

frontier

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BLOWN UP

HYSTERIA swept parts of the country last week over the hijacking and burning of the IAC plane at Lahore. Both the Government of India, in the throes of Jana Sanghi electioneering, and sections of the people have over-reacted to a situation which has become too familiar in many parts of the world. The incident, indeed, has been blown up beyond measure.

We should have been relieved by the fact that the passengers and the crew of the Fokker Friendship were not held inside the plane as hostages pending the release of 36 Kashmiris. Their return was delayed, no doubt; crowds, no less hysterical than their Indian counterparts, were at the Lahore airport. If the slightest injury had occurred to any of the passengers, one can imagine what would have happened in India—the Hindus can create nightmares when their righteous indignation is aroused.

It is difficult in most cases to prevent the destruction of a plane when the hijackers are determined and prepared to die. Whether the two hijackers concerned constituted a suicide squad we do not know. It is quite possible that they derived encouragement from the attitude of the airport crowd, which also may have given the Pakistani authorities opportunistic second thoughts about the promised safe return of the plane and the baggage—big pieces of property which we value more than human lives. However, no Pakistani Government, whether headed by Yahya Khan or Bhutto or Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, would have dared to refuse asylum to the hijackers, nor for that matter, any Indian Government to their hijackers, any number of UN resolutions notwithstanding. That is a hard fact of life Mrs Gandhi and the Jana Sangh rabble in this country should remember.

At the heart of the matter lies Kashmir. Whatever we may think of the Earthly Paradise, there is no use nursing the myth that the people there are in love with New Delhi and adore the massive show of permanent military strength. Had the love been there, the Government would not have banned the Plebiscite Front on the eve of elections, or rejected scores of nomination papers before the last elections. Kashmir is a lovely possession, but we should be prepared to pay some price for it now and again.

It is true that Mr Bhutto wants trouble with India to keep his party united ; in any future Government he and his party comprising both feudal and radical elements would find it hard to effect radical reforms and would think up 'popular' causes. The army, or a section of it, should be in league with him. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who is not obsessed with Kashmir, is more moderate so far as relations with India are concerned ; but the actions of the Government and some sections of the people of India will make his position difficult. The conclusion is hard to escape that both the Governments of India and Pakistan are keen on keeping alive mutual tensions and hatred in the interest, the sordid interest, of the ruling classes. And in India the follies of the ruling politicians are likely to be visited upon the minorities once again.

The more one thinks of the crazy demonstrations in Delhi the more astounded one feels. On Friday (February 5) 10,000 battled with the police in front of the Pakistani High Commission. That was the day when the butcher of Vietnam, General Westmoreland, arrived in the capital. The leftist jingoes in Delhi were so preoccupied with perfidious Pakistan that they did nothing against the invitation and reception to this war criminal when Indochina is again burning.

Towards A Take-Over

The army has taken up position in West Bengal. In all district and sub-divisional headquarters army units have been deployed. For the next six weeks they will be on the ready to jump into the arena should the situation so warrant. Even if that contingency does not arise, they will not sit idle ; they will patrol and flag-march to strike awe for the law in the heart of citizens and perhaps to keep themselves in trim in the process. According to one estimate, 40,000 troops are being moved into

the State for this purpose. Never before had the army been deployed on such a scale in peace-time in the State. The ostensible object is to "aid" the civil authorities in maintaining order and ensuring a "free and fair" poll. To what extent the civil authorities are carrying out their responsibility is, however, a question. The situation has gone far beyond their control, and it is doubtful if they are able even to keep track of all that is happening in the State. Civil administration has practically ceased ; its activities are now confined to such ridiculous inanities as inquiring into the reasons why a number of officers did not attend the state reception at Raj Bhavan on Republic Day and whether they had acknowledged receipt of the invitation. The officers may take this as an indirect certificate that they have not been otherwise guilty of dereliction of duty during President's rule.

