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AN AGE OF COALITION

QUITTING its week-long sulks the Swatantra Party has ganged up with the Congress(O), the Jana Sangh, and the SSP in a grand alliance to capture power at the Centre in the coming mid-term poll. What these parties separately stand for is known, but not jointly. The alliance has avoided spelling it out because the disparate programmes of the parties cancel one another out. Their highest common measure of agreement is a lust for power and a hatred of the Congress(R); maybe some other parties informed with the same spirit will join the alliance in time, but that will not alter its opportunistic character. Many experiments with such patch-work quilts have been made in the country since 1967, and coalitions of all varieties have proved equally unstable. The grand alliance cannot fare any better; it will be beyond even the foxy "sage of India" to hold it together. Already two of its leaders are discomfited. The persevering originator of the grand alliance idea, Mr S. K. Patil, is no longer certain that he will be able to return to his original constituency of south Bombay which he lost to Mr George Fernandes of the SSP in the last election. Mr Masani has been made to eat the humble pie by the national executive of his own party and asked to return to the fold which he had left in a huff.

Yet the alliance is a significant development for it aims at bearding the lion in its own den. In most of the peripheral States the ruling party is of no major consequence, whatever the Prime Minister's cheerleaders may say. The Congress(R) derives its strength from the heartland of India where politics is a poisonous brew of feudalism, communalism, and linguism; which shows the wrinkles under the radical make-up of the party. This benighted region is also the stronghold of the grand alliance, which, in its bid to humble the Congress(R), will try to propitiate this vicious trinity; the Swatantra, the Jana Sangh, and the SSP will represent these three varieties of fanaticism and the Congress(O) will act as moderator. The ruling party cannot allow itself to be outdone in this matter unless it is sure of compensatory support in the peripheral States. It has not yet made its choice, but if its professions are not wholly hypocritical it will have to hobble on crutches like the DMK in Tamil Nadu, the Bangla Congress in West Bengal, the Jana Congress in Orissa, and the CPI-led coalition in Kerala. None of them will extend

its support for love; each will demand its pound of flesh at the Centre. The grand alliance may be able to shake the rosy dream of the Congress(R) of an absolute majority at the Centre. Mrs Gandhi may not be the Wilson of India, but she may be forced to exchange the leadership of a minority ministry for that of an uneasy and disparate coalition.

The full impact of this alliance is yet to be felt on party alignments in West Bengal, though the clandestine move for all alliance of the two Congress parties and the Bangla Congress has been stalled by the visiting leaders of the Congress(O) who have ordained that their party must fall in with the all-India pattern and join hands with the Jana Sangh, Swatantra, and official SSP, all nonentities in West Bengal politics. The Congress(R) and its alter ego, the Bangla Congress, have resumed negotiations after what looked like a lovers' quarrel over division of seats. The CPI and its allies in the eight-party combination still remain fence-sitters biding their time. The emissaries are, however, busy, and all kinds of shady deals are being negotiated under the hardened surface of multiple electoral fronts. The RSP engaged itself in the exercise of retaining its neutrality while allying with the United Left Front, and the CPM is examining how many deserters from other parties could be set up as independents. Between now and the last date of withdrawal of nominations, the kaleidoscope will be shaken many times, and the ultimate pattern may be very much different from the present. The only thing that can be said with some certitude is that West Bengal also is heading for a coalition. And with the rival alliances intent on curbing one another by any means and about 50,000 additional policemen to be imported into the State for ensuring peaceful election, the wading may be through blood.

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Out Of Bounds

One cannot discuss the virtues of secession. There is the Unlawful Activities Act. But it appears that the disgraceful action taken by the Kashmir Government has more to do with the coming Lok Sabha elections than with any immediate threat of secessionist activities by the Plebiscite Front. While top leaders like Sheikh Abdullah cannot enter the State, nearly four hundred activists have been detained—the number will go up—and the front has now been banned. It is argued that anyway the Front has no right to contest the elections because it threatens to wreck the legislature from within. Such threats, it should be recalled, do not emanate from the Front alone. What is there to note is that the State Government is panicky about the strength of the Front. Had it been so sure of election results it would not have acted as it has now. Of course it speaks of the flow of 'foreign' money and arms into Kashmir, but the Central and State governments in this country always speak such nonsense when popular agitation mounts in border areas.

There is so much excitement among the acting politicians all over India over the big political battle ordered by Mrs Gandhi that not many people will bother about what is happening in Kashmir after the sudden dropping of the fig-leaf of democracy. Much worse things are being perpetrated elsewhere. At most we can have a little, local, lovely hartal here and there. The effect the Kashmir events will have on public opinion and organisations and the army in West Pakistan is not difficult to predict and will be dangerous to ignore. The effect, however, can be exploited by the ruling party in this country for election purposes. There is no greater election booster than the slogan 'the country is in danger'. The Hindi heartland will feel grateful to Mrs Gandhi.

Deadlock Continues

The New Year, it seems, bodes ill for India-Nepal relations. These relations have not been smooth in the past few years. But recently things have come to a head over the question of trade and the solution seems as difficult as squaring a circle.

Just before the treaty signed in 1960 was about to expire Nepal asked for its extension by a year to get enough time to negotiate a new one. The Government of India, however, coolly refused and put up, on its own, a new, conditional treaty. The new treaty is larger in scope, with certain qualifications. It provides for freer trade between the two nations and also gives greater transit facilities to Nepal for her trade with the third countries. But it lays down in guarded terms certain constraints which Nepal—by now wise enough to see through the designs of New Delhi—cannot accept. New Delhi, however, refuses to back down and inevitably a stalemate has set in.

The disaffection struck root, reports go, over the question of India's refusal of a road route to Pakistan through Radhikapur. Nepal stuck to this right assiduously. But India was adamant on this point and accused Nepal of having political motives behind her demand. Obviously India's attitude to Rawalpindi is the hidden cause of this refusal. But she would not say so. Or perhaps, she could not. Despite all the clowning, the rulers of New Delhi are hard put to work out the empirical correlate of their attitude to Pindi with the proposed treaty terms.

The resentment, however, reached its high point on the question of prevention of smuggling. The politicians in New Delhi have discovered gaps in the Nepalese excise law and insist that the new treaty should work out the specific steps that Nepal should take to stop deflection of trade. Nepal has obviously refused to give in on this point and says that it is a pretext for violating her independence. Of course smuggling

is rampant across the Indo-Nepal border and some high-ups in both the governments have often been found to be colluding in this traffic and earning a pretty big pie. Such a state of affairs should be done with. But, all the same, it should not come in the way of a normal intercourse between two nations. The Nepalese Foreign Minister has made it clear that his country is ready to co-operate with India to stop smuggling. But this cannot be achieved, the Nepalese Minister says, as conditions in the trade agreement and his country have created unrest.

The trouble is that New Delhi still in a way looks upon Nepal as its protectorate. Nepal has come to resent this overbearing attitude and has refused to surrogate wholly on India for her upkeep. Particularly after India's war with China, she has found a situation where she could ask both for aid and thrive. Obviously, New Delhi is galled by even this semblance of neutrality and now it finds in the trade deal a gilt-edged chance to bring its prodigal fief to terms.

But the Nepalese people and the bourgeoisie, or many of it, are in a rebellious mood about India. The students are protesting against the showing of Indian films. New Delhi must take note of the situation or else it will have to rue its worse-than-short-sighted policy.

Emergency In Eritrea

Despite the abundance of advice available from its American friends the decrepit regime of Haile Selassie could not afford the luxury of counter-insurgency operations à l'américaine. Strategic hamlets and 'psy-war' for winning the hearts and minds of people are expensive techniques and of doubtful use as well. Genocide right from the beginning works out much cheaper and that is what Emperor Haile Selassie has prescribed for the rebellious people of Eritrea. Declaration of emergency in Eritrea last

month was designed to be nothing more than a legal fig-leaf, for a large portion of the Ethiopian army had been operating in Eritrea long before it was officially handed over to the Army. In the wake of the emergency, however, they have launched an all-out offensive against the people sympathetic to the guerillas of the Eritrean Liberation Front. In two weeks more than 1,000 Eritreans have been killed and 37,000 had to flee to neighbouring Sudan for safety. The ELF has appealed for help to thousands of other starving people rendered homeless by ruthless bombing.

