow proving herself very wily, has not merely hidden away all her treasures; she has even altered all her fine dresses to fit her daughter, who, even though classed as a poor peasant on account of her being married to one, still shields her mother. Such behaviour during the early days of the revolution would have surely resulted in a good beating; but now, even Manhsi, impulsive and angry though he is at the way the widow has succeeded in tricking the villagers, controls himself and is content merely to curse. To that extent, as Ch'i Yun says, the raid on the widow's house has been 'a good night's work'. The chapter describing the return of goods illegally seized (mainly from the middle peasants) shows how it was the gesture of the return that was more important than the goods themselves; the latter together did not amount group of villagers that raid the house to more than about \$700 worth of goods. For instance, there is the question of a sweater, a sweater seized by Shen Yu-hsin, a militiaman, from the dead body of Shen Chi-mei, the head of the puppet administration of Long Bow, who was executed following the liberation. It is a trifle, and there are suggestions that Yu-hsin keep the sweater; but others disagree. It was 'public property' and had to be returned. There is an incredibly complicated discussion about a cart seized illegally by Chang-hsun; he had 'bought' it for an absurdly cheap price, from among the goods of Wang Lai-hsun seized during the 'settling of the accounts' period. Even this question is democratically resolved, with Chang-hsun agreeing to pay back the profit he had made on the deal, plus two more hundredweights for the cart itself. "From millions of just such small incidents, the fabric of political life in Revolutionary China was being woven".

Fanshen, notwithstanding the exhortation of the Secretary of the Lucheng County Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, was not nearly complete; for *fanshen* did not

merely consist of a shift in the pattern of landholding among the villagers of Long Bow. No doubt land ownership patterns *did* change over the period, and changed significantly, as the table presented by Hinton clearly shows. But the true 'turning over' was a process that went somewhat deeper. Land reform was important, not because it dignified a poor peasant with the new nomenclature of 'new middle peasant', but because, as Hinton says, "land reform, by creating basic equality among rural procedures, presented a choice of roads; private enterprise on the land leading to capitalism, or collective enterprise on the land leading to Communism". The key, here as elsewhere, was of course, production, and the method in which this production was going to be organised. The road the peasants of Long Bow were going to take was not yet clearly recognisable; what was clear was that feudalism had been overthrown. But the immediate reaction to the defeat of feudalism was a swing to an extreme "left" position, with a rather naive belief that now that the landlords had been overthrown, one could have instant communism. Here, the Communist Party itself had to play the role of the rectifier. "Without the Communist Party the poor peasants might well have driven all their more prosperous allies into the arms of their enemies and rejected, perhaps even destroyed, the most militant, the most devoted, and the most able leaders they had produced. Such mistakes could only have broken the peasant population into factions based on kinship, religious affiliation, personal influence, and gang loyalty, and could only have led to never-ending feuds between these factions. In the end, the peasants could well have gone down to defeat betrayed by a vision of justice and a programme of action that was impossible of fulfilment in an economy of scarcity. The vision: absolute equality; the programme: extreme levelling; the result: complete restoration of gentry rule." That the problem is still to be resolved, that the debate, the dialectical process, is still continuing, has been made evident in the events of the Cultural Revolution, though of

FRONTIER is available from

DURGAPADA DAS

Basirhat R. N. Road

24-Parganas

course, the upheavals of the Cultural Revolution involve many other debates as well, apart from those on the land question (or more precisely, the agriculture question).

The New Society

But what is *fanshen*? In the final analysis, a person who really *fanshen-ed*, not merely became a 'new middle peasant' from being a 'poor peasant'; he transformed himself from being a passive victim of natural and social forces into an active builder of a new world. *Fanshen* was a change both outward and inward. At the level of the individual, the community and the country, it meant the emergence of the New Man, the New Society. That is why one has to reiterate that *fanshen* is not yet complete; certainly, the villagers of Long Bow took the first steps toward that final achievement; they did *fanshen*, in a limited way. They set a model too, like villagers in thousands of other villages in the liberated areas, to the other peasants in other areas of China, who too were on the point of being liberated. But the 'turning over' was a continuous process. You throw off the imperialist yoke, form poor peasant's leagues, classify your community, settle accounts with the landlords and oppressors, seize and redistribute goods, in short, you *fanshen*. But then? In other words, even such a thoroughgoing *fanshen* as was achieved in Long Bow, as Hinton himself would be the first to grant, is but a stage in the great adventure of building a communist society, in creating a New Man and a new consciousness.

II

Apart from being an extremely vivid sociological and political document, has *Fanshen* got any special relevance for us in India, today? To be more exact, how exactly one should understand and apply the slogan: China's Chairman is Our Chairman; China's Path is Our Path? I leave the first part of the slogan, a self-explanatory plea for proletarian internationalism. But how is China's path our path? Could it be? Are the conditions in rural India similar

to those in rural China? One need not seek for any kind of mechanical similarity; but is the system of exploitation similar? Are the rural methods of production in India similar to those described in *Fanshen*? How about the structure of village society in India? The village organisations? Who constitute our rural élite? And most important, Hinton describes a rural China which was barely in contact with distant villages, let alone the capital; the average villager was hardly conscious of the outside world. It is now about 25 years since the villagers of Long Bow *fanshened*. The questions are of course very complicated, and one of the basic reasons for the major ideological splits in the Indian Left are the differing assessments of the Indian situation at the present, the nature of the Indian ruling élite, its link-up with domestic and foreign monopoly capital &c. The issues are being debated in exhausting detail among the Left groups, and I don't even consider myself competent to contribute to the debate. Instead, what I would like to do here is to point out some aspects of the similarity between the Chinese situation described by Hinton, and the Indian rural scene, which struck me as I read the book. First, the system of exploitation that Hinton describes is astonishingly similar to that prevailing in the rural areas of our country. The perpetuation of the offices of village government in one or two families, the importance of religious and 'cultural' institutions as instruments of exploitation, the stranglehold of moneylenders on villagers, leading inevitably to certain land pauperisation—these aspects of rural exploitation in China are all present in our own rural areas, present even to this day, after the 'land reforms', after the commercialisation of agriculture, after the 'green revolution', and are going to remain even after a lot of noise is made about land-grabbing. (Instances are numerous in our villages of landless peasants who acquired about one or two bighas of land as a result of some land reform measure, only to lose it five years later, not due to any fault of their own, but because the methods

of rural agricultural production would just make it impossible for a poor peasant to hold on and cultivate his land over the years). It is common knowledge that the 'prosperity' in the rural areas of the country has not reached the bottom layers; on the contrary, land pauperisation, particularly of those poor peasants who hold less than one acre of land, is not merely going on, but, given the conditions prevailing in the countryside (lack of capital to buy good implements, animals, seeds and manure, not to speak of having sufficient labour to work), is inevitable. The use of religious and 'cultural' organisations to exploit the poor is another phenomenon that has striking parallels in our rural scene; but superstition seems to be more strongly entrenched here (than it was in China. On the women question too, Hinton's book provides striking parallels with the Indian situation; if anything, the woman in village India is even more oppressed than she seemed to be in Long Bow. The differences too need to be noted; Long Bow was so 'remote' that the average peasant in 1945 was hardly aware of anything outside his little closed world. The same thing cannot be said of the majority of our villages; our villagers might be 'mentally' isolated, but physically they are assuredly not. The differences between the 'minority' question in China and India should also be evident. Then there are the symbolic democratic participation rituals that our villagers periodically go through, an exercise the villagers of Long Bow were total strangers to, till liberation. But the most important difference, it seems to me, is that there was a Communist Party, tempered and steeled through long experience of revolutionary warfare against alien and indigenous reaction. Arm-

NOTICE

Articles cannot be returned unless accompanied by return postage.

Business Manager
Frontier

ed struggle was not merely a theoretical possibility to be debated endlessly.

"China's Path is Our Path": on reading *Fanshen*, one realises how inevitably China's path *has* to be our path. Not because Indians are all going to be Sinophiles; not certainly because the Chinese are going to come down the mountains. It is because China has been the first (and only) country from among the so-called underdeveloped countries of the world which has been able to re-order land relationships among its people, its agricultural production, along lines which, apart from being based on sound Marxist doctrines, have also proved themselves supremely effective. (Only the hopelessly naive still predict the collapse of China's economy). One may have differences of opinion on China's international policy, on whether it is being consistent in its support of revolutions in other areas of the 'underdeveloped' world, whether it practises genuine proletarian internationalism &c. But there cannot be any two opinions on the way the Chinese people have ordered their economy. With the crisis in our country getting more and more acute, the relevance of a peoples' experience in 'turning over', in making a new world for themselves which is consistent with their dignity and self-respect, would become increasingly evident. But what about the strong, militant, Communist Party, under whose correct leadership the peasants of Long Bow *fanshened*? I better leave the question of its Indian counterpart (*which is its Indian counterpart?*) alone. As it is, this 'review' has taken enough space.

Our agent at Alipurduar

Mr SUBHAS BOSE,

Newtown Library,

Alipurduar, P.O.,

Dist. Jalpaiguri,

West Bengal.

Meet Academician Sakharov

DILIP GHOSE ROY

SOVIET academician Andrei D. Sakharov, has produced a little book titled *Progress, Co-existence and Intellectual Freedom* (New York Times book, W. W. Norton & Co. Inc.), in which he has advanced Marxism one step further by treating even socialism as a commodity for sale in the market. He asserts that the millionaires in the USA are no serious burdens for her economy, says that revolutions in the advanced capitalist countries are not in the interest of the working class, advises the poorer nations not to organize agrarian revolutions but to depend completely on the assistance of the advanced countries, says that to stop thermo-nuclear war, one camp should submit completely to the victory of the other and utters thousands of other such brilliant tidbits.

Is it merely an accident that Soviet academician Sakharov's estimates coincide with those of the Russian Mensheviks and profoundly anti-communist scholars, and of the Yankee culturists? Is it merely naivete that he rejoices in finding unanimity between his views and those of his American fellow-travellers?