Army aid, however massive, cannot revive this administration. Induction of the army may, therefore, be a prelude to a take-over, though civil administration may be allowed to continue until a situation is created in which this democratic pretension may be dispensed with openly. When that situation will arise exactly is anybody's guess ; so is who will create that situation. From what the Prime Minister said in Calcutta it appears that she is determined to hold the election in West Bengal, not because she is convinced that President's rule has failed but because she wants to lift her quota of Lok Sabha seats from the State to secure an absolute majority at the Centre. In the circumstances, it is unlikely that the election will be abandoned as long as she is not convinced that the State will return many more of her opponents than her supporters. For a political leader to acknowledge defeat before election results have conclusively proved it is rare. She herself has said that every political party enters the fray in the hope that it will secure a majority. There may be exceptions, but the remark holds good of her party. And West Bengal will

have to go through the motion of a democratic election under army auspices, though in the mean time the daily murder-rate may go up many times and more areas are converted into veritable battle-fields of contending parties settling accounts with lethal weapons to pave the way for peaceful polling—a sort of measured blood-letting to prevent bursting of veins.

In spite of the military presence, if voters do not turn up in sufficient numbers or if those who come vote, by and large, against the parties of the Prime Minister's choice, it may be time for the army to hold the stage without the civilian regalia. Whether the army will be able to get on top of the situation is a difficult question ; codified reactions may make the situation worse and embitter the uncommitted. Ready remedies have failed ignobly. So many people are being detained under the Prevention of Violent Activities Act that it has become necessary to appoint three reviewing committees—an all-time record—, and some more may be appointed ; surreptitiously though, for the members have, for obvious reasons, become shy of public announcements. Yet violence has not abated. It will need some optimism to believe that an army take-over, direct or indirect, will succeed where other traditional measures have failed. The army is the ultimate response of a bankrupt administration. That does not mean, however, that the end of the tunnel is in sight.

To Whomsoever It May Concern

The latest to come out and claim credit for the Green Revolution in India is Mr I. K. Gujral and his AIR. It is his community sets, rural forums, special programme cells, by courtesy FAO, that had broken the rural stagnancy and brought in the

green revolution. So, here is an addition to a lengthening list of the claimants; World Bank which gave loans for river project works and irrigation; IDA which gave agricultural credit to Punjab and Gujarat; researchers who have developed the miracle seeds; planners who have dedicated themselves to the chemical-biological breakthrough; entrepreneurs who have shed Indian fatalism and lethargy. This is surely good news for Gunnar Myrdal who believes that, population pressure or feudal land relations no matter, it is possible to extract very much larger yields from the available land now in India by raising the input and efficiency of the labour force.

Not that the green revolution is altogether a myth. Other developing countries like Pakistan, Iran, Kenya, the Philippines and Mexico have already done it by achieving self-sufficiency in cereals. They are however modest and call it breaking of the cereals sufficiency barrier. Whether India will be able to do it even by the end of 1972 is yet a matter of speculation. But that does not deter those who can make a gorgeous issue of it, from claiming the arrival of the green revolution in India. We are going to hear more of it, surely, as the election tempo goes up. Although those very people will probably feel relief if India can reach this year the 100 million mark in foodgrains production. Even in their wildest fancy they are not being able to forecast more than a 5 per cent annual growth in foodgrains; the record during 1950-1969 is however an average growth of 3 per cent, slightly higher than the average growth of population, and much below the minimum requirements of a developing economy.

The green revolution is of course a different matter. It primarily

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means delinking of agriculture from monsoons, making the soil yield without harming its long-term potentialities and a more or less even spread of the produce on the available land for cultivation. Last fortnight, a big area in Bihar had to be declared a famine area. Dry farming is not Bihar's forte, neither India's. The FCI is finding it impossible to reach even last year's attainment in procuring rice in West Bengal. In the latter case, it was announced with aplomb that there would be a bumper harvest in West Bengal this year in spite of the extensive and disastrous floods. Not that the FCI disbelieves in the bumper harvest story; it explains the procurement difficulties by saying that Calcutta and the industrial areas of the State have suddenly developed into a blackmarket region!

Government aid has however enabled a certain section, though very thin, of agriculturists to break through, particularly in Punjab and Gujarat. The story is of course the same as the one we got during the package programme in community development, or when loans were given by the Life Insurance Corporation or by the State Bank of India. Only those are helped who have had the basic amenities and are already prosperous.