The gory tales of massacre filtering out of embattled Eritrea have suddenly put it on the map and made the world aware of a people's war that has been silently raging for a decade. The overwhelmingly Muslim and nomadic population of Eritrea has little in common with Ethiopia dominated by Christians and is at a very different stage of socio-economic development. Years of fascist Italian rule and then British occupation gave this strip of land on the Red Sea a new mould. However insignificant numerically, a working class and indigenous bourgeoisie came into existence—a world apart from backward, feudal Ethiopia. But the fate of Eritrea lay not in the hands of its people but with the big powers who decided in the UN in 1950 that Eritrea should constitute "an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia". A federation was formally declared two years later but actually Eritrea was turned into a colony of Ethiopian landlords. In 1962 the label of federation too was dropped to annex Eritrea outright as a province of the Kingdom of Ethiopia. Ethiopian landlords then started moving into the state-owned lands of western Eritrea threatening the seasonal earnings of nomads who subsist on it. Haile Selassie was never enamoured of things like schools and hospitals for his subjects. (In the whole of Ethiopia 7 per cent adults are literate and there is one doctor for every 70,000 people.) It was thus not surprising that the only visible

signs of authority in the skimpy countryside of Eritrea were tax-collectors from Addis Ababa and that the people promptly kicked them out when called upon to do so by the ELF, founded in 1960. The Ethiopian army moved in to enforce its rule and in response sprang up a people's army. Starting with homemade weapons the guerillas built their arsenal with weapons captured from the enemy and currently they have a force of 10,000.

Haile Selassie's army has not spared any means to terrorize the Eritrean population. In the last three years they have destroyed more than 500 villages and killed more than 10,000 patriots. Dead bodies have often been on public show hung from trees in a row. To serve their own imperialistic designs as well as to prop up Haile Selassie's regime the Americans have set up a military base, Kagnev Station, in the heart of Eritrea (which incidentally is the largest American base in Africa after the dismantling of the Wheelus base in Libya last year). Israelis too could not miss the chance of outflanking left-wing Arab States with a base of operations on the Red Sea. They have started digging in under the pretext of training the Ethiopian army.

Despite this formidable line-up against the Eritrean people the front has grown strong enough to launch new attacks against Addis Ababa. Overland communication in Eritrea has been almost totally disrupted and a large part of the countryside is under the administration of the ELF (that is exactly what has prompted the recent genocidal bombing). In a dramatic ambush in November the guerillas of the ELF killed the Commander of Ethiopia's Second Army.

The Eritrean people have not only suffered enough but also tasted enough of victory against the enemy to relent now that repression has reached a new height of ferocity. As Osman Salah Sabeh, leader of the ELF, pointed out in a recent interview, the struggle will continue until they can obtain "complete independence for Eritrea and create a na-

tional unity among Eritreans—Muslims and Christians—belonging to different tribes...and establish a popular, socialist and democratic government.”

Orissa

It's Not Too Late

PRAFULIA KUMAR SENAPATY

IN the first week of December, the verdict of death passed by the sessions court in Andhra on N. B. Pattanaik, the veteran CPI (ML) leader of Orissa, and three other peasant guerillas created a stir in the sensitive minds of some intellectuals, poets, social workers, advocates and students. The daily reports of indiscriminate, brutal and hideous police atrocity in newspapers were also a cause for anxiety and concern for them. The gruesome police methods adopted for grilling, the stark refusal, it seems, to listen to the voice of conscience on the part of the police personnel and yankee-modelled bureaucrats, steered in methods of torture during the British colonial rule and now revising that forgotten art in the neo-colonial phase of India with the green go-ahead light from Indira's socialist regime, are appalling. Police victimisation and repression is now not merely confined to the communist activists but has even affected innocent citizens. At the slightest, unfounded suspicion of the police, the adivasis of Koraput, a CPI(ML) base, and of Nilgiri, a CPM base, are subjected to inhuman torture. Cap-

ture of the innocent adivasis, then death by shooting, is the normal ethics now operating there. One such instance was the murder of Gambhir Bhuyan at the hands of the police in Koraput in 1970. It was reported in Oriya newspapers, *Samaj* and *Prajatantra*, that he died in an encounter. (These two Oriya dailies never pretend to maintain that facade of honesty and veracity which the bourgeois papers do occasionally to confuse and bewilder the masses. Every report from the government in connection with the Naxalites is presumed by them to be sacrosanct). But the truth as unmasked by a PSP MLA, Mr Biraja Roy, who visited Mr Bhuyan's home, interviewed his wife and other people of the locality, was that Mr Bhuyan's case was one of cold-blooded murder by the police on suspicion of his collusion with the Marxist-Leninists. Roy also stated that rape of adivasi women, and plundering adivasis' property have become the acquired, accepted and legitimate right of the police. The unbridled authority given to the police by their paymaster, Indira's Congress in the case of West Bengal, and by the Swatantra and the Jana Congress in the case of Orissa, has taken away even the semblance of democracy and freedom and converted the fundamental rights into fairy tales. After all, nationalisation of banks and abolition of privy purses are definitely a serious undermining of the fundamental right (the right to property) ! Mrs Gandhi has to secure bank nationalisation with the consent and the appeasement of the bankers and pay heavy compensation to them and the neo-rulers, because of the "fundamental" right to property. But the same fundamental right (the right to property) takes on altogether a different dimension in the case of the adivasis of Koraput when a goat or a hen of those wretched of the earth, acquired after years' toil, is pillaged to feed pot-bellied police officers.

The painful political panorama now prevailing in the whole of India, shattering the last vestiges of democracy and decency and tending to

wards the rule of police thugs, is, of course, not new in the history of a country's revolutionary phase. It is just an echo of those bygone days of French Algeria, Chiang's China, Batista's Cuba and Daladier's Vietnam. It has also contemporary parallels in Thieu-Ky's South Vietnam and Lon Nol's Cambodia. But while in Vietnam, where a regular war is being fought, obviously curtailing and negating the fundamental rights, a My Lai could raise a storm and force the Nixon administration to try the offenders, unfortunately here in India even if there is no such declared war, the police actions in the streets of Calcutta and in the jungles of Koraput do not claim the attention of the civilised man to the extent to which it should. These, indeed, should prompt us to shake off our old style of thinking and make us adopt a new perspective to assess the situation. It is good news that some enlightened people of Orissa, pre-eminent among them, the ex-Chief Minister, Mr Nabakrushna Choudhury, have woken up to the urgency of the situation and formed a Civil Rights Defence Committee with Prabir Palit, an advocate of Orissa High Court, as its convenor. The committee, composed of the Sarvodaya leader, Sm Malati Choudhury, the Marxist poet, Rabindranath Singh, the CPI leader Gobindo Mohanty, the CPM leader, Laxmana Pattanaik, the advocate, Aswini Jena, Haridas Chakravarty, Rabindranath Sahoo and many others will take measures, legal and otherwise, to see that the death sentence on N. B. Pattanaik and others is commuted, that Manmohan Misra, the labour leader arrested in Simdega, is released from jail and the cool, calculated police hunt for heads, so systematically planned out, is exposed ruthlessly.

NOTICE

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View from Delhi

Return To Anti-Congressism

FROM A POLITICAL
CORRESPONDENT

MRS Indira Gandhi's election strategist perhaps did not anticipate the atavistic return to anti-Congressism now being witnessed all over. It is anti-Congressism of the 1967-vintage, with the difference that the so-called reactionary wing of the Congress is part of the opposition compact. It is easier for the right to unite against the ruling Congress, than for the left. The SSP has solved its dilemma in a predictable fashion. As in 1967, it has opted for a two-front strategy, joining the right and the left at the same time. The CPI needs to support the Congress-R strategically but tactically it has to clash with it because there is bound to be a Congress-R candidate opposing the CPI candidate except perhaps in a dozen seats across the country, the adjustments being limited to Bihar and Kerala. Mrs Gandhi's "image" is supposed to make up for any damage anti-Congressism may bring to the ruling party.

Election forecasting is not the function of mere arithmetic. Often political judgment has proved more correct than the sophisticated models being built all the time. It is being slowly realised by Mrs Gandhi's strategists that all their assumptions, largely based on a mixture of metaphysics and arithmetic, may go away.

In the first place, even if Mrs Gandhi wins 300 seats as the optimistic of her supporters hope, it would be an amorphous right of centre constellation in the Parliamentary Party of the ruling Congress. It would be in Mrs Gandhi's interest, as was pointed out last week, to keep her victories down to 220 so that she would be heading a minority Government with the backing of parties like the CPI and the DMK. If she gets 280 or 300 seats, she might not be the Prime Minister in the first place and

there would be heavy rightist party pressure on her. The lists from the Pradeshes are packed with the so-called reactionary elements and there is even a surreptitious attempt to keep out the pseudo-radicals on Mrs Gandhi's bandwagon. Mrs Gandhi is trying to counter this by inducting representatives of the new political elite, the sentimental-leftists who were the CPI until the other day and now think the way to socialism lies through the board rooms of public sector undertakings. Mr Mohan Kumaramangalam is among them.