Sakharov sees the whole world in grave danger, the main danger arising chiefly from thermonuclear war, from racism, militarism, dogmatism, demagogy and oppression (by which he refers mainly to Stalin and Mao) from the cruel, brutal, hypocritical, egotistical and power grabbing police dictatorships by which he categorically means regimes of Stalin and Mao, from hunger and overpopulation and from the threat to intellectual freedom. Then he makes some prognostications, devotes considerable energy in praising the imperialists and their achievements and tries to bolster up the capitalistic system. Finally he presents a banal and out and out reactionary thesis of convergence and advises us on what is to be done.

He says that in order to avoid ther-

monuclear war one side should succumb to the complete victory of the other but never takes pains to tell his reader why is this possibility of the war and who possibly can launch it. He rejects crudely the basic tenet of socialism about war—the famous enunciation of Clausewitz that war is the continuation of politics by other means, which tenet has been revered by Marx, Engels, Lenin and all the stalwarts of scientific socialism. That is why he dares not speak out that so long as imperialism exists, so long as class oppression exists, the possibility of war exists also. This possibility of starting war by the imperialists has been deepened by the revisionist-renegade cliques being in power in the in a part of the "Socialist" world of today. But war is war. Whether it is war by handfighting, by bows and arrows, by mortars and bombs or by thermonuclear weapons, the basic character of war does not change. What changes is the technique and the intensity of devastation. Thus just coining a verbose and fearful word of "universal suicide" in place of thermonuclear war does not change the basic character of war, does not change the socio-economic objective conditions leading to the launching of war. War can really be prevented only by the strong mobilization of all peace-loving forces of the world, only by strengthening the hands of all the anti-imperialist forces, only by organizing the active and militant opposition of the people. It is the people and not the weapon that decides the war. But Sakharov does not have any faith in the strength of the people and advises us to succumb to the imperialist threats. His blunt rejection of Clausewitz leads to deliberate non-discrimination between just and unjust wars and obviously he wants us to counterbalance the U.S. imperialistic militarism, which he calls 'doctrine of strategic escalation', with

the strategy of peaceful co-existence. I ask anybody whether it makes any sense to confront the napalm loaded Thunderbirds, Phantoms and B-52s with folded arms and divine smiles.

Sakharov is not shy of praising the heaven of U.S. imperialism. He gives us as good a picture as possible about the beauties of this heaven, tells us not to destroy it, tells us to patch up all differences with it, to adjust to it in a thousand ways and if necessary, even to allow it to have complete victory. And this he does in the name of preventing thermonuclear war: "...any preaching of the incompatibility of world ideologies... is madness and crime." But you are permitted to commit such crime and madness if and only if imperialism, especially U.S. imperialism, is not involved. Therefore, as soon as the question of Stalin and Mao comes, as soon as China gets involved, Sakharov manifests his real self. He comes out venomously against Stalin and Mao. In a sort of megalomaniac vengeance against them Sakharov forgets his own preaching and with unlimited zeal, preaches the incompatibility of the ideologies of Stalin and Mao. He completely forgets the sufferings of thermonuclear war, that such a war is to be avoided and calls for a worldwide mobilization through the UN (which definitely includes U.S. imperialists), to intervene inside nuclearpowered China. Thus in case of U.S. imperialism we are called to submit. But for China, we will have to crush her.

Commodity

Let us now see how this 'socialist' denounces socialism.

First and foremost, he treats socialism as a commodity—for sale in the world market. He tells us that in economic and technological progress, America is the leader, pioneer, breaking the ice and the Soviet Union the tail-dragger, lagging behind, following in the footsteps of the United States. And Harrison Salisbury, who has annotated the book, immediately comes up to say that this analy-

sis "provides a dramatic and realistic analogy to the actual course of technological and economic development of the two countries". Thus the entire achievement of the great Russian revolution is made to show like just tail-dragging, just following the footsteps of America. This is a sheer mockery of the heroic achievements of the Soviet people, mockery of Lenin himself and the maximum possible insult ever hurled at the Soviet Union even by the bourgeoisie themselves. Anybody who is a little familiar with the world events of the thirties and forties, only if he will agree to tell us just even a fraction of the truth, cannot but admit how the world imperialists, with the USA as the gang leader, trembled at the sight of the gigantic strides of Bolshevik construction in the Soviet Union, how Stalin's 'first five-year plan in four years' made them almost insomniac. Though for the past fifteen years, the Kremlin has been trying its best to curb that socialist dynamism, still the American imperialists are highly fearful of Soviet economic and technological progress. But Sakharov goes on barking—"There are no grounds for asserting...that the capitalist mode of production leads the economy into a blind alley or that it is obviously inferior to the socialist mode in labor productivity, and ...that capitalism always leads to absolute impoverishment of the working class." This is not all. Some of the other representative samples are—"...there is a real economic progress in the United States and other capitalist countries, the capitalists are actually using the social principles of socialism and there has been a real improvement in the position of the working people." In this year of 1970, one need not enter at all into serious arguments against these barkings. One needs to look at the rampant inflation in the USA, how even the imperialist press publishes almost every day the decline in the purchasing power of the working people, how the prices of the essential commodi-

ties are soaring sky high, how the index of living is increasing every day, every week, every month. One needs to look at how poverty, unemployment, malnutrition and starvation are casting their deadly shadows over the so-called richest society of the United States. One need just to look at capitalist Britain, drooping down with rampant poverty, or at France tattered by the strikes of the working people for better living. The world has not forgotten how the dollar empire almost collapsed two years ago the shock of which instead of dying down, is becoming more intensified. 'Using the social principles of socialism?' Just imagine General Dynamics, N.A. Rockwell, Lockheed Corporation, Bangor Punta or Dow Chemical who specialize in making weaponry for killing millions of people both inside and outside the country, using the principles of socialism? When the Americans themselves are protesting against these, our socialist Sakharov is coming with great zeal to their defence.

Our academician says, everything we want we can get from capitalism. We need only make socialism and the working class apply little pressure. So the solution is very simple. Just apply a little pressure on Dow Chemical, N.A. Rockwell or General Dynamics and on the American ruling class and at once they withdraw from South-East Asia, at once they stop all their manoeuvres, at once they give the working class the proprietorship of the means of production, at once the Krupps, Rockefellers, Rothschilds, Morgans, Fords become saintly and at once imperialism becomes a force divine.

Convergence

This pressure applier says that the capitalist world gave "birth to the socialist, but now the socialist world should not...destroy by force the ground from which it grew." That will be suicidal. You are not allowed to destroy the ground from which you grew. But you are allowed to destroy the ground which you have created. So your sacred duty is to

destroy Mao's regime. In that case it cannot be suicidal. If not destroy the capitalist ground then what should we do? Sakharov says we should ennoble it and ultimately merge with it, because there is no qualitative difference in the structures of the two societies of the USA and the USSR. Of course not. If American imperialists are practising the social principles of socialism and the Russian renegades are practising the capitalistic principles of capitalism, then how can there be any difference? Therefore come his preachings of peaceful competition, co-existence, give-and-take policy between imperialism and socialism, which stuff ultimately culminates into his theory of convergence. Out of it comes the motto that revolution should not come in the advanced capitalist countries in which case it will always be against the interests of the working people.

Sakharov puts the entire blame of the Negro problem squarely on the racism and egotism of the white workers, which problem, he says is not a class but a racial problem. But he forgives the Yankee rulers by saying that "the ruling group in the United States is interested in solving the problem." This is a direct insult to the American working class. His servility to the millionaires of the USA is so much that he does not have the least hesitation to say that "the presence of millionaires in the United States is not a serious economic burden..." I ask him how can a man become a millionaire without pauperizing millions? On the question of hunger and overpopulation,

he talks exactly like a man-in-the-street duped by capitalist propaganda. He ascribes overpopulation and hunger to "absence of technical-economic reserves, competent officials, and cultural skills, social backwardness, a high birthrate" He remarks very easily and casually that the poorer nations have no cultural skills. As answers to the problem he cites wide application of fertilizers, better irrigation and farm technology, using oceanic resources and perfecting the production of synthetic foods, primarily amino-acids. These suggestions of this amino-acidic academician will only encourage some other Rockefeller, Birla or Tata to produce some more amino-acids and make some more profit out of that. If overpopulation is the real reason for hunger and poverty, then why doesn't it hit all the strata of society in the same way? Why then a section of society always remains independent and richer while the largest cross-section always falls victim and becomes impoverished every day? Does this learned man know that in the poorer parts of the world (as he says), anybody can have enough foodstuff if only he has the capacity to pay the fantastic blackmarket price? This lumpen socialist puts the blame squarely on the people for the absence of cultural skills and rotten reactionary stuff like that while he does not utter even a single word about the capitalists, the feudal landlords, the hoarders, the profiteers and the blackmarketeers that create the problem. He never lets us know that a slave cannot have any interest in increasing the production of his master, that production cannot be increased until the proprietorship of the means of production is equalised.

He says that birth rate is high in the poorer nations. Why is it a fact that the poorer nations only reproduce rapidly and not the rich ones? Are the peoples of the poorer nations more uncultured, more uncivilised and have more animality than those of the richer nations? According to Sir Alexander Carr-Saunders, the African population has been stationary

for over long periods. Latin America also had such long stagnations. In India, as Colin Clark says, the population has been much the same in the 4th century B.C., 17th A.D. and the early parts of the 19th century. Though in more than past 100 years she had an increase of more than three times, the USA had it more than ten times and England more than four times during the same period. According to Sir A. Carr-Saunders and Professor Wilcox, the world's two most careful demographers, the Chinese population has been stationary since 1850 and still now, large cultivable areas are uninhabited in China. According to Clark, the most surprising thing is that only 95 million people inhabit 1,250,000 square miles of cultivable land in South East Asia, 210 million people on 6 million square miles in Africa, 170 million on 7 million square miles of Latin America as compared to 175 million on 2,275,000 square miles of the United States of America and Canada. According to Simon Kuznets, for the most of the older countries like India, China, and those of the Middle East, the rate of growth of population over the last century to century and a half has been much lower compared to the developed countries of today and that during the first half of the 20th century, this has not been any significantly higher than that in the older European nations. According to Clark, the world of today with 24 million square miles of cultivable area can sustain 12,000 million people as opposed to 2300 million as it supports now.* And Sakharov himself has confessed that population has increased by 50% whereas food production has been up 70%.