The mini-Syndicate in the ruling Congress is not a new phenomenon. Its presence is being felt more openly now. Mr Chavan has to build an all-India faction if he has to make a bid for Prime Ministership. No wonder the Maharashtra list keeps out six outgoing members who are known to have voted for Mr V. V. Giri at the Presidential election, Mr Mohanlal Sukhadia and Mr Brahmananda Reddy are trying to keep the Prime Minister's supporters out of their lists. The bosses are everything, once again. Mr Jagjivan Ram is trying to pack his nominees into the list of candidates for the Scheduled Caste seats.

The strategy is simple. If Mrs Gandhi wins under 220 seats, the composition of her Parliamentary Party would be such that a patch-up and, ultimately, unity with the rival Congress would be possible. It might be a coalition of the two Congress parties if not outright merger of the two into one. There will be a confrontation in the party between Mrs Gandhi and her rivals, Mr Chavan and Mr Jagjivan Ram. She would favour heading a minority Government with the support of parties like the DMK and the CPI while the others might insist on a rapprochement with the Congress-O.

The Congress-O knows that its alliance cannot come anywhere near winning power at the Centre. All it is interested in is the ouster of Mrs Gandhi. Mr Kamaraj is credited with his master plan for uniting the two parties after the elections. But

everything depends on Mrs Gandhi failing to win an absolute majority.

The allies of the ruling Congress are the most disillusioned lot. The CPI is reconciled to fighting Mrs Gandhi's party in most seats. The PSP, after the failure of talks on seats in Gujarat and Mysore, might find itself opposing the Congress-R. In Mysore, there was even a move for a PSP-Congress-O adjustment of seats. In Andhra Pradesh, Mr Brahmananda Reddy would have none of the CPI's proffered support. In Maharashtra, Mr Chavan wants to keep the CPI out. In sum, Mrs Gandhi's party is seeking allies only in the States where it is weak, as in Tamil Nadu and Kerala and does not want a countrywide policy of adjustments. Mr Jagjivan Ram has seen to this, with his own power ends in view.

The Soviet stakes seem to be the highest in the mid-term elections. Often it is the not-so-beautiful Russian in New Delhi, who will tell you that Mrs Gandhi will win 300 seats, and a couple of vodkas more, it swells to 400. "Pray, why doesn't she win all the 523 seats?" the hardened cynic might be pardoned for whispering. For, the uneasiness in the ruling party circles is no longer a secret. When it was found that the rightists were coming together after all and the Pradesh bosses were packing their lists with vengeance with anti-Indira Gandhi elements, the Prime Minister even made overtures to the CPI(M). Mr Ramamurti had talks with Mr R. K. Khadiolkar, Mr P. N. Haksar of the Prime Minister's Secretariat who is now playing big party politics, and with the Prime Minister herself. It is a measure of the reassertion of anti-Congressism in the country that Mr Ramamurti had to turn down the Prime Minister's offer of seat adjustments with the CPI(M) to fight "right reaction". Mr Ramamurti knew the price his party would have to pay in the long run if it sold itself out for a few seats in the next Lok Sabha. Even the CPI is compelled to feign anti-Congressism now.

January 9, 1971

Workers And Peasants

GEORGE THOMSON

BEFORE the Peasant Reform of 1861, the relations of production in the Russian countryside had been predominantly feudal. The unit of production was the village, or group of villages, which was economically self-sufficient. What the peasants produced was consumed either by themselves or by the landowners, to whom they were in bondage. If there was a surplus, it was disposed of in the local market. Many of the peasants were impoverished as a result of crop failures and debts.

With the rapid growth of commodity production after 1861, these feudal relations were, to a large extent, transformed into capitalist relations, but at the same time the big landowners retained many of their feudal privileges, which thus became a fetter on the development of capitalism. At the beginning of the present century some 15% of the rural population in Russia were rich peasants, that is, capitalist farmers employing wage-labour; some 65% were poor peasants, that is, rural proletarians or semi-proletarians, who had little or no land and lived by selling their labour-power; and the remainder were middle peasants, that is, small-holders, who were being steadily driven down into the proletariat (Lenin, *Collected Works*.)

All sections of the peasantry had a common interest in the complete abolition of feudal relations; but after 1905, when the big bourgeoisie came to terms with the landowners, many of the rich peasants—the kulaks—went over to the counter-revolutionary alliance, while the other sections—the small producers—became increasingly impoverished. Accordingly, the Social-Democrats, the party of the proletariat, set itself the task of winning the widest possible support for the bourgeois-democratic revolution and at the same time of convincing the

poor and middle peasants that their long-term interests lay in joining forces with the industrial proletariat in the struggle for socialism:

“The Social-Democrats have pointed out repeatedly that the peasant movement sets before them a twofold task. Unquestionably, we must support this movement and spur it on, inasmuch as it is a revolutionary-democratic movement. At the same time we must unswervingly maintain our proletarian class point of view, we must organise the rural proletariat, like the urban proletariat and together with it, into an independent class party; we must explain to it that its interests are antagonistic to those of the bourgeois peasantry; we must call on it to fight for the socialist revolution, and point out to it that liberation from oppression and poverty lies, not in converting several sections of the peasantry into petty bourgeois, but only in replacing the entire bourgeois system by the socialist system.” (CW 8.231, cf. 4.422, 9.237, 10.438.)

“Every advance in science and technology inevitably and relentlessly undermines the foundations of small-scale production in capitalist society; and it is the task of socialist political economy to investigate this process in all its forms, often complicated and intricate, and to demonstrate to the small producer the impossibility of his holding his own under capitalism, the hopelessness of peasant farming under capitalism, and the necessity for the peasant to adopt the standpoint of the proletariat.” (CW 15.35.)

Turning to China, we note that, although individual farming had been established there much longer than in Russia, the relations of production in the Chinese countryside remained predominantly feudal right down to 1949:

“Among the peasant masses a system of individual economy has prevailed for thousands of years, with each family or household forming a productive unit. This scattered, individual form of production is the economic foundation of feudal rule and keeps the peasants in perpetual poverty.” (Mao, *Selected Works*, 3.156, cf. 1.18.)

The following assessment of the peasantry was made by Chairman Mao in 1939:

“The peasantry constitutes approximately 80% of China’s total population and is the main force in her national economy today.

“A sharp process of polarisation is taking place among the peasantry.

“First, the rich peasants. They form about 5% of the rural population (or about 10% together with the landlords) and constitute the rural bourgeoisie. Most of the rich peasants in China are semi-feudal in character, since they let a part of their land, practise usury and ruthlessly exploit the farm labourers. But they generally engage in labour themselves and in this sense are part of the peasantry. The rich-peasant form of production will remain useful for a definite period. Generally speaking, they might make some useful contribution to the anti-imperialist struggle of the peasant masses and stay neutral in the agrarian revolutionary struggle against the landlords...

“Second, the middle peasants. They form about 20% of China’s rural population. They are economically self-supporting...and generally they do not exploit others but are exploited by imperialism, the landlord class, and the bourgeoisie. They have no political rights...Not only can the

middle peasants join the anti-imperialist revolution but they can also accept socialism. Therefore the whole middle peasantry can be a reliable ally of the proletariat and is an important motive force of the revolution...

"Third, the poor peasants. The poor peasants in China, together with the farm labourers, form about 70% of the rural population. They are the broad peasant masses, with no land or insufficient land, the semi-proletariat of the countryside, the biggest motive force of the Chinese revolution, the natural and most reliable ally of the proletariat and the main contingent of China's revolutionary forces." (Mao, SW 2.323).

When we compare this assessment with Lenin's, we see that in China the worker-peasant alliance had a broader basis, and that this difference was due to the emergence of a new contradiction—the contradiction between the Chinese people and imperialism. By placing itself at the head of the struggle against imperialism, the Chinese proletariat was able to effect a shift in the balance of class forces and so to isolate the main enemy in the countryside—the feudal landlords. It was able to do this because it was guided, through the Communist Party by Lenin's theory of allies as applied to China by Mao Tse-tung.

The Lumpen-proletariat

Thus, the worker-peasant alliance consists basically of an alliance between the industrial workers and the poor peasants, that is, the urban and rural proletariat and semi-proletariat. It remains to consider the lumpen-proletariat. This section is composed of declassed, demoralised elements, not regularly engaged in production, unorganised and to a large extent unorganisable. In the early days of the working-class movement, when the proletariat was still struggling to become conscious of itself as a separate class and to develop the solidarity and discipline necessary for the

creation of trade unions, the lumpen-proletariat was seen as a danger to the movement rather than a potential asset:

"The 'dangerous class', the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society, may, here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution; its conditions of life, however, prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue." (*Communist Manifesto*.)

A similar warning was given by Lenin in 1918, when the Russian workers were struggling to reorganise production in the chaotic conditions created by the war:

"Undoubtedly, the war is corrupting people both in the rear and at the front; people who are working on war supplies are paid far above the rates, and this attracts all those who hid themselves to keep out of the war, the vagabond and semi-vagabond elements, who are imbued with one desire, to 'grab' something and clear out. But these elements are the worst that has remained of the old capitalist system and are the vehicles of all the old evils; these we must kick out, remove, and we must put in the factories all the best proletarian elements and form them into the nuclei of future socialist Russia." (CW, 26.468).

With this may be compared the following appraisal by Chairman Mao:

"Apart from all these, there is the fairly large lumpen-proletariat, made up of peasants who have lost their land and handicraftsmen who cannot get work. These lead the most precarious existence of all... One of China's difficult problems is how to handle these people. Brave fighters but apt to be destructive, they can become a revolutionary force if given proper guidance." (SW, 1.19.)

"China's status as a colony and

semi-colony has given rise to a multitude of rural and urban unemployed. Denied proper means of making a living, many of them are forced to resort to illegitimate ones, hence the robbers, gangsters, beggars and prostitutes, and the numerous people who live on superstitious practices. This social stratum is unstable; while some are apt to be bought over by the reactionary forces, others may join the revolution. These people lack constructive qualities and are given to destruction rather than construction; after joining the revolution they become a source of roving-rebel and anarchist ideology in the revolutionary ranks. Therefore, we should know how to remould them and guard against their destructiveness." (SW, 2.325.)

This more positive appraisal reflects the advance of the international working-class movement. In the new era introduced by the October Revolution, even the lumpen-proletariat, given proletarian leadership, is capable of playing a positive part in the struggle against imperialism.

Proletariat in the West

At this point the question may be asked, why it is that there has not been a socialist revolution in any of the advanced capitalist countries of the West? In their early years Marx and Engels expected that the first socialist revolution would break out in Western Europe, but this expectation was not fulfilled. At the time of the October Revolution Russia was the most backward state in Europe. At the end of the second world war there were socialist revolutions in several countries in central and eastern Europe, but not in the West; and China in 1949 was more backward than Russia in 1917.

This question needs to be considered in connection with the converse question, why did the Russian and Chinese revolutions take place when they did? The answer lies, as we have seen, in the uneven development of capitalism. In these coun-

tries the bourgeoisie was still struggling to shake off the shackles of feudalism at a time when in the advanced countries of the West it had already reached the stage of imperialism. It was weakened still further in Russia by its dependence on Western capital and in China by imperialist oppression. The proletariat, on the other hand, was strengthened in Russia by drawing on the revolutionary experience of the West, and in China by the example of the October Revolution and the support of the Soviet Union. These external factors combined to intensify the internal contradictions and to shift the balance of class forces in favour of the proletariat.

In the West, where the development of capitalism had begun much earlier, feudalism had been completely eliminated, and from the beginning the bourgeoisie had been enriching themselves from the plunder of America and India. In this way they strengthened their position at home. Drawing on the immense profits of colonial exploitation, they made substantial concessions to the industrial workers and bought over many of their leaders. Hence, in addition to the gulf dividing the proletariat of the metropolitan country from the workers and peasants of the colonies, the metropolitan proletariat was itself divided and infected to a considerable extent with bourgeois ideology. The effect of imperialism in these countries was to mitigate the internal contradictions and to shift the balance of class forces in favour of the bourgeoisie.

That this was Lenin's opinion is clear from many passages in his writings :

"Only the proletarian class, which maintains the whole of society, can bring about the social revolution. However, as a result of the colonial policy, the European proletarian finds himself *partly* in a position in which it is not his own labour, but the labour of the practically enslaved

natives in the colonies, that maintains the whole of society... In certain countries this provides the material and economic basis for infesting the proletariat with colonial chauvinism." (CW, 13.77, cf. 21.243.)

"Is the *actual* condition of the workers in the oppressor and in the oppressed nations the same, from the standpoint of the national question? No, it is not the same.

"(1) *Economically*, the difference is that sections of the working class in the oppressor nations receive crumbs from the *super-profits* which the bourgeoisie of these nations obtains by extra exploitation of the workers of the oppressed nations. Besides, economic statistics show that here a *larger* percentage of the workers become 'straw bosses' than in the oppressed nations, a *larger* percentage rise to the labour *aristocracy*. That is a fact. To a *certain degree* the workers of the oppressor nations are partners of *their own* bourgeoisie in plundering the workers (and the mass of the population) of the oppressed nations.

"(2) *Politically*, the difference is that, compared with the workers of the oppressed nations, they occupy a *privileged* position in many spheres of political life.

"(3) *Ideologically*, or spiritually, the difference is that they are taught, at school and in life, disdain and contempt for the workers of the oppressed nations." (CW, 23.55.)

"It would be expedient perhaps to emphasise more strongly and to express more vividly in our programme the prominence of the handful of the richest imperialist countries, which prosper parasitically by robbing colonies and weaker nations. This is an extremely important feature of imperialism. To a certain extent it facilitates the rise of powerful revolutionary movements in countries subjected to imperialist plunder and in danger of being crushed and partitioned by

the giant imperialists (such as Russia), and on the other hand tends to a certain extent to prevent the rise of profound revolutionary movements in the countries that plunder by imperialist methods many colonies and foreign lands, and thus make a comparatively large portion of their population *participants* in the division of the imperialist loot." (CW, 26.168, cf. 29. 123, 31.191, 230.)

"However, in regard to Britain it must not be forgotten that...the percentage of workers and office employees who enjoy a petty bourgeois standard of living is exceptionally high, due to the actual enslavement of millions of people in Britain's colonial possessions." (CW, 32.456.)

Thus we see that in the metropolitan countries of imperialism even the proletariat, that most revolutionary of classes, may cease to be revolutionary.

At the present day, with the oppressed peoples in revolt all over the world and imperialism heading for total collapse, the situation in Western Europe is beginning to change; but no decisive change can be expected until the proletariat recovers its revolutionary consciousness. Finally, it should be noted that in these advanced capitalist countries the industrial workers form a larger proportion of the total population than in any others. Again we see that the strength of the proletariat is not to be measured by its numbers.

(This is part of an article published in *Broadsheet*)

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Oppenheimer's Offensive In Africa

A. K. ESSACK

MR. Harry Oppenheimer, one of the world's largest mining magnates based in South Africa, scored his first success when his political protege, Mrs Helen Suzman, was able to secure an interview with the Zambian President. Heartened by this, she now plans similar "private visits" and hopes to secure interviews with other African heads of state. She has succeeded where Muller, South Africa's Foreign Minister, would obviously fail. To save his vast financial empire in Africa, Oppenheimer has also begun his own private dialogue with Helen Suzman as his spokesman. In this he also hopes to demonstrate his own political weight as distinct from his economic strength on this continent.

Who does Helen Suzman and her Progressive Party serve? Just where does she and her party stand in relation to the aspirations of the 17 million oppressed in South Africa?

Helen Suzman was an economic history lecturer in the university of Witwatersrand. In the then university climate where the vocal section of the students and lecturers were liberals, Mrs Suzman stood for parliament as a United Party candidate. This party since its inception has devoted itself rabidly to the maintenance of white supremacy in South Africa. It stands for segregation with discrimination in all aspects of the social, economic, political and educational life of the country. During election times, it tries to go even further to the right than the Nationalist Party and has accused Verwoerd and Vorster of doing so much for the blacks. But the UP says that it believes in discrimination with justice. While the Nationalist Party believes in throwing the black man lock, stock and barrel

out of the main legislative bodies of the country, the UP believes that the blacks should be represented in the all-white parliament—by whites. It also believes that there should be justice for the Europeans and that is why when it was in power it initiated, and later as Opposition it supported, every draconian measure aimed at suppressing the oppressed people. It was from this muddy and murky past that Helen Suzman emerged as a member of the Progressive Party in parliament. Soon, she was hailed as a great "crusader for the rights of the Black man, and a fierce opponent of apartheid".

With the forward movement of the oppressed masses in South Africa, farsighted sections of the UP realised that this party offered to the blacks too little and with little weight. Ten or 12 MPs broke and formed the Progressive Party. But this new party was established when there was a strong backlash, for the white electorate was moving further to the right and the result was that the PP's parliamentary wing was decimated. Only Suzman survived thanks to the efforts of Oppenheimer.

It is well known that she stood then and still represents the Parktown Houghton constituency, which is the home of Oppenheimer and other millionaires in Johannesburg. This upper class constituency was won for the PP largely through Oppenheimer's finance and his connections in the area. The English language newspapers supported the UP, but of Helen Suzman they made an exception. They actually asked the electorate to give her the vote against the official UP candidate.