He advises the poorer nations not to head towards agrarian revolutions, but to be solely dependent on the assistance of the richer nations. In

* For the above data of Colin Clark and Simon Kuznets, reference is made to the book "The Economics of Underdevelopment", edited by A. N. Agarwal and S. P. Singh, Oxford University Press, 1969.

For FRONTIER readers in

West India can contact

S. D. CHANDAVARKAR

10, Kanara House

Mogal Lane, Mahim

Bombay-16

the same page he says that the psychology of the American citizens should be changed so that they support "their government—to change the economy, technology, and level of living of billions of people." Doesn't this clearly say that the American government is trying to change the economy etc. while it is the American citizens whose psychology does not support these efforts of their government?

The funniest remark which he makes is that such situations if continued, will lead to the peoples' hatred against communism. It is impossible for one to understand the great underlying significance of such a divine philosophy. The capitalists, the blackmarketeers, the profiteers, the landlords who create the problem will not take the wrath of the people. The wrath instead will fall (only this man knows how) on the communists who speak against these bugs.

His underestimation of the poorer nations is so much that he is sure that they cannot fulfill his suggestions (that is, producing those amino-acids etc.) and almost in a hysterical zeal to exaggerate the catastrophe (which is completely his own offspring) he predicts the date of tragedy to be 1975-1980. His zeal is so much that even Harrison Salisbury retracts and cannot help saying that it is a little earlier. Such is our academician Andrei D. Sakharov who calls himself "profoundly socialist".

Leftist-Leninist

For poor socialism, he predicts multi-party system and the ultimate victory of 'idealistic forces of leftist-Leninist communists' (that is the Sakharovites) and leftist Westerners (soon we will see who they are) and defeat for the forces of Stalinism and Maoism (that is racism, militarism, dogmatism and demagoguery.) Such is the fate which our academician has reserved for socialism. But for capitalism, especially the United States, he has naturally prescribed a much better lot. There the leftist reformist wings of the bourgeoisie will follow the policy of rapprochement with socialism. These are our Sakharov's

leftist westerners—the counterpart of the realistic leftist-Leninist communists in the socialist countries. These leftist westerners are mentioned specifically by Sakharov. They are (don't laugh) Cyrus Eaton, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and especially President John F. Kennedy. Quite naturally, with the help of such realistic leftist-Leninist communists and leftist westerners, it will be easy to "attack the forces of racism and militarism" (that is of Mao and Stalin). Then the USA and the USSR will overcome all alienations (for Sakharov's knowledge, they won't have to because there is no such alienation between our Sakharovites and the leftist westerners) and will then start solving 'the problem of saving the poor half of the world' which means they will start producing more amino-acids (proteins, fats and carbohydrates have been added this time). Finally Sakharov's miracle-making 'socialist convergence' will eliminate all the differences between the structures of the two societies which will promote progress, co-existence, intellectual freedom, will create world government and smoothen out national contradictions.

Our academician is a great humanitarian and so must show us the way out. Here are the samples: The USA and the USSR should base their international policies on some universally accepted unified and general principles. Observance of the "Declaration of the Rights of Man" by all governments must be checked by an international control, that is, simply the United Nations. All governments should strive towards mutual help in economic etc. problems, should eliminate painlessly all domestic and international difficulties and should try to prevent the sharpening of international tensions. Peaceful competition and co-existence must be practised as usual. Also Stalin must be exposed and because our hero happens to be a scientist, a law of geohygiene has also been added. Such are Sakharov's solutions.

He knows very well that these should's and must-be's cannot happen.

Does it need much pedantry to understand that it is impossible for the American imperialist government and the North Vietnamese government to act for their mutual benefit? So long as classes and hence class oppression exists, the class interests remain irreconcilable. Does it need much knowledge and learning to understand that in such a classified world, the governments in one way or other represent some definite interests of some definite class or classes? The United Nations? It is an organisation which is almost governed by the United States of America and which refuses to recognise the legitimate membership of the People's Republic of China. Does he think that we have forgotten the role of the UN in the Congo and in Korea? Who doesn't know the composition, structure, and hence the interests the UN serves? He invites the UN, which includes, the USA, to supervise the observance of the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Does he know that their own American Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights of the American Constitution have never been ratified by the US Senate, nor ever submitted to that body by the State Department? Sakharov's intention is very clear. He is not at all interested in any betterment of the world. His main purpose is to use the UN to assign clear-cut powers to Russia and the USA to intervene and destroy China so that the act may get an international colour.

All these naïveté and saintliness melt away instantaneously as soon as Sakharov comes out against Stalin and Mao Tse-tung. He equates Stalin's and Mao's regimes with those of Hitler, of the racists, fascists, militarists and oppressors. He does not speak about the exposure of Hitler, Mussolini, Tojo, Truman, Johnson, or any of their flock. He wants Stalin to be exposed. If he has spoken one word against the fascists, racists and militarists, he has drowned Stalin and Mao with condemnations. He clearly says that Stalin is more dangerous than Hitler. In his denouncements and condemnations

of Stalin, he has gone to such an extent that even Salisbury has been taken aback. In his zoological type (we have borrowed the word from Sakharov himself) of anti-Stalinism, he has quoted such a fantastic figure of atrocities committed by Stalin that even anti-Stalinist Salisbury also had to protest. In speaking against Mao, his enthusiasm is so much that he does not care for facts at all and says that the red guards jumped with joy at the public executions of ideological enemies of Mao. This is a blatant lie and completely his own invention. No such public execution has ever occurred in China and nobody has ever proved it. Even his beneficiaries, the American imperialists have also failed to prove so. His accusations and condemnations of Stalin and Mao are so baseless, so factless, and so hysterical that it seems to be useless to talk against those.

He speaks about the 'myth' of the sharpening of class struggle by which he means that Stalin spread this myth. The sharpening of class struggle, besides being a fundamental tenet of Leninism, has been and will continue to be one of the strongest objective realities. We will not go into serious discussions about the theory of sharpening of class struggle. This seriousness Sakharov does not deserve. We will rather refer our reader to Lenin's *State and Revolution*. We will only say that if sharpening of class struggle is a myth, then the whole of Soviet history is a myth, the world wars are myths, the Chinese revolution is a myth. The world-wide liberation struggles are all myths. According to Sakharov's own contention, the whole human race faces destruction from the weaponry of unprecedented destructive power and as days go on, this power also goes on increasing. How can then this class struggle be not sharpened against the imperialists? He speaks about 'the exaggeration of the contradiction with capitalism in the Soviet Union, by which he wants to say that it was Stalin who exaggerated this. After all that has happened

in the Soviet Union during World War II, after all the unprecedented devastation of Soviet land, after such incidents like the nine-hundred day siege of Leningrad, and Hitler's mobilization in the battle of Stalingrad, only criminals like Sakharov can assert that the contradiction was an exaggeration. Was he blind when the capitalist USA, Britain, and France were displaying their most illuminating opportunistic betrayals of the Soviet Union? These conceptions of the myth of sharpening of class struggle and exaggeration of the contradictions with capitalism (which is a result of his zoological anti-Stalinism) naturally lead him to discard very casually any imperialist threat on the earth. To him destruction of China is much more important than combating the imperialist threats which do not exist in his opinion. A real sample is "Actually the crimes of the Maoists against human rights have gone much too far, and the Chinese people are now in much greater need of help from the world's democratic forces (that is the USA... our comment) to defend their rights than... for the purpose of combating the so-called imperialist peril somewhere in Africa or in Latin America or in the Middle East". Note specifically the words 'so-called' and 'somewhere'. May I remind Sakharov of what happened in Pinkville? Does it make any sense not to consider the indiscriminate shooting of 567 unarmed women, children and old men in twenty minutes an imperialist peril? Do the various Green Beret murders and innumerable other killings of 300,000 unarmed civilian Vietnamese people by the American fascists not prove in reality the so-called imperialist peril? Does this peril remain so-called and somewhere when in Vietnam men are dropped to be killed from helicopters, when bodies of children are found burnt to death by cigarette burns, when knives are penetrated into the bellies of healthy living young men, when thousands of girls are ravished and unarmed innocent people are shot indiscriminately?

**THE HALF-CLAD TRIBALS OF
EASTERN INDIA**

by Neville A. Watts
Rs. 30.00

**AMERICAN ATTITUDE AND
POLICY TO THE NATIONALIST
MOVEMENT IN CHINA
(1911-1921)**

by Dr. Nemaï Sadhan Bose
Rs. 35.00

**FOREIGN POLICIES IN SOUTH
ASIA**

General Editor: Dr. S. P. Verma
Rs. 40.00

**SLENDER WAS THE THREAD:
Kashmir Confrontation, 1947-48**

by Lt. Gen. L. P. Sen
Rs. 27.50

POLITICS IN INDIA

by Rajni Kothari
Rs. 30.00

**URBANIZATION AND SOCIAL
CHANGE**

**A Study of a Rural Community on
the Metropolitan Fringe**

by M. S. A. Rao
Rs. 25.00

**THE RURAL ELITE IN A
DEVELOPING SOCIETY**

by V. M. Sirsikar
About Rs. 20.00

**DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL
CHANGE IN VILLAGE INDIA**

A Case-study

by A. H. Somjee
Rs. 20.00

ORIENT LONGMANS LTD

17 Chittaranjan Avenue,
CALCUTTA-13.

BOMBAY MADRAS NEW DELHI

A Note On Gramsci

REGIS DEBRAY

(This article was sent by Regis Debray to a Cuban magazine from his prison cell in Camiri, Bolivia. It was originally written in French. We received the article from Prensa Latina).