The programme and policy of the

PP was to the left of the UP, that is, it was very much part and parcel of the South African ruling class. The Nationalist Party stood for apartheid; the UP for white domination with justice; and the Progressive Party for equal rights for the "civilised". Despite differences in terminology, the aim of all these three parties was the same, namely the perpetuation of the system of exploitation and white domination. Where these three parties differed was on how this system of oppression and exploitation was to be preserved. That is why Helen Suzman was given all the freedom to denounce apartheid in parliament before Verwoerd and Vorster and for which the blacks would either be banned or flung into jail. Verwoerd knew her role—that she would not destroy white rule in South Africa. In fact the PP has reiterated again and again that its policy alone would save white Christian civilisation in South Africa. How? By getting a small elite into the camp of the oppressor from the oppressed. This tiny group is to be showered with bribes and gifts, granted concessions and it then would perform the role of being the guardian of the interests of the financiers inside as well as abroad. The PP thus held out the carrot. To pass the "civilisation" test would mean citizenship rights and escape from the rigours of the pass laws. The whites as of right should acquire this, but the blacks could aspire towards this. In short they had to prove themselves.

Rhodes Policy

No one could dare accuse Cecil John Rhodes of being a friend of the oppressed people. In about 1890 he

For Frontier contact

People's Book House

Meher House,

Cowasji Patel Street,

Fort, Bombay.

evolved the diabolical policy of creating a set of conditions to smoke out the Africans from the Reserves so that immediately they could be netted for the gold mines. On the foundation of this ingenious system of exploitation, he also formulated the doctrine of "Equal rights for the civilised". If the blacks had certain educational and property qualifications, the doors to white society would not be closed to them. To get a part of the blacks on to the side of the oppressive white apparatus was to him the only way of perpetuating the system of exploitation. Astonishing but true, the Progressive Party sixty years later took this basic policy of Rhodes word for word. And this was a time when waves of liberation movement were sweeping Asia and Africa and where Africans were beginning to control their own governments and run the various organs of state machinery. The whites boast that the African population in South Africa is the most literate of any African country. They boast that there are more African graduates in South Africa than anywhere on the African continent. Further, South Africa has a very large urban African population with over 1½ million employed in secondary industries and half a million working in the mines. But that is precisely the reason why they have even greater claims to be granted full democratic rights, because it is by such labour in the factories, farms and mines that they have contributed to the prosperity of South Africa. But the greater their claim on the strength of their increased participation in the economic march of the country, the more repressive the machinery becomes. The Progressive Party policy has not shifted basically since its formation. It still stands for: 1) Denial of citizenship rights to over 98% of the African people 2) maintenance of the present land division where 87% of the land is in the hands of the whites. It wants to perpetuate the land hunger of the Africans when about 80% of the population is squeezed into less than 13% of the land. But

it wants to repeal the Group Areas Act so that a small stratum of the black population with wealth would be granted the right to buy land in "European areas". (3) Segregation in education at all levels except the university where future leaders of the blacks are to be trained. (4) Residential segregation, but it believes that it should be voluntary. (5) Continuation of the system of migratory labour which dooms the African miner to perpetual poverty and early death.

The Progressive Party says it wants to eliminate all legislation that discriminates and prevents the movement of labour and prevents it from selling it to the highest bidder. Therefore it wants relaxation of the influx laws. It is also opposed to job reservation. It does so, not for any concern for the black but rather to benefit the white bourgeoisie. These industrial magnates have found the white labour not only unreliable, but also very expensive. Relaxation or elimination of the colour bar laws would mean opening the doors for greater exploitation of the blacks, for they would be forced to accept less pay than the whites while doing the same work.

Mrs Suzman has been built up by a certain section of the white ruling class as a Defender of the "black man's rights". But whatever defence there has been, it is within the framework of the Progressive Party policy. Her verbal battles against the crazy apartheid measures have been widely publicised by Western world agencies. She has been built up as an international figure for a particular reason. Her role has been to act as a link between the English financiers and a certain section of the African, coloured and Indian propertied and educated sections. The aim is to detach these sections of the population from the road of armed struggle and to project the hope of peaceful solutions. Her value thus does not lie in so influencing the whites that the PP comes into power. Her role has been

to spread the idea of changes to be wrought peacefully. Now her new role has been to act as a messenger for Oppenheimer and to contact certain leaders of African States.

It was Rhodes' vision that one day Africa would be linked from Cape to Cairo. Oppenheimer, his real successor, has carried out this dream, but in a slightly different way. Today Oppenheimer subsidiaries, the various Anglo-American concerns dot the the African horizons, and starting with De Beers in South Africa, it has concerns right up to Mauretania in the north. And in a feat rare in history, he has the distinction of operating with equal ease under socialism on the one hand and apartheid on the other. And from both these systems he has been able to extract huge profits. But now Oppenheimer's financial empire is being threatened. He senses the threat is coming from the Left. Already for instance the governments of Zambia and Tanzania have taken a controlling interest in his concerns. And as the trend shows countries are becoming more and more determined to control their own resources. Oppenheimer's monopolies have become a stumbling block. For instance, Zambia with the third phase of its economic reforms could now acquire 100% of Oppenheimer's copper mines by a simple administrative procedure within the framework of the MINDECO. Thus Oppenheimer would very much like to know what is to be the future of his concerns. He certainly has no intention of committing financial harakiri. He is already heavily committed to the manufacture of arms for Vorster's South Africa. His subsidiary, the LTA has cornered the major portion of the engineering contract of the Cabora Bassa dam. In other words it is clear that he has taken sides in the coming battle for the reconquest of Africa. His purpose then is to soften the African States, disarm them ideologically, induce them to relax their vigilance and thus make it easier for counter-revolution to strike at them.

Calcutta Diary

GYAN KAPUR

IT is not often that one can find anything for which the Calcutta Corporation can be praised. But when praise is due it must be given. In spite of its being very much hard up, just short of bankruptcy, to be exact, a lot of money has been wasted recently in mounting an advertisement campaign through the local press against the Centre's niggardliness. Even if the charges are genuine, it seems sheer waste of money to throw it away on newspaper advertisements when the same effect could be had by statements. It is nobody's case so far that the Mayor's statements are not given the press publicity due to them.

Be that as it may, the recent announcement through an advertisement of the opening of seven new primary schools in the Corporation's own buildings is welcome. Our press being what it is, one doubts whether the matter would have received any publicity at all. As such, one should not perhaps cavil at the money spent.

What is more pleasing in the announcement is the fact that out of the seven schools, one will be in the Hindi medium while the others will be in Bengali. According to a rough estimate, 50% to more than 50% per cent of the population of Calcutta is non-Bengali. So far, however, apart from economic demands raised through workers' movements, this large body of people have more or less remained aloof from the mainstream of life in the city. The fault, if any, can be shared equally by both groups. If the aliens have chosen to be so by and large, the local people have also done little to show that they think about the whole of Calcutta, including all its people. Opening of such schools, if it betokens a change in the attitude, is welcome. In time, no doubt, this may be reciprocated by a change in outlook of the outsiders, perhaps leading to an improvement in the civic services as

a result of a large number of people taking an interest in the affairs of the Corporation. The opening of such schools for different language groups is a step far removed from the previous attitude typified by limiting the distribution of free Bengali textbooks to only those schoolchildren whose mother-tongue it is.

Lest the above is misconstrued, I wish to say once again that I could not care less if the present system of higher education breaks down and is replaced by something nearer the needs of the common people. There has developed a sort of imperialistic exploitation in higher education in our country. At the cost of the tax-payer, direct and indirect, we are training up young men to man the hospitals, factories and laboratories of the UK and the USA. They get them fully trained up and get them very cheap indeed. This is what our education system is doing for us, when the villages and even cities cannot get medical aid. The best most often go overseas and remain there. Most of the others are up against the wall, while a fortunate few get the jobs. And the poor people pay for it all, with taxes on kerosene, matches, cloth and other necessities.

If for each hundred students in higher education we can teach reading and writing up to primary level to a thousand boys and girls, I would prefer that and let higher education take care of itself.

After all we are going to have the fun of elections in full at one stroke, the only point left to be settled being whether it will be on one day or two or more. Judging by the political parties' preferences, they would not like it to be spread over two or more days. Even if the results are announced only after full polling, there are always kite-flying reports about

the trend of voting and no one is prepared to take the risk of such reports influencing the results.

As a consequence, whatever the slogans and posters might say, it is a certainty that, come polling eve, policemen, including CRP, will make a beeline for this State from all over India and they will have to be welcomed by all, including those who campaigned against 'foreign' police. That perhaps, is perhaps only to be expected. We must all pay the price set on a thing, when we are keen to have it at any cost.

* *

Citizens of Calcutta who take their milk from the Government Dairy must thank the employees and the Government for a novel experience. With the starting of the new month on the 10th, those who failed to get their milk cards renewed before the 5th are in the happy position of getting milk without payment. Employees, of course, hoped that the Government would come to a settlement, faced with the problem of cash collections. But they did not count on the ingenuity of Mr B. B. Ghosh's Government. It simply decided to hand out milk without payment, a decision which apparently caught the employees unawares.