GRAMSCI'S historicism can turn on him in the sense that he can himself be the object of a limitative-historical analysis. He is not comprehensible without knowing what he opposed, that is, his historical horizon. He essentially combats "social-democratic" and Bukharinist mechanicism, the confusion of the natural sciences with the historical sciences (hence his anti-Engels, anti-scientific aspect, etc.).

What was the principal danger? The principal confusion against which and in relation to which Marxism ought to be defined and distinguished? The definition of the singularity, that is, the true essence of a doctrine or theory is not done abstractly: it is an active and reactive task: to define is to distinguish, that is, separate what it is you are defining from its historic proximity, from its affiliations, from threatening kinship. Gramsci's idea was to conquer Marxism on the basis of the mechanistic materialism of the 18th century. He thus wages a combat, his theoretical work is in essence polemical, just as his role as a militant rests on his theoretical work. It is not a question of justifying the theoretical reflections of Gramsci in so far as they may be surprising, because of his role as a committed militant, as does George Cogniot in Morceaux Choisis (selected passages). He is constantly led to defend Gramsci against himself, to "moderate" him the way people calm down an excited person in the midst of a tumult. In fact there is no theoretical analysis that is not polemical in essence—the "committed" form of criticism—just as Marx constructed *Capital* on the basis of a criticism of the political economy of Adam Smith, Ricardo and Say. Gramsci is interesting because he does

not deceive nor does he claim a scholastic, academic or scientific "objectivity". He lays his cards on the table; he accepts theoretically the need for open polemic. He wages this combat, taking, as a starting point (that is, with the help of) Croce, Sorel, de Man, — above all Croce—whose importance he overestimates. For us this overestimation is in itself a historical datum, the sign of the times. But regardless of his limitations, his great merit is that he took as the strategic point of his analyses what constitutes the basic problem and the decisive place, the unity, the line of the fusion of theory and practice. Gramsci radically opposes the cut. He is the man who asks how theory can pass over into effective history; and anyone who is an effective militant and believes he is carrying out a revolutionary action must ask the question about the union of history and philosophy.

Union

(a) *in the political-revolutionary form:*

The unity of "spontaneity" and the "conscious leadership" (of the Turin movement) of the Party and the masses, of the leaders and the rank and file members (p. 338): formidable for the May movement. Most not be condemned without giving it a direction, that is, raising it. The Party-education-intellectual-collective (or the denied contradiction: the intellectual is the individual).

(b) *in its theoretical aspect:*

"The modern thesis can be in opposition to the spontaneous sentiments of the masses" = "as a quantitative difference, not one of quality." Marxism branches out from common sense: it improves on it and retakes it.

(c) *in the cultural aspect:*

"The intellectuals" in reference to whom the criticism is; do they or do they not join with the rising

masses: if they do they are "organic", if not, artificial.

(d) *in the artistic aspect:*

Popular literature. How does the union between "great literature" and the people take place? Under what form can a people-nation gain access to the literature of the elite?

Hence the great attention paid to the historical-national reality, which is inseparable from theoretical reality. Marxism must be born from an historical implantation and retake a tradition, under its incorporated form. Just as in the form of theory, it must "translate" concrete life. (P. 339). "A historical-political, scholastic and academic conception—dualism is the expression of passivity."

It is historically correct.

Translate common sense into philosophy or incorporate (Marxist) philosophy into common sense: the two key words.

The problem of passing: translation and transformation. At the same time. Besides we have an extraordinary historical advantage over Gramsci. Gramsci was unable to witness the *passage* from Marxism to a concrete historical society. He could not measure the consequences of this for either Marxism or Russian society. Besides, we have fifty years of fabulous historical experimentation—what happens to a theory when it has already become the official ideology of a certain number of States? Or even, what happens to a culture when it has incorporated a "scientific" theory? etc....

On this point, I verify: Marxism has still not reflected its own incorporation into history. Socialism has become a historical, social and cultural reality for a third of the world's population, the "countries with a socialist system," the former socialist camp.

This half century constitutes a history, which has produced a result: This history, and consequently its result, is complex: it is not the expression of a simple principle on the surface, there are levels, inequalities, contradictions (between these levels both inside a country and between different countries; economic, cultural, and political contradictions. But the fact of complexity means

simply that a complex analysis is required, and not that it is unnecessary to make any analysis.

Moreover, this socialist "realisation" (history-result) has not been the object of a "Marxist" analysis. For different reasons:

(a) Marxism is not the analysis of socialism, but of the capitalist system. This gap is specially noteworthy in the economic sphere: the desperation of the socialist economist painfully seeking points of reference in Marx (*Gotha Programme*, the *Manifesto*, letters, etc.).

(b) The historic law of combat has made the task of defence take precedence over that of knowledge: it is first necessary to defend the socialist camp against its attackers so as to protect the proletariat from doubt, despair, etc. Hence there is apology, not analysis. Impossible to look at things from a distance. Moreover it is evident that analysis would reveal the fact of the contradiction inside socialism, which communism as mass ideology ideally makes disappear.

(c) We would come up against the use of "heterodox" notions: civilisation, culture, etc.

(d) The ideological backwardness of consciousness (like that of the sciences) in regard to its process-object.

Gramsci is at the same time a philosopher "and" a historian: (quantitatively the philosophical and historical notes are about even). But he is not a historian of philosophy—which would imply that philosophy has its own, intelligible-from-within, history, an anti-Gramscian idealist prejudice. The problem that he sets himself is that of the "and", he places himself in the relation cut, and far from taking the relation for granted once and for all, he poses it as a question, in the form of problems (plural) that are always new and singular, that is in the form of historical problems.

History as a Problem

History as a problem to be solved: this is his strength. His weakness, or to state it properly, his "historicist deviation", appears when he thinks of history as its own solution or as a self-solved problem: "Humanity only

sets itself problems that it can solve or the conditions for whose solution are already given..." etc. is the leit motif. Hence some insoluble logical difficulties: how and why historicism is not a simple historical relativism, or a few gaps: how and why science exists, etc.

Another objective limit of history that makes some of Gramsci's texts pathetic, but which in no way disqualifies them—they remain as witnesses, as milestones of a historic hope: the texts that announce, that expect from a passage from theory to practice a new civilisation, a new culture, a way of life and a scale of values radically different from those that prevailed in Western capitalism, which turned inorganic, decadent, dualist. As far as Europe is concerned (the USSR, the Peoples' Democracies), history has given the lie. The "Gramscian" task here is to seek the reasons, the modalities and the consequences of his denial. "Gramscian", because its concern is Europe, above all, the Italian and French intellectuals and working classes. Some of the political conditions have been assembled to undertake this task, especially in Italy. But the objective dynamics of the theoretical field (forces and counter-force will of necessity lead this criticism rightwards, to "revisionism"—to the extent that it refers only to Europe. Or at the other pole, if such a criticism take its points of reference in the myths of the third world or a non-European reality, it will be led towards a romantic and abstract left without roots or point of application in reality. Can this alternative be overcome, this dialogue of the deaf between two equally incorrect positions (let us say: the mass right and the ghetto left) but sufficiently astray to be able to justify each other and maintain each other reciprocally? Abiding by reality—what is happening at present in Paris or Rome—is just not done. I say "reality", that is, a critical phenomenon, restored to its conditions of real possibilities. The drama of "May 1968", which seems on its way to playing the same role in regard to leftism as did "June 1936" in regard to reformist communism: that is the role of a justifying

myth, the coin of scores of illusions. What is new in comparison with 1936 is the speed with which the phenomenon passed from history to myth, from the real to the symbolic. This is surely due to the progress of capitalism in the recovery of its arguments through books, newspapers, magazines, films, plays, etc. But principally May 1968 has filled a real need, a vast frustrated need felt by the revolutionary groups (and to a certain extent by the entire social body as a contrast): precisely an autochthono Myth, from within capitalism—taking into account that all myths reflect in an absolute way a relative breach. This need arose from the hiatus produced by the contrast between a local history that was gray, reformist, unhallowed and a brilliant but far-off revolutionary air (China, Vietnam, Cuba) with neither current able to meet the other in the terrain of the here and now. Disso-ciation has been filled in as far as it has the appearance of reality. "May 1968": the need is filled for a score of years.

Introducing Gramsci

PARESH CHATTOPADHYAY

TO the readers of *Frontier Régis* Debray, the author of the well-known *Revolution in the Revolution?* and prisoner of the U.S. satellite régime of Bolivia, requires no special introduction, but Antonio Gramsci does. In what follows we shall first give the barest elements of his life and then indicate some of his outstanding contributions to Marxism. The space at our disposal is, however, much too short for attempting anything like a satisfactory account of this great and many-sided man.

Antonio Gramsci, one of the founders and leaders of the Communist Party of Italy (PCI), was born in 1891. He studied history, philosophy and philology at the University of Turin where he came in close contact with the working class. In 1913 he became a member of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) and directed the

Turin edition of the central organ of the Party, *Avanti*, in which he denounced reformism. After the October Revolution in Russia Gramsci fought inside the PSI for the revolutionary line including the programme of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is at this time that he put into practice, in Turin, the institution of "factory councils"—workers' councils in factories with the programme of workers' control of production and their military as well as political preparation. (Gramsci's revolutionary programme of "factory councils" must not be confused with the revisionist programme of the so-called "workers' self-management" elaborated and put into practice by the present-day Yugoslav leadership). On May Day, 1919 Gramsci came out with the weekly *Ordine Nuovo* (New Order) as the organ of the factory councils. In April, 1920, he led the great political strike of the Turin workers, which was united with the strike of the agricultural labourers in the countryside. In May he came out with the political platform of the Turin section of the PSI—"Programme for the Renovation of the Socialist Party" which was highly praised by Lenin at the Second Congress of the Communist International. In 1921 along with Togliatti and others Gramsci broke with the opportunist majority of the PSI and founded the Communist Party of Italy. In 1922 he attended the Fourth Congress of the Comintern and was elected to its Executive Committee. The same year, it may be noted, the fascists under Mussolini captured power in Italy. After the PCI was banned Gramsci, who as the leader of the Communist group in the Chamber of Deputies was exposing the nature of fascism with great courage, was arrested by the fascist government in violation of the rule of parliamentary immunity. Even in the midst of physical and mental torture in prison he never lost contact with the Party which he continued to guide towards the formation of a broad anti-fascist popular front. At the same time he wrote in prison some of his best works, of which the most famous, perhaps, are *Historical Materialism and the Philosophy of Benedetto Croce*

and *Notes on Machiavelli, Politics and the Modern State*—all of them posthumously published. Under inhuman suffering Gramsci's health completely broke down and he died in prison in 1937.

A revolutionary militant, Gramsci was also a great theoretician of Marxism. In his theoretical battle he fought, on the one hand, against perhaps the most formidable bourgeois philosophy-ideology of contemporary Italy, the neo-Hegelian idealism of Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) and, on the other, against the mechanical and fatalist distortion of Marxism as manifested, mostly, in the theory and practice of the leaders of the Second International and their spiritual successors—the so-called "orthodox" Marxists.

His polemic against Croce basically stressed the anti-metaphysical side of the Marxist world view and identified the reality with the concrete, productive activity of man which alone satisfactorily solves the problem of the relation of man to man as well as that between man and nature. Gramsci fought vigorously against Croce's interpretation of historical materialism as a "simple canon of interpreting history", holding that it was vulgar and that Croce had reduced Marxism—or what Gramsci called *filosofia della prassi* (Philosophy of Praxis)—to "a form of economism".¹

Again "Orthodox" Marxists

In his fight against the "orthodox" Marxists Gramsci showed how certain passages in Marx's writings were interpreted by these gentlemen in a way that would justify the negation of all *revolutionary practice* on their part. The following two famous propositions from Marx came in for special mention: (1) "No social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed; and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself".²

¹ *Il Materialismo Storico e la Filosofia di Benedetto Croce* (Einaudi), p. 203.

² Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859).

(2) "Mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve; since the task itself arises only when the material conditions of its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation".³ It is well known that on the basis of the above two propositions the "orthodox" Marxists of the Second International—Kautsky, Plekhanov *et al*—denounced Lenin for his advocacy of socialist revolution in Russia after February, 1917, by holding that the backwardness of the Russian economy and the insufficiency of its capitalist development did not warrant such a revolution which must have to wait till the objective situation was "mature". It is precisely because the two propositions cited above lent themselves to a mechanical and fatalist interpretation that Gramsci insisted upon "purging them of all residue of mechanism and fatalism" (*depurati da ogni residuo di meccanicismo e fatalismo*).⁴

In the second place, by unilaterally and mechanically interpreting the relation between 'base' and 'superstructure' and between 'being' and 'consciousness' these "orthodox" Marxists were *in effect* overrating the objective and underrating the subjective elements in a historical process, thereby committing the mistakes of the old materialists whom Marx had already criticised, for example, in his *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845).

What all this amounted to was a negation of *conscious, revolutionary practice* and a blind faith in some sort of a historical inevitability and automaticity coupled with a lack of faith in men—that is, the masses—as the active makers of history. Nothing, it goes without saying, could be a grosser caricature of Marxism.

Gramsci revolted against such crass distortions of Marxism.⁵ He showed that historical materialism, far from being "economism" and far from excluding the role of superstructural elements like moral, political and

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Note sul Machiavelli, sulla Politica e sullo Stato Moderno* (Einaudi), p. 69.

⁵ Thus Gramsci criticised Plekhanov for falling into "vulgar materialism"—See *Materialismo Storico*, p. 80.

ideological factors, stresses, on the contrary, their tremendous influence on the base itself. Violently reacting against the cold fatalism and mechanism of the Second International and its spiritual successors Gramsci emphasized that socialism comes through revolution that is made by the *voluntary* and *conscious* action of men and does not come *automatically* and *inevitably*, "independently of the will of men".

On the other hand, Gramsci attacked those "Leninists" to whom 'spontaneity' and 'consciousness' were absolutely antithetical. These pseudo-revolutionaries would make a fetish of 'consciousness' and disdain all manifestations of spontaneity among the masses, dismissing such manifestations as "anarchist" and hence "objectively counter-revolutionary". (It is well known how, on this score, the revisionist leadership of the French Communist Party condemned the worker-student revolutionaries and unashamedly justified its own inaction during the great events of May-June, 1968 in France—a fact appropriately referred to, though not so clearly, in Debray's note on Gramsci). Qualifying such a conception as "scholastic and academic" Gramsci sarcastically remarked that according to this conception "only that movement has the reality and the dignity which is hundred per cent conscious and is determined by a thoroughly prepared plan in advance".⁶

With all his greatness as a militant and thinker Gramsci's theoretical position is, in certain respects, contestable.

First, he denied the existence of reality outside and independent of *human* existence and called such an idea either a "metaphor" or a "form of mysticism".⁷ At the same time he denied that reality changes objectively.⁸

While it is undoubtedly true that man becomes fully aware of the existence of objective reality only through social practice in relation to nature, such awareness could arise only on the

basis of the already existing nature *anterior* to human existence. This is a fundamental premise of materialism as emphasized, for instance, by Engels and Lenin. Not only that. Nature, like human society, undergoes change following objective laws. In other words, dialectics holds good for nature as well as for human society—a point emphasized, again, by Engels and Lenin.

Closely associated with Gramsci's position on the reality of the external world was his definition of "matter" itself. He defined "matter" narrowly as that which is "socially and historically organised for production";⁹ this is very different from Lenin's definition of "matter" as "an objective reality existing outside our mind".¹⁰

Secondly, Gramsci held that Marx never called his conception of the world "materialist".¹¹ While it is true that there is no systematic exposition of materialism in Marx it is equally true that it was his life-long collaborator Engels who, with Marx's full knowledge and approval, did the job thoroughly.¹² However, Marx himself referred to his world view as "new materialism" in contrast to "old materialism" which he criticised, for example, as far back as 1845.

All this attitude of Gramsci follows, it seems, from his particular interpretation of Marxism.¹³ In opposition to the mechanical and fatalist interpretation of Marxism by the so-called "orthodox" Marxists, Gramsci emphasised that Marxism could not be conceived independently of concrete, human practice. "Separated from the theory of history and politics", he wrote, "philosophy can only be metaphysics, while the great victory of the history of modern thought represented by the philosophy of praxis is... the concrete historicisation

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁷ *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (1908) ch. V, Sec. II.

⁸ *Materialismo Storico*, p. 152.

⁹ In *Anti-Dühring* (1878) and *Dialectics of Nature* (1873-1883); after Marx's death in *Ludwig Feuerbach* (1888).

¹⁰ In what follows we have drawn upon the penetrating criticism of Gramsci by L. Althusser in his *Lire le Capital*, I (2nd ed. Paris, 1968), p. 160 ff.

(*storicizzazione concreta*) of philosophy and its identification with history (*identificazione con la storia*).¹⁴ Indeed Gramsci held that in the expression "historical materialism" emphasis should be put more on the first term than on the second which was of "metaphysical origin".¹⁵ Marxism was "absolute historicism... an absolute humanism of history".¹⁶ "The philosophy of praxis", he wrote further, "is derived from the immanentist conception of reality, but to the extent that it has been purged of speculative aroma and reduced to *pure history or historicity or pure humanism (a pura storia o storicità o a puro umanesimo)*".¹⁷

Thus Gramsci denied, in effect, the separate existence of philosophical (dialectical) materialism apart from historical materialism. As Althusser has pointed out, historical materialism which connotes a scientific theory of history signified for Gramsci, *at the same time*, the Marxist philosophy.¹⁸ Gramsci tended to confound in historical materialism *alone* both the theory of history and dialectical materialism which, however, are two distinct disciplines.

¹⁴ *Materialismo Storico*, p. 133.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 191. Our emphasis.

¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 165.

PLACE A REGULAR ORDER
FOR YOUR

FRONTIER

Subscription Rates

INLAND

Six Months	..	Rs. 8.25
One year	..	Rs. 16.50
Five Years	..	Rs. 75.00
Seven years	..	Rs. 100.00

Foreign AIR MAIL Rates (One Year)

Europe:	Rs. 120 or 15 dollars
Asia:	Rs. 88 or 11 dollars
America:	Rs. 168 or 21 dollars

By Surface Mail

All countries: Rs. 40 or 5 dollars

Long-term Subscriptions will

help the weekly

OCTOBER 3, 1970

Marxism And Art

SUMANTA BANERJEE

THE current radicalisation of Leftist politics in India should compel Marxist intellectuals of our country to reassess their views on art and reshape their attitude towards the cultural aspects of the Indian revolutionary movement. This is all the more necessary in the context of the recent attacks on libraries and burning of books, all in the name of "annihilation of bourgeois culture."

It should be remembered at the outset that the scattered observations by Marx and Engels made on literature, do not fit together in any kind of scheme from which one can deduce a well-knit Marxist theory of literature. They only bear the imprint of a solid 19th century humanist education which gifted them with the capacity to appreciate the best irrespective of the political views of the particular authors. In discussing writers with whom they had sharp, doctrinal quarrels or whose relationship to class alignments was the opposite of their own, Marx and Engels were strongly inclined to respect the man as an artist.

Take for instance Engels' assessment of Balzac: "Well, Balzac was politically a legitimist; his great work is a constant elegy on the irreparable decay of good society; his sympathies are with the class that is doomed to extinction. But for all that, his satire is never keener, his irony never more bitter, than when he sets in motion the very men and women with whom he sympathises most deeply—the nobles.... That Balzac was thus compelled to go against his own class sympathies and political prejudices.... I consider one of the greatest features in old Balzac." (Letter to Margaret Harkness, April, 1888).