We should all be thankful to the West Bengal Government if this is to be a new pattern. Thus if bus or tramwaymen have to enforce their demands, all they should do is to stop selling the tickets and they are sure to get the sympathy of the public at large who will not have to pay any fares. The Government also no doubt would become popular, should it apply its new policy wherever possible.

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'Freedom Of The Press'

K. C.

THE *Basumati*, one of the oldest Bengali dailies of Calcutta, has not been coming out since November 16. Finding it a source of "continuous trouble", the owner, Mr A. K. Sen, a former Union Minister, has closed it down, throwing over 500 people out of employment. The employees working under the *Basumati Private Limited* which brings out three papers—daily, weekly, and monthly *Basumati*—and runs and manages a big publication section, have been deprived of their salaries for the closure period. The wages for September were given in instalments while those for October were not paid at all.

The West Bengal Labour Commissioner thrice arranged for tripartite conferences in November and December to settle the dispute but neither Mr Sen nor any one on behalf of the management attended the conciliation meetings. And so the employees had only one way of expressing their grievances, the old way of a "peaceful democratic trade union movement." The protest meetings organised by them at the gates of *Basumati* have been addressed by Mr Jyoti Basu, Mr Jatin Chakravarty, Mr Biswanath Mukherjee and even leaders of the West Bengal Pradesh Congress(R) to which Mr Sen himself belongs. But no immediate opening of the paper is in sight.

That Mr Sen has been thinking in terms of closing down the *Basumati* permanently was evident in his attitude and direct provocation to the employees. In September last year the editor, Mr Vivekananda Mukherjee, was unceremoniously and summarily dismissed. Mr Mukherjee incurred Mr Sen's displeasure by consistently opposing his direct interference in editorial work. Following agitation by employees the management was, however, compelled to reinstate Mr Mukherjee who, since 1963, helped increase the circulation of the

paper from 6,000 to nearly 1,00,000.

Immediately after the closure Mr Mukherjee went to Delhi to meet the Prime Minister and the Union Information Minister seeking their intervention in the *Basumati* affairs. They were reported to have given a sympathetic hearing to Mr Mukherjee but nothing has been done yet.

Mr Mukherjee, in a memorandum to the Prime Minister, has openly alleged that many of his writings have been distorted, deleted and withheld without his knowledge by Mr Sen and his "agents". It was after the sudden boom in circulation of the *Dainik Basumati* during the food movement in 1966 that Mr Sen started interfering with editorial work. Fabricated and distorted versions of important news items had to be published; also tendentious writings behind the back of the editor and sometimes in spite of his protests. In 1967, when Mr P. C. Ghose became the Chief Minister of West Bengal, the first and second leaders on the political situation were altogether deleted secretly at the instruction of Mr Sen and only two small paragraphs were published as main editorials. In 1969, during the mid-term election in the State, three consecutive editorials were totally suppressed without the editor's permission. "Any writing criticising U.S. imperialism was withheld by Mr Sen. Even an innocent article on Ho Chi Minh was rudely censored."

Mr Mukherjee in his memorandum also states that the employees of the *Basumati* are poorly paid, much below the actual scales recommended by the Wage Board and that they have been fighting against non-fulfilment of minimum economic demands, mismanagement, corruption and the highhandedness of the management.

Towards the end of December, 1962, Mr Sen, then Union Law Minister, became the real owner of the *Basumati* group of papers and the book publication section by virtue of a "benami" purchase in a High Court sale. Later, Mr Sen managed to transfer the ownership and manage-

ment of the *Basumati* to the newly constituted *Basumati (Pvt) Ltd.* The directors of the company are reported to be all Mr Sen's aides and henchmen.

The present phase of agitation by the *Basumati* employees began in September last year mainly in protest against non-payment of wages. But far from conceding their legitimate demands Mr Sen resorted to victimisation. Four union leaders were dismissed when employees under their leadership raised their voice against the management for not depositing provident fund contributions with the appropriate authority. In the last week of October, a notice was given that wages for October would not be paid. However, on November 5, another notice was served to the effect that wages for October would be paid on November 9 but with deductions on two accounts. The employees filed objections to the proposed deductions. On November 9, instead of paying the wages, the management issued another notice intimating that the payment would be made on November 16. The employees meanwhile held a meeting and passed a resolution demanding payment of wages for October by November 12. As payment was not made on November 12, representatives of the employees called on Mr B. S. Bose, a director, who told them that Mr Sen was coming to Calcutta the same night with Rs 50,000 and payment would be made on the following day. On their insistence on immediate part payment to a section of low-paid employees who could not draw their weekly rations, Mr Bose asked the cashier to disburse the ready money of nearly Rs 19,000 among the workers. But on November 13, the employees received a notice signed by Mr Bose alleging that the money had been forcibly taken away from the cash by the employees the previous evening and that the directors were forced to sign the pay-sheet and to issue the necessary pay-order.

On November 14, Mr A. K. Sen came to the *Basumati* office. As he was passing through the main pas-

sage leading to the staircase, he found Mr Nilmoni Mandal, an employee and union leader, talking to one of his colleagues. Mr Sen allegedly caught hold of him and beat him. The news of the assault spread and representatives of the *Basumati* employees, both journalists and non-journalists, together with leaders of journalist and non-journalist unions of other newspaper establishments called on Mr Sen. Expressing regret for losing temper he promised that the payment for October would be given by November 18 and there would be no victimisation of employees. He also assured the employees that the retrenchment notice served on the cinema editor would be withdrawn and a written agreement incorporating the above terms was signed by both the management and the union on November 16. But far from keeping his promise Mr Sen surprisingly declared a closure on the morning of November 16.

Allegation of financial irregularities, one should recollect, had resulted in a probe by the CBI.

The employees and workers unions, in two separate letters to the WBPCCR President, Mr Bijoy Singh Nahar, and the ruling Congress leader, Mr Jagjivan Ram, have expressed deep resentment over the WBPCCR's decision to nominate Mr Sen for a parliamentary seat. They have stated that if Mr Sen is given nomination, a *Basumati* journalist would contest him, backed by the CPI(M)-led United Left Front and the CPI-led Eight Party Combination.

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Anti-Yank Bumblebees

The ingenious Vietcong employ bumblebees, fire-flies and tiger fat in their war against the Americans and South Vietnamese Army, defectors say.

Fire-flies are used for signalling. They need no special care and are used to draw the allies into ambush positions, according to the defectors questioned by U.S. experts on North Vietnamese affairs. Vietcong outposts are given small penicillin bottles filled with fire-flies and told to wave the bottle when an allied patrol approaches.

Defectors say the fire-flies can be seen for at least 250 yards.

Bumblebees have been trained to attack U.S. soldiers and South Vietnamese Rangers, the defectors told U.S. and South Vietnamese questioners at the Chieu Hoi (open arms) centre. A defector who served as a bumblebee trainer said the Vietcong had at least 90 hives of the militant bees in Long An and Kien Hoa.

The bee trainer said that after a hive of bumblebees was located in the jungle a trainer would make daily approaches to the hive until the bees became used to his presence. After a week or so, the trainer approaches the hive with his hand coated with molasses and allows the bees to come out of the hive and eat the molasses from his hand.

A week or more of the molasses treatment and the bees are tame enough to allow the trainer to use pruning shears to detach the hive from its branch and transport it to a desired spot.

There a Communist trainer clad in protective clothing to guard against stings dons as an outer garment a U.S. or South Vietnamese Ranger uniform. The trainer in the allied uniform approaches the hive and beats it with a stick. When the bees emerge and attack the trainer he rolls on the ground to simulate the agonies of a human being stung by the bees, whose stings are so venomous that in

numbers they can kill a water buffalo.

Several such attacks on the hive and the bees learn to recognize the uniform and will attack it without provocation, defectors told their interrogators.

When the bees are fully trained, they are placed along a trail likely to be used by allied patrols. A small booby trap is rigged on the trail to be tripped by an unwary soldier. A small charge is placed against the hive to blow it open and enrage the bees. When the booby trap is tripped the bees swarm out, spot the allied uniforms and attack.

The bee training programme has been described in Communist pamphlets as well as by defectors, North Vietnamese affairs experts say, but military sources say they are unaware of any combat deaths caused by the bees although there are many instances of allied soldiers being stung by wild bees in Vietnam.

Scraps of tiger skin or tiger fat are among the means used by the Vietcong to dissuade pursuit by U.S. Army scout dogs. These are left in the trail by retreating Communist units. The dogs scent the tiger skin or fat, are terrified and refuse to continue trailing the fleeing Vietcong.

If attacked by a scout or sentry dog, Vietcong sappers are trained to drop to their knees. The Communists have learned that the dogs are trained to leap for the throats of taller Americans and the dog will sail over the head of the crouching Vietcong sapper, defectors say.