Or take again Engels' comments on Heine, whom he describes in a letter to Marx written on December 21, 1866, as "at bottom a cur in a political sense," but whom he hails as "the most eminent of all living

German poets" in *Communism in Germany*.

Excerpts from their articles and letters would go to prove that Marx and Engels were not always obsessed with only one aspect of art—its function as social consciousness. They were fully aware that this is not the only or the most important aspect of art. Marx's favourite writers—Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Goethe or E. T. A. Hoffman—were neither revolutionaries nor social critics. To quote Engels again, "...the writer is not obliged to obtrude on the reader the future historical solutions of the social conflicts pictured." (Letter to Minna Kautsky, November 26, 1885).

Marx and Engels of course believed that literature, together with all other products of the human intellect, has its being within an ideological superstructure, the content of which is ultimately, not solely, determined by the economic and political structure of society. But, at the time, they sought to set general limits to the efficacy of the economic factor as the governor of man's spiritual life. Witness for instance Engels' letter to Joseph Bloch (September 21, 1890): "The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure also exercise their influence upon the historical struggle and in many cases preponderate in determining their form."

Among the various elements of the superstructure is the individual consciousness of the artist. Marx had this in mind when he said: "But the difficulty is not in grasping the idea that Greek art and epos are bound up with certain forms of social development. It rather lies in understanding why they still constitute with us a source of aesthetic enjoyment and in certain respects prevail as the standard and model beyond attainment." (*A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*.)

Marx never had the time or oppor-

tunity to resolve this problem. But some of his followers, particularly in the Soviet Union, ignored his cautious approach and assumed an extremely direct and restricted relation between base and superstructure, seeking class conflicts in every work of art. I am afraid a similar attitude on the part of some communist revolutionaries of India today is bringing ridicule on the cultural aspects of the revolutionary movement. They are in a hurry to dismiss every product of bourgeois civilisation, including libraries.

Let us first be clear about the scope of Marxist analysis in cultural matters. Marxism is not a finished system. In literary matters, it provides us with a method of investigation, a few inspired leading thoughts opening to us endless perspectives of independent activity. The Marxian methods in art are bound to differ from those in a political or economic movement. Marxism cannot guide the production or creation of literature. To quote Plekhanov: "The scientific aesthetic does not lay down any rules for art. It does not tell art: you must stick to certain rules or examples. It modestly limits itself to the observation of how the various rules and examples which dominated certain historical eras came into being." (*Art and Literature*).

Leave It To Readers

The Marxist laws of historical materialism can thus only explain why and how a given tendency in the arts originated in a given period of history and leave it to the readers or spectators the right to take or leave the particular artistic product. Dialectical materialistic analysis of the roots of art can never be a substitute for the aesthetic standard by which art should be judged. And aesthetic standard differs from age to age, individual to individual.

What then should be the attitude of the working class revolutionary party towards culture? What should it expect from the arts?

It should be noted that the proletariat as a non-possessing class, cannot in the course of its struggle up-

wards spontaneously create a culture of its own. It is deprived of the facilities which enabled aspiring classes in the earlier phases of history—like the rising bourgeoisie against the feudal class—to establish an intellectual dominance. Diderot, Rousseau or Voltaire were thrown up by the bourgeoisie preparing to overthrow the feudal class.

Thus "the working class will not be in a position to create a science and an art of its own until it has been fully emancipated from its present class position. . . . The utmost it can do today is to safeguard bourgeois culture from the vandalism of the bourgeois reaction and create social conditions requisite for a free cultural development." (Rosa Luxemburg: *Stagnation and Progress of Marxism*, 1903).

These words are relevant in the context of the cultural situation in India today. The communist revolutionaries should be aware of the forces in our culture which represent bourgeois reaction and recognise the trends which continue the tradition of bourgeois humanism and prepare the way for the free cultural development of the future.

Take for instance the film world. It is dominated by producers who thrive on perverting the taste of the masses of the proletariat. The films spawned by the Bombay studios are a kind of opium of the workers. Hopelessly brutalised by their environment and upbringing, the majority of them want either to be tickled by pornography and violence, or lulled by melodrama. Little has been done so far by the communist revolutionaries to draw them away from such films, and awaken the latent sensibility in them to help them understand the finer arts.

Maybe this is the task of the committed artist in India. His position is painful. His desire to create beauty and all aesthetic niceties and subtleties are apt to seem trifling in the midst of the terrible poverty and misery of our unhappy land. The disharmony of social relations, that ever present awareness of responsibility for those outrageous social and political

conditions from which he cannot rid himself, do not permit for a moment any indulgence in self-oblivion. Terms like "freedom of the artist" or "spiritual liberty" mock the reality.

Yet, the privilege of education, denied to the majority of his people, has thrown open the gates of the modern culture of the West to the committed artist of India. The fascination of the intellectual world of the West is overriding. But when he tries to speak in that language he finds a deaf audience. His people are yet to learn to appreciate his art.

The artist in India therefore is vitally involved in the political future of his country. He cannot remain insensitive to the prospects of delivering his people from poverty, to the need of educating and elevating them to the level of a receptive audience. The more the revolutionary movement succeeds in India, the easier it is for the writer to win a wider readership or the artist to gain a bigger audience.

Two Loyalties

He is thus torn between two loyalties—one to his art and the other to his people. Without proposing to degrade his art or to engage in didactics, he must communicate and contribute to the cultural development of his people. Although he must not fail to avail himself of the expressive devices worked out in the West, neither must he let himself be carried away by the intellectual frames, of reference of creators in the West.

The clash between the immediate blind demands of a political movement and the aesthetic values cherished by an artist, is an old one. While on the one hand, it calls for the commitment of the artist, on the other, it is desirable that the leaders of the political movement recognise the unique role of the artist. Lenin's tolerance of the artistic experiments in the young Soviet Union of the twenties can be cited as an example.

It is about time therefore that the communist leaders in our country recognised that in the arts the struggle is on a different level. The artist's inherent role is that of a rebel. In

his own sphere he pits aesthetic values against philistinism, good art against bad art. The writer has to break the conventional readymade pattern of words to express new ideas, to make himself heard in the cacophony of familiar words. He has to write because he feels different from what has been written so far. In this role of a rebel, he is a comrade of the revolutionaries in the streets.

Yet, at the same time, the artist needs the detachment necessary for perceiving things hidden to the common eye, apprehend dangers yet unrecognised and dream of ideals yet to be cherished. If this is denied to him by the impatient political leaders, the political movement deprives itself of spiritual values and degenerates into philistinism, besides ruining the artist.

One remembers in this connexion the fate of the Soviet communist movement and the thousands of intellectuals it destroyed. Mayakovsky's words are still relevant today:

"Agitprop
sticks
in my teeth too,
and I'd rather
compose
romances for you—
more profit in it
and more charm.
But I
subdued
myself
on the throat
of my own son."

(At the Top of My voice)

But such a subjugation is not always conducive to the growth of culture. Mayakovsky had to commit suicide.

For Frontier contact

People's Book House

Meher House,

Cowasji Patel Street,

Fort, Bombay

Decline Of The Bhadrakok

ARJUN BANDYOPADHYAY

IN recent times much greater attention is given to regional studies of 'Indian' history; attention is also given to the study of a definite clan or a stratum of society, i.e. micro-study is gaining ground. As a result it is becoming clear that the impact of the British, by disturbing or upsetting the hierarchical patterns of society, increased competitiveness between men of different communities and castes. Not only that, it also produced a new unevenness of development between different regions.

In the first decade of this century Bengal was engrossed with the partition agitation but in Punjab the main concern was with the disturbances and highhandedness of the British government, specially regarding the regulations governing the tenure of land of the canal colonists. On the other hand in Bombay neither partition nor colonisation was an issue. To understand these differences and unevenness and to get the proper perspective, regional studies are important and helpful. In this respect J. H. Broomfield's *Elite Conflict** is an important attempt. He chooses Bengal and an elite group, the bhadrakok, literally the respectable people, the gentlemen and his period is the first half of the twentieth century, specially the period between 1912 and 1927—that is from the reunification of Bengal to the time when the Hindu bhadrakok's leading role in Bengal legislative politics was taken over by the Muslims. In an epilogue Broomfield tells the story up to the second partition of 1947 when the basic tenet of the Hindu bhadrakok's political faith, a united Bengal, was finally shattered.

**Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth Century Bengal*
By J. H. Broomfield
University of California Press,
published in India by Oxford University Press. Rs 50.

According to Broomfield at the beginning of this century the Bengali bhadrakok were a socially privileged and consciously superior group, economically dependent on land rents and professional and clerical employment. They kept distance from the masses by their acceptance of high-caste proscriptions and their command of education and showed a pride in their language, their literary culture and their history. They were maintaining their communal integration through a fairly complex institutional structure that had proved remarkably ready to adapt and extend their social power and political opportunities. The bhadrakok were distinguished by many aspects of their behaviour—their deportment, their speech, their dress, their eating habits etc and by their social values and their sense of social propriety. The basic and most rigidly maintained distinction between *bhadra* and *abhadra*, between high and low, was the bhadrakok's abstention from manual labour and their belief in the inferiority of manual occupation. Another important feature is that unlike other provinces in India there was no dichotomy in Bengal between landholders and the professional middle class: the same bhadrakok families received rent and supplied men for government service. Education became the hallmark of bhadrakok status. Entry into the bhadrakok status was possible through education as well as birth, though it was very much difficult. In this sense the bhadrakok, unlike caste, were an open elite. Broomfield's *Elite Conflict* is a study of the unsuccessful effort of the bhadrakok to maintain their socio-political dominance after 1912.

In Bengal, from the last quarter of the 19th century the bhadrakok, as a well-knit community, wanted to extend their countrymen's share of administration and political power. Their ambition was to take part in the development of a system of par-

liamentary self-government in India. Their hopes ultimately rested in legislative politics: in this sense they were not a revolutionary community. The partition of Bengal in 1905 gave them opportunities: during the anti-partition agitation their numbers greatly increased and more and more they were given an active involvement. They also gained experience; moreover, though the agitation achieved its success in 1912 a profound distrust of the political objectives of the Indian government and any strategy based on British co-operation grew. There was an outright attack on the old constitutionalist school, their technique, their secular ideals. Economic deprivation, frustrated ambition and injured pride made the lower-class bhadrakok ready recruits for radical political action. Terrorism was a development of this trend: it was a lower middle class phenomenon, to an extent.

After 1905 new opportunities came before the Bengal politicians to participate in representative institutions. The years from 1913 to 1920 gave the political elite—Hindu and Muslim—experience in working within the legislative system. Early in that period high expectations were raised by institutional reforms that would give greater power to Indians. The positive significance of the bhadrakok's experience with the Bengal Legislative Council from 1913 to 1920 was the demonstration of their capacity to work within a parliamentary system and reinforcement of their interest in such a development. The negative significance of that experience was that the bhadrakok were discouraged on the one hand from committing themselves fully to the institution because of the lack of power vested in it and on the other from making the effort to establish political control with non-bhadrakok by an extending narrow franchise and separate communal electorate. They were completely unprepared for what happened in 1921: the enfranchisement of a million new voters of whom the majority were rural illiterates. Their appeals for restricted franchise in order to secure competent voters and

manageable electorates were disregarded. This coincided with the transfer to the elected MLCs of first real power through appointment of responsible ministers and a promise of more power in the future. This period 1913-20 was the peak-period of the Hindu bhadrakok's success and also the beginning of their decline. The riot of 1918 also had its effects. It showed that the latent mass discontent could be exploited for personal and communal advantage. This gave new significance to the numerical strength of the Muslim community. Violence now became an effective instrument in the hands of the Muslims. With it a possibility of non-bhadrakok influence in the legislative bodies was there. The non-bhadrakok were against the upper caste and class Hindu bhadrakok. So the development of the parliamentary system became a menace to the Hindu bhadrakok instead of an opportunity to maintain their position in a changing society. The effect was to cut the ground from under the feet of the liberal secularists, as a result of which Hindu revivalists gained ground. By 1923 Bengali high-caste men had formed defensive communal sabhas and as the feared legislative attack from below developed over the next decade, the organisations won increasing influence and respect. The role of the Hindu bhadrakok was becoming gradually reactionary, though at the initial stage they wanted to play a secondary role.

Terrorism

This ambivalence—heritage of liberal ideas and at the same time of their vested interests and lack of capacity to adapt themselves to the changed situation—is demonstrated in their attitudes towards terrorism, itself a lower middle class phenomenon. On the one hand they feared that further constitutional development and transfer of more power to Indians which were their goals would be retarded by terrorist outrages and the existence of revolutionary organisations. Temporarily many of them were averse to violence and were disturbed by the indisci-

pline in bhadrakok society which it revealed. On the other hand they felt a sneaking admiration for those boys, their own flesh and blood who were willing to risk their lives and liberty in attacks on the foreigner. Thus it was against their personal and cultural integrity to join any government-sponsored condemnation. Politically it would have been disastrous. On the other hand the councillors had to find some means of dissociating themselves from these acts of violence. So they attempted to assert that most of what the government described as political crime was in fact common dacoity.

After 1918 Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi became a first rank nationalist leader. Gandhi from the very beginning showed his ability to sway the masses and an astuteness as a politician. It was natural that Bengali bhadrakok leaders saw a rival in Gandhi. Leaders like C. R. Das and Bipin Chandra Pal also aspired to national leadership. So they opposed Gandhi and his non-co-operation movement. There were other reasons for opposition than this personal rivalry. Gandhi made it clear that there would be no room for dissenters in any political organisations he commanded. This was something new to Indian nationalist politics. Formerly the leaders, Narooji, Bannerjea, Tilak and others had derived their power from one province or other. They had to join with the leaders of the other provinces and there were minimum external interferences in regional activities. Gandhi was not a regional leader and wanted to subordinate regional differences to a national plan. Naturally the Bengal leaders were disinclined to accept it. They enjoyed power too long and did not want to obey the dictates of an outsider. To the extremists Gandhi's vaishnavite ahimsa and satyagraha were meaningless. This demand of total disengagement from the foreign system was too much for the bhadrakok and the Bengali bhadrakok were poles asunder in their temperament and culture: the liberal Bengali middle class babus could not accept

Gandhi, a bania, a traditional Hindu leader. Gandhi's mass movement, his deep-rooted Hinduism and peculiar political creeds were opposed by the Bengali legislative politicians who already had become very much suspicious of the masses.

The bhadrakok had great difficulties in communicating with the non-bhadrakok. They had virtually no institutional contact with the lower orders. According to Broomfield, their own developed network of institutions was a disadvantage: it involved them in complex commitments within the community, a set style of associational behaviour which inhibited development of non-bhadrakok contacts. It was a problem of a culture gap between bhadrakok and non-bhadrakok. Their education and ideas were not shared by other sections of the society and were incomprehensible to them. Moreover, the Hindu bhadrakok had no appeal to the Muslim majority, their problem was the problem of symbol manipulation. In the countryside they were small, scattered and without base. They were well based in towns and their movement also was limited to the towns where transport was easy. Agitational politics in Calcutta was their main weapon. Rural Bengal could not be insulated against urban Bengal and an apparently successful city manoeuvre provoked an unpleasant backlash in the countryside where their control was so much less secured. The problem of the Hindu bhadrakok was the problem of a caste elite whose hopes rested on participation in imported liberal institutions, which were by nature open-ended. The Hindu bhadrakok valued their high caste and wanted to resist demands from the lower orders but ultimately they failed. Practically even the lower middle class section did not support them. They wanted to snatch the privileges from the upper middle class leadership.

A Continuation

This is a very sketchy summary of the author's arguments, very sketchy in the sense that we have to leave

a detailed analysis of the political activities of the Bengali bhadralok in the Bengal legislature politics in the first half of this century. Also we have left the impact of Muslim politics and the British attitude which influenced the course of bhadralok politics. Broomfield shows the conflict between the Hindu elite and the Muslim elite. But from even this sketchy summary we may draw one or two conclusions. One can understand that present-day Bengal politics is also to some extent a continuation of the previous period. The middle class whom Broomfield likes to denigrate as bhadralok is still imbued with outdated liberal attitudes. Caste still plays a big role. Even the communists see the parliamentary system as the only path of development. Secular liberalism is still strong. After disillusionment a section of the middle class resorted to extra-parliamentary activities but with the return of legislative politics even the middle-class communist leaders are resting hopes on it. Moreover the Bengali middle classes' attitude towards Naxalites reminds one of the moderates' attitude towards terrorism—a combination of sneaking admiration and a distrust of violence. Our communist parties also are trying hard to dissociate themselves from this movement. They want to describe the Naxalites as only anti-social. Indeed our communist movement upto now is an offshoot of liberalism and the leadership is pathetically bhadralok minded. Even the heritage of agitational politics in urban areas, particularly in Calcutta, was very much present in the two decades after 1947—only very recently an awareness of the need to spread to rural areas has grown, due primarily to the Naxalite movement. We are still carrying on the middle-class politics of the first quarter of this century.

In his book Broomfield has used the term bhadralok as an analytical category. To him it is very much advantageous as it emphasises the most important attribute of the members of the group—social honour. Broomfield categorically says that to

him the bhadralok are a status group in the sense Max Weber used it and it is not an economic or occupational class. But if the bhadralok group is taken as a status group, their style of life must be discussed in detail. (Max Weber emphasised it.) Their decline or change should also be delineated in the terms of change or decline in the style of life. But though Broomfield starts with a sociological concept, ultimately he tells the story in a more or less prevalent political fashion. Only to describe the role of the Hindu bhadralok in legislative politics cannot be sufficient in this respect. Broomfield tries hard to avoid the concept of class—a Marxist concept no doubt, but Max Weber himself said, "class distinctions are linked in the most varied ways with status distinction. . . . Both property and propertyless people can belong to the same status group. This equality of social esteem may however, in the long run become quite precarious". So, how can Max Weber's concept of status group be used in opposition to the class concept? It is true that in the late 19th century Bengal those groups which felt a similarity of interests were themselves more a product of bureaucratic initiative than of economic change. But the question may arise, why these groups felt a similarity of interests? Was it due to their social honour or style of life? Why were the middle class people very much eager to take part in legislative politics? Why were they champions of English education? Broomfield's obsession with status groups prevents him from giving an answer to these questions.

Another question: what types of elite these bhadralok were? The studies based on the elitist approach really started after Parets and Mosca. Every writer, including them, defines the elite in terms of the means of power. Did the bhadralok of Broomfield really hold any power during British colonial rule? How far can a group dependent on land rents and professional and clerical employment be labelled elite is surely a debatable question. Indians filled the lower

ranks and supplied the vast majority of officials. Practically the bhadralok of Broomfield were not elite but an elite through which the British government was connected with the society. It was a much larger group which comprised the whole new middle class. Broomfield is very much touchy about the class concept in the Marxist sense. For this reason he invents the term lower-class bhadralok. In reality they were lower middle class.

Moreover, elite groups are brought about by the actions of entire classes. These classes have to be led. But the elite group of leaders arise from and along with the formation and development of the class. So a study of an elite group must be linked with the study of the whole class. Whom Broomfield calls bhadralok are nothing but a section of this class and they were leaders of this class in a particular period. As the leaders of the middle class and as landholders and professional groups they had some common economic interests and were engaged in a conflict with other segments of the society. These people were definitely class conscious, at the same time caste conscious also.