As the dog passes overhead, the sapper is instructed to seize the dog's genitals, immobilizing him and preventing him from giving an alarm. Then the sapper is trained to strangle the dog.

The Vietcong have also found a way of inducing U.S. scout and sentry dogs to defect. They parade female dogs in heat around the area and lure the American dogs from their posts.

(Bangkok World)

Porpoises

The Pentagon has confirmed that

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it has sent a number of porpoises to Vietnam to perform certain secret war duties. A spokesman... said the unit in Vietnam had been set up "for the purposes of evaluating a surveillance and detection system using porpoises". All information is classified.

According to a well-informed report in the newspaper San Diego Union, the porpoises which have been sent to Vietnam can be used to retrieve lost missiles, guide frogmen back to their base and distinguish between metals. Some day, porpoises could also be trained to penetrate enemy harbours. (*The Times*)

And The Men

"At one camp," reports entertainer Johnny Grant, who spent Christmas night in the field, "we heard the grunts cheer enthusiastically which they learned that two of their own officers had just been killed in a Vietcong ambush."

... "One night," recalls a captain in the First Air Cavalry Division, "I went out to check our perimeter and I found everybody—I mean everybody—asleep in five bunkers in a row. I just decided enough was enough, and at the last bunker, I woke the men up and took their names. I was walking away when I heard one of the guys yell, 'I'm gonna kill you, you mother-f---'. I heard him pull the pin, and I went down fast into a ditch. The frag (fragmentation grenade) sailed right past me and went off a few feet away." (*Newsweek*).

Paintings By Rabin Mandal

By An Art Critic

IN his latest one-man show at the Gallery Chemould at Park Street, Rabin Mandal, a re-nowned contemporary painter of Calcutta, exhibited eleven of his paintings based on primitive formalisations.

Rabin Mandal is one of those

painters who believe that primitive artefacts are more sensitive and evocative than anything created by intellectual beings. And primitive art is purer because it is not governed by our so-called civilized inhibitions. He tries to speak to us in a language which has the capacity to move into the sub-terranean region of our mind. He has been successful in producing something which has the supra-rational or perhaps sub-rational capacity as that of a primitive idol or totem pole. His *Festivity I* and *Festivity II* are very ambitious canvases. 'King and Queen', 'Royal Family', 'Adam and Eve' and 'Man and Woman' also deserve special mention.

His passage of colours is never flat. With small strokes of bright and vibrant hues he creates such a well-knit texture that if even a small portion of it is cut out and viewed separately it will appear to be a perfect composition. He has so greatly improved upon his technique in the last two or three years that one looks forward to seeing his future works.

Letters

"Not By Calcutta Alone"

So the Reader from Gauhati in his letter "The Betrayers" (December 19) has conceded the point that movements like the Naxalite one 'are always an inevitable part of the greater revolutionary struggle', although he does not seem to agree with what he calls 'the methods adopted by them'. What is happening in Calcutta has very often and wrongly taken to mean all that is the Naxalite movement. There are so many of us who believe that an armed revolution is the only path for India and yet so many of us are unable to agree with the individual acts of terrorism that have unfortunately come to mean the Naxalite movement. But such 'excesses' are again the preludes and at present the wind seems to be blowing in the proper direction. Calcutta never was and never is the centre of the Naxalite movement and it would

be wrong to draw conclusions from what has been happening in that city. The CPI(ML) has at last emerged as a political force to be reckoned with (notwithstanding the difference between the different State units) and it is this party that holds up hope for all those who really want to overthrow the present order and usher in the dictatorship of the proletariat. The enemies of this party would only happily wish to see its activities being centred round educational institutions, post offices and family planning units plus the attacks on policemen and a stray official here and there. All this greatly helps them, for then the party would not be able to spread to the rural areas and at the same time the repression could be conveniently continued. Happily that is not happening. Urban terror tactics are not the only identifying factor of this movement. Differences have cropped up between Charu Majumdar and other party units and the latest resolution of the Uttar Pradesh Committee of the CPI(ML) is a pointer in this direction. The UP Committee has emphasized that Mr Majumdar has confused the two stages of a socialist revolution, viz., the peoples' democratic revolution and the socialist revolution, and that he has all along been emphasizing individual terrorism. Perhaps this is an over-simplification of Mr Majumdar's line and does not do justice to him. But it does reveal the point that the shift of activities from the rural to the urban areas has not in the least appealed to those who sincerely believe that a revolution is inevitable; that this is to be brought about through armed struggle, viz. guerilla warfare, and not at one stroke by killing individuals and not distinguishing between the rich peasants and the landlord class. One needn't tell Mr Majumdar that a revolution calls for long-term and protracted warfare and that this must be preceded by the creation of a mass base, mainly among the peasants, and that all this may take some time. He for sure knows this. Yet it cannot be denied that the kil-

ling of individuals and the random grouping together of the landlords and the rich peasants have, on the whole, done damage to the movement by creating a sense of insecurity and panic among the villagers. Guerilla warfare alone cannot bring about a revolution, and it will positively damage the cause if implanted on the villagers. For it is they that must fight and they will do so the moment they realise that it is *their* struggle. A single spark can sure light a prairie fire but the grass and shrubs of the prairie must be somewhat dry and ready to burn. Individual killings cannot arouse the masses and the students, and I just don't believe that Mr Majumdar precisely advocates this and nothing more. Perhaps the stress has been a bit too much on this and it can be effectively checked. And at the same time it would do good to keep in mind that all the killings in and around Calcutta have not been committed by the revolutionaries (I wouldn't like to use the word 'Naxalite' for it has come to mean so many other things) and that Calcutta has always been a city of crime. The police seem to be in their luckiest moments for now all crime can so easily be pinned on the 'Naxalites'! But the people know, and the corrupt government knows and our enlightened left (sic!) parties know that with all their gimmicks they cannot push off the coming revolution. For revolutions are greater than bureaucrats, governments, parties ('left' or 'right') and above all our god-like leaders. A night at Beliaghata cannot frighten those who have already staked their presence for a tomorrow that is sure to come. And to make this tomorrow come soon, the CPI(ML) must come together and Mr Majumdar be prepared to rectify errors, if proved. For a split in the CPI(ML) just cannot be afforded and the people will never forgive the leaders if at all for individual standpoints they decide to separate. In a revolution individual views and standpoints have sway only when these are in total accordance with those that are for the

good of *all* the people. I may be charged with repeating already known facts. Yet this is necessary when we are in the danger of falling out just because of 'differences' which can so easily be made up. Let us have faith in the revolutionary masses of our country and bear in mind that "all work done for the masses must start from the needs and not from the desire of any individual, however well-intentioned. It often happens that objectively the masses need a certain change, but subjectively they are not yet conscious of the need, not yet willing or determined to make the change. In such cases, we should wait patiently. We should not make the change until, *through our work*, most of the masses have become conscious of the need and are willing and determined to carry it out. Otherwise we would isolate ourselves from the masses".

URVASHI MITRA,
Gauhati.

Kunnikal Narayanan, ABC (December 26) and many others have been educating us about the wrong policies of the CP(ML). Though not qualified in any way to argue in favour of CP(ML) tactics, I think many people are more overpowered by emotion than cold political reason when they see the head of a kulak, policeman or Marwari moneylender rolling on their way. They are scared to death. Their emotions surcharged, they are not willing to listen to any political argument.

Let us begin from the beginning of it all. The CPM was formed as a protest against revisionism. But almost immediately sincere revolutionaries found out that it was controlled by some tired, worn-out, ageing cowardly parliamentarians. Those revolutionaries had the guts to break the ground at Naxalbari. Then the UF Government suppressed it. Everyone then took it as a childish revolutionary prank of the anarchist Charu Majumdar. But that single spark lit the whole eastern front. How one Charu Majumdar, one Naxalbari

could do it? How does ABC explain the rising youngsters of Calcutta, rising in spite of the hellish torture of policemen? Something is there that drives them to defy death and torture, so that they can lay the foundation stone of the India of their dreams. It is their eagerness to build a socialist India that drives them to get themselves "annihilated" by annihilating the class enemies and oppressors. Does ABC think that the people who die at the hands of American bombers in Indochina are dying because they are fools? People have to pay heavily with their lives, especially in the beginning of the revolutionary stage. And in India only with Naxalbari was a serious start made for capturing State power for the working class. There may be many failures, especially in the initial stages. And what we see in the Naxalite tactics is that they are "studying warfare by doing warfare." First it was only in villages. Then they found out that simultaneously you can experiment in cities also. The cardinal principle should be that you should strike the enemy at his weakest point. That is what they are doing. They may go wrong here and there but they are moving forward. This style need not be a carbon copy of any country.