Broomfield's otherwise admirable study is also a warning. In historical writing sociological concepts must be used with caution. Sociology must be helpful in the study of history and the writing of Indian history must take help from the sociological approach and investigations. But sociology and history are not the same thing. During our times sociology, like economics, is going to be abstract, oblique, modelbased, specially in the hands of the Americans, but the study of history must be concrete and conscious of time and place. Here Marxist sociology is the most helpful.

NOTICE

Articles cannot be returned unless accompanied by return postage.

Business Manager
Frontier

Filming In Calcutta

MRINAL SEN

QUITE often during the past several years when I was irreligiously active on the film front I had me out on the streets of Calcutta shoot a sequence or two, minor or major, from my film scripts, but never could I "see" the multi-coloured face of the city as I do now. We have just made a film called *Interview*, a dawn-to-dusk story of a young Calcuttan who comes out of his house daily to return after a couple of hours so five times during the twelve hours covered in the film. Our experience while shooting this film has been fascinating.

Take, for example, Calcutta Telephones. Telephones mean so much to city life and yet it is so exasperatingly difficult to get the man you are frantically trying to catch. Or, remember the jet black smoke that goes right into your lungs as you trail behind a State-owned bus emitting burnt gasoline. Or, the picketers squatting on the pavements, slogan shouters dominating the street scenes, bombs and police at loggerheads and on and so forth.

All this and rains too, as sudden and unwarranted as the sudden paralysis, partial or total, of any of the metropolitan activities. In *Interview*, the laundry workers of the city go on strike for an indefinite period. There was, of course, advance notice, the trade union formalities were meticulously observed. But an average Calcuttan is, by no chance, supposed to know absolutely everything that takes place in the city, least of all the prolonged negotiations and show-downs of strength, the threats etc. that passed between the laundry workers and their bosses. Quite understandably, therefore, when our protagonist goes to his laundry in the early hours of the day to collect his valuable clothes, he is shocked to find it closed. He is upset because he needs his clothes very badly. He has necessarily an instant feeling which our camera and recorder have tried to capture.

This and many other events that follow. And a host of feelings to capture: spontaneous, commonplace and very much belonging to the city. It has indeed been an enormously fascinating job to go into the details of all these and several others which, however, look so very slight, insignificant and infantile on the surface.

Example: a taxi-cab on duty. Many a time we have shown the dramatis personae getting into taxis and being driven to their destinations. But never before had it occurred to me that it could be wonderful to hold an old turbaned Sardarji in tight close-up driving the cab. This is what we have done this time and the visual, to our mind, has immediately lent a certain dimension to the scene and has helped to build a total picture of the metropolitan complex. True, according to a storyteller, the inclusion of an old Sardarji in close-up in a sequence like this—that of a taxi-drive—may not mean much. But since the story is born in Calcutta, I do not see any reason why we should dismiss a visual like this which is so essentially urban. To our mind, as we edited the film, this visual of the Sardarji was almost like a discovery, the absence of which would have been like missing the "dew drop" just outside the door.

In the absence of such details one does not know how much one misses in a film. An intense search for details, therefore, became an exciting act of exploration for us.

Let us suppose you and I are travelling in a State bus. The driver pulls the brake, the bus stops, we get a shake. The sound is unusually long-drawn: loud, shrill and funny. And instantly I find an appropriate visual on a wall, the face of Sheikh Mukhtar, one of the many faces of the Indian screen which have eclipsed nearly half of the city walls. Sheikh Mukhtar's is a face which, because of a slight fold in the poster or for some other reason, seems to be crying in excruciating pain. This goes exceedingly well with the funny sound of the brake. And now, having edited the sequence this way and overlapping the end part of the screeching

The Next Issue of Frontier will be dated October 31

sound of the State-owned-automobile brake on the troubled face of a certain movie celebrity, I, for one, can see the connection as quite logical and very effective too. It looks like a positive contribution to the humour of the city.

Anger

The anger? Yes, it is strewn like pebbles everywhere. If one-half of the city-walls is given to cinema posters, the rest almost completely belongs to the angry and the defiant varieties of the ever-increasing population. One cannot escape this sight unless one chooses to be blind.

And one should pity the deaf who is deprived of an exciting variety of aural patterns in the fish market in the early hours of the day. As you move into the thick of the crowd in any of these fish markets, you can almost entirely build a case for the "fishy" Bengalis.

In the barber's saloon too, when our protagonist walks into the shop, our camera runs into "heads", quite a number of them, placed in the safe custody of the expert hair-dressers. Never before have I and my colleagues guessed the potentiality of such visuals.

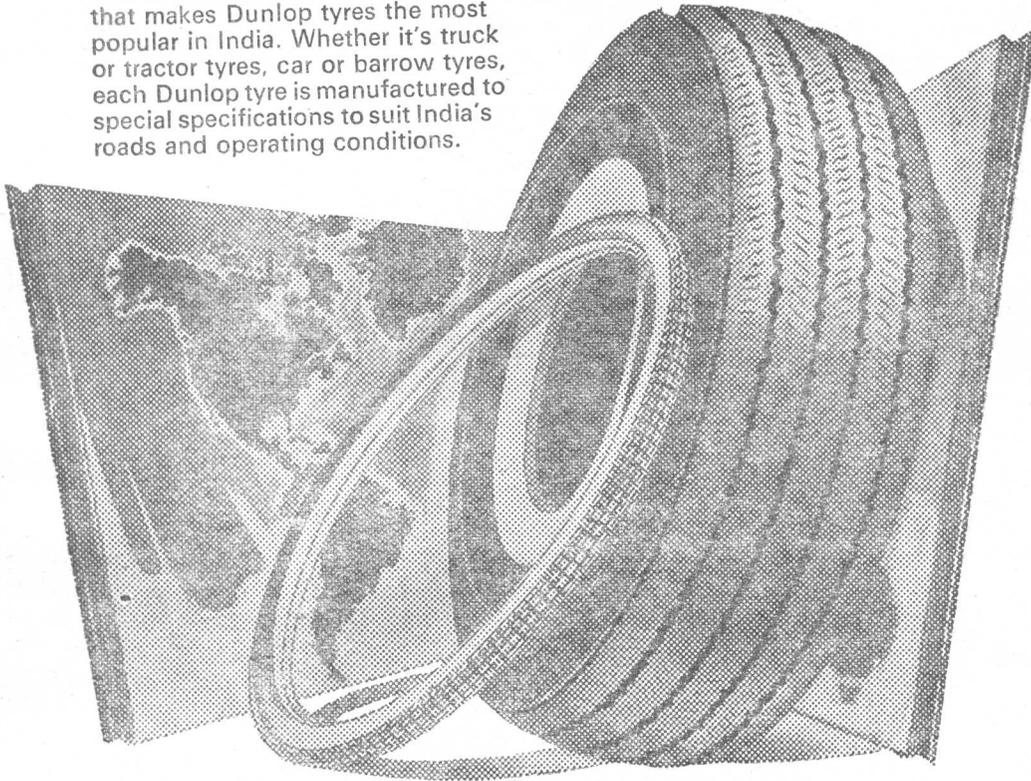
Sometimes during the day you go to a friend of yours. You keep on pressing the calling bell. Nobody responds to your call. And when you feel that there is nobody in the house, you see that the power in the locality which failed half an hour ago has not yet been restored.

All those days our "search party" went into everything that belongs to the city and tried to "salvage" the details. From obscurity we have tried to bring them out into the limelight and to mix them up with the story material and finally to "connect".

The point, however, is to connect in the right manner.

Tyres that are acceptable in 61 international markets

It's superior Dunlop India tyre technology that makes Dunlop tyres popular in 61 countries abroad. And it's the same tyre technology that makes Dunlop tyres the most popular in India. Whether it's truck or tractor tyres, car or barrow tyres, each Dunlop tyre is manufactured to special specifications to suit India's roads and operating conditions.



prove that
**Dunlop tyre
technology
leads the way**

 **DUNLOP INDIA** tyre technology leads the way

DTIC-3

RS

e
S
e

Raja
Sizes 5-8, 9-12
Rs 5.95, 6.95



Junior
Sizes 7-10, 11-1, 2-5
Rs 12.95, 14.95, 18.95

Bappa
Sizes 2-5
Rs 18.95

Father & Son Private Ltd

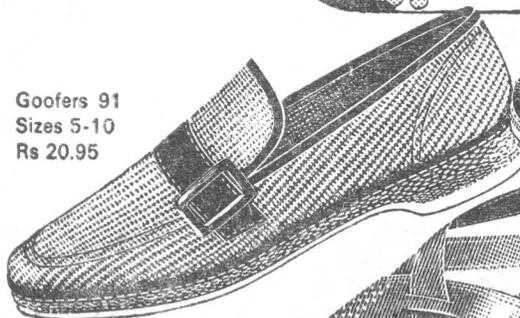
This is strictly man's province. Between father and son, all this talk of the 'generation gap' is pointless when they step out proudly to their favourite Bata Store to buy shoes for themselves. The new range of Bata styles for men is truly fabulous.



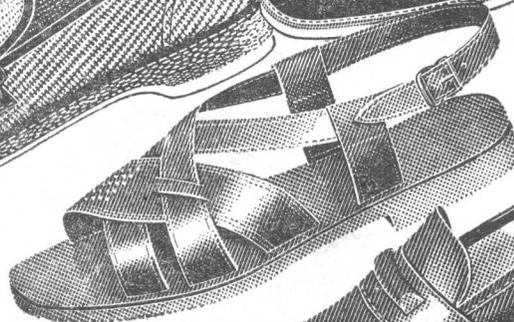
Some are aggressive. Some have a quiet dignity. Many reflect the latest trends in men's fashion. All have distinction. All are comfort-crafted, making walking a real pleasure.

Safari Derby
Sizes 5-10
Rs 36.95

Goofers 91
Sizes 5-10
Rs 20.95



Sanat
Sizes 4-10
Rs 18.95



Bata

Envoy Casual
Sizes 5-10
Rs 32.95