M. N. D. NAIR
Trivandrum

The Two Films

The tone and timbre of the spate of letters in your journal on *Pratidwandi* and *Interview* are indicative of the political temper of your readers. Here comes the problem of the Editor. In a politically committed journal, you cannot afford to sit and function from the neutral tower of objectivity nor would you like to do so. Yet you have to keep up the facade of an open forum where you have not only to publish occasionally something against your policy but also to entertain letters from those who write a few lines in conformity with their idea of your policy, so that

their letters and names are published. But fortunately you have the right to publish a letter critical of your point of view followed by one which is more favourable to yours and then close the correspondence by the stroke of a few printed letters.

To me, the many letters on the two films have somehow seemed unreal—a sort of shadow boxing. At one end, we come across the benign state of ecstasy of Mr Jyotirmoy Ganguly when his unreason leads him unwittingly to a stand where he is as much unfair to Manik Bandopadhyay as to Mrinal Sen. He arrogates to himself the supreme status of a judge who exercises his right to pass a verdict without showing reasons. At the other end, we have the oracle of your film critic, A. M. Das, who sees 'reality' only in the police terror and guerrilla warfare of Calcutta. I hope, there is a plausible viewpoint—critical and appreciative at the same time—shared, according to the dictionary of the politically committed left, by the 'liberal bourgeoisie' like me and others.

To us, the only meeting point of these two films is the effort of both the directors to tackle the contemporary reality of Calcutta. Even in this effort and inevitably so, the approach could not but be different. To compare or contrast the two films is to be unfair to both the directors. Criticism is bound to lose coherence where the critic is disappointed and therefore adversely vocal because the director (in this case) or the creator did not do what the critic expected him to do. Why Satyajit Ray was not politically committed in his latest film is as irrelevant as why Mrinal Sen was so. It was a matter of individual choice how each tried to grapple with the reality of Calcutta today and from what point of view.

Here a digression is unavoidable. Life in its ruthless complexities presents reality which is all too permissive, floating and fleeting. It is like a stream from which you can just take a bucketful of moments (a span of time) and then devote your creative force to express the reality in a particular art form in such a way that it

retains an artistic totality of truth and expression. Excellence in such an endeavour is reached when in the course of grappling the reality and in the process of utilising the available resources of the particular medium, the creator's perception of the real and the rational is pervaded with an abiding humanism. Such humanism transcends the realm of charity, kindness and similar class-conscious concepts and is permeated with the desirable feelings of sympathy, mercy, nobility, compassion, togetherness and such universal and eternal concepts which are at once beyond class and apolitical as well as entirely progressive and for the people.

In this sense and this sense alone, art is not for art's sake. Creative art can touch the human chord without being didactic or propagandistic. Here the truth and the whole truth becomes synonymous with humanism in its deepest, broadest and boldest sense.

To have the occasion of seeing two such outstanding films in the span of a fortnight is certainly a matter of one's immense good fortune in this era of total decadence, confusion, political deceit, commercialism and what not, that have come in the wake of the degeneration of a nation.

That an art medium could reach such heights of boldness and introspection is the happiest sign that all is not lost so far as the human mind is concerned.

To say this is not to lose sight of the inadequacies inherent in both the films. It is just to record how perspective should operate. The challenge of time, art and craft that has been met by the two directors and with what success deserves an independent essay.

T. B. MUKHERJEE
Calcutta

The line of criticism followed by Haradhan Guin and others in their letter on *Interview* (December 26) is puzzling, if not shocking. The content, and not the form, of the film is their concern and they judge it from

their own standpoint. But form is as much a part of a film as content and the criticism of the one excluding the other tends to become not only incomprehensible but also unwholesome.

They have branded Mrinal Sen a reactionary simply because his hero's protest is "devoid" of any "political orientation", "The hero does not get a job and so rebels. This is in essence bourgeois revolt". Well, I admit it. But at the same time it should be remembered that the middle-class section of our modern youths, pitted hard against the reality, feel every time the urge to destroy the rotten system. A stupendous discontent is brewing in their minds and at the slightest provocation it can find its outlet in a conscious revolt. Ranjit is essentially a representative of this section of the youth—the section that has long been duped and exploited and to whom the spectacle of social injustice has become too glaring. He, like many middle-class youths with illusions at first cannot explore the defects in the social system. But when he is made to understand, or for that matter, provoked, he protests violently. And call it bourgeois or spontaneous, his protest is certainly a thing to reckon with.

DEBABRATA GHOSE
Naihati, 24-Parganas

Satyajits Reality

I agree with Mr Kiranmoy Raha in his review of *Pratidwandi* (November 7) as far as the merits of the film are concerned. *Pratidwandi* is a masterpiece created by an artist. In the film Mr Ray has artistically depicted the thoughts and contradictions, sorrows and angers, hopes and frustrations of a contemporary, honest and conscientious—but not courageous and determined enough—middle-class young man of Calcutta in a real setting. But there he stops and proceeds no further. Thus, despite all the mastery of Mr Ray over his medium of art the

whole show becomes purposeless. Or does he want to prove the futility of all revolutionary struggles? The principal character in the film starts as a contestant against all the odds surrounding him, but ends up as a pure and simple conformist taking refuge in some sweet nostalgic memory. Incidentally, does the last scene showing a funeral procession symbolise the death of all fighting spirit in him?

I cannot but point out another serious lapse in the film which we do not expect from a director of Mr Ray's stature. The depiction of the growth of intimacy between Siddhartha and his girl-friend is, to say the least, tasteless. At least in the first two encounters one almost takes her to be a cheap call-girl inviting a customer for money. The way she pleads her loneliness in the dark house and the way she is shown to be frustrated when Siddhartha simply goes back after repairing the electric line suggest nothing but that. It is only somewhat later in the film that one can place the girl in her true position.

Another minor lapse should also be pointed out. In the sequence of Siddhartha's second interview he is shown to burst out in a violent protest against the inadequate arrangement and apathy of the authorities. All other candidates are shown to be witnessing the whole affair passively. But in Calcutta conditions of 1970 it is simply unthinkable. Now-a-days, any form of violence against authority, once started, even if by a single person, soon transforms itself into mob-violence.

T. CHAKRABORTY
Konnagar.

Battleground

Teachers who stand for progress should recognise that educational institutions are a battleground in the class war. In theory this is not so difficult. But in practice, with the administration looking over their shoulders and students eyeing them

suspiciously, the teachers may find it difficult to join the students.

Outside the basic skills of reading, a whole series of programmes will have to be developed in almost every class to provide a real working class education. Trips to factories, around working-class neighbourhoods, and even to places like hospitals and army postings might be arranged—in every case encouraging the students' anger at the pervasive oppression and raising the question of who is responsible. Students write essays but better than essays are interviews with other students, family members and neighbours. This develops a class outlook.

It is particularly important to ask the students to criticise their class teachers, not just as a gimmick, but with the outlook of learning from the working class.

In working thus the question is of forming an alliance with parents and others teachers who are sympathetic.

JYOTI BANERJEE
Calcutta

"The Bell Tolls"

Who knows what March 1971 means for us, the much neglected people, the conventional scapegoats of the political parties of India in their acts of corruption, blasphemy, betrayal of the cause of the country, overt and covert patronage of the well-grounded capitalist feudal tyranny in India. Who knows which team of capitalists this election-bell tolls to parliament.

The sound of the fluttering wings of so-called nationalist and marxist birds is in the air, the fog and filthy air of parliamentary politics. It resembles not the sound of Puck's wings with the promise of a happy mid-summer night's dreams. People now would be helpless onlookers of many illicit and immoral love scenes among the various combinations and parties.

Yet the bell tolls and elections are at hand. But political parties would do well to remember one thing even

in the midst of their wild ecstasy the bell tolls, of course, some groups to power; but others, certainly, to a political doom, as was the experience of our next-door neighbour, Pakistan.

If spring comes, can winter be far behind?

SANKAR SARMA
Calcutta

"Campus Unrest"

Mr Suraj Singh in his "Campus Unrest" (November 12) has made an implied criticism of the CPI(M) for its alleged non-participation in the agitation launched for Mr Sarsunya's appointment and says the matter should be considered in the light of Lenin's formulations as regards backward communities. It is enough to say that Lenin's formulations are for men of backward communities as a whole, not for a particular person, however much qualified he may be. As such, there is nothing wrong in the CPI(M)'s non-participation, as has been alleged, in the agitation for Mr Sarsunya's appointment.

SABYASACHI SHARMA
Bongaon, 24-Parganas.

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Bills for Collection	26,55,71,309
Branch Adjustments etc.	9,24,64,344
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PROFIT & LOSS ACCOUNT

Profit for the period 19th July 1969 to 31st Dec. 1969	48,86,865
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	<u>3,34,87,45,897</u>

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Constituents Liability on Acceptances	22,95,12,031
Premises	2,09,49,852
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Other Assets etc.	2,66,98,149
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