The inequity in distribution of favours can be easily hidden behind quotations of figures, actual, projected or fancied. This has been the era of land reforms, we are being told, climaxed by the passing of the second amendment to the West Bengal Land Reform Bill. On paper it looks fine. But the execution will be nobody's business, it will anyway serve election purposes with its noble phrases: lowering of the land ceiling, stoppage of bargadar eviction, land to the tribals. Incidentally, the bill has legalised all ownership transfers made before August 7, 1969. The bill took a long time in coming, for which the erstwhile UF Government had its own share to play, and those who mattered had sufficient time to manoeuvre.

The New U.S. Adventure

Those who believed in Nixon's peaceable utterances about U.S. withdrawal from Asia could never imagine the American President to be such a devilish dialectician. The best way to wind up the Indochina war, according to his dialectics, is to expand it. Last spring it was 'Operation Total Victory' in Cambodia in search of the Vietcong military headquarters (COSVN) that never was; this time it is operation 'Dewey Canyon' against "North Vietnamese build-up in Laos". At this rate Americans would withdraw from Vietnam only when the whole of South-East Asia has been turned into a theatre of war.

But people not so naive as to be taken in by Nixon's protestation of innocence would find the latest escalation in Indochina not at all self-contradictory. It is as logical as imperialist logic can be. To be fair to Nixon he cannot be accused of having let down the Pentagon or having ever disavowed American intentions to dominate Asia. His Guam doctrine for Asia prescribed new means—covert and less expensive in terms of American lives—for fulfilling the same old neo-colonial design. Notwithstanding the periodic noise about troop withdrawals from Vietnam (how many people know that new American recruits continue to pour into South Vietnam?) the difference between the policies of Johnson and Nixon is basically semantic and sartorial. Johnson bombed Laos and Cambodian border provinces without bothering about suitable terminology for the crime. Nixon calls it "interdiction" bombing—aimed at interdicting North Vietnamese supply, not for the destruction of Pathet Lao and Khmer Rouge held areas. Johnson freely dispatched GIs and advisers to Vietnam. But GIs operating in Cambodia are called "military equipment delivery team" (MEDT) and the advisers "air-borne coordinators". Unlike Johnson the Republican Presi-

dent prefers American soldiers in Cambodia to move around in bush-shirts like American tourists.

But the pressure of the resistance forces in Indochina is obviously too strong for Washington to maintain its cool posture. Contrary to its earlier statement that the American role in Cambodia is only that of ensuring withdrawal from South Vietnam the State Department admits that it is also committed to the survival "of a friendly non-communist regime". Ripping open the mask of moderation fabricated by the Guam doctrine Melvin Laird blustered last week: "we will use, as necessary, sea and air resources to supplement the efforts and the armed forces of our friends and allies who are determined to resist aggression."

Amidst such menacing growl from Washington, Americans and their South Vietnamese and Thai puppet forces have been moving into Southern Laos and north-east Cambodia in the most massive operation of the Indochina war. American bombing of Laos, begun in May 1964, has recently been stepped up to a record level involving more than \$4,680,000 worth of bombs per day. The reasons for the latest ferocity in aerial bombing and invasion of Laos (which has been in the air since the Cambodian invasion last year) are not far to seek. Stunning blows struck by the Pathet Lao forces who recaptured a series of American strongholds from the Plain of Jars to the Bolovens Plateau last week and the success of the Cambodian guerillas against the Lon Nol regime totally upset the American design in Indochina. Puppets cannot be saved without massive American intervention. But a desperate Nixon forgets that the only impact of his invasion of Cambodia has been the opposite of what he wanted to achieve. The greater his commitment in Indochina the heavier would be the defeat.

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View from Delhi

Arithmetic In Revolt

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

NO Prime Minister in the past has gone to the electorate to plead for a "stable majority in Parliament." So Mrs Indira Gandhi's shrill speech at the Ramlila Grounds here on January 31 was a measure of the erosion of the Congress party's credibility. All she wanted was a majority to ensure stability. But the country has had 23 years of stability at the Centre, between the father and daughter and the late Mr Lal Bahadur Shastri, to what purpose one fails to understand. The Congress party's credibility lay in the fact that it was *the* party in the country. But it has ceased to be that. It might contest anything between 425 and 450 of the 518 elective Lok Sabha seats, which means it has already lost 68 to 93 seats without a contest. It has to win majority from out of the seats it will be contesting. Secondly, an important State like Tamil Nadu has no chance of having a Congressman in the Assembly because none is being allowed to contest seats there.

Mrs Gandhi's election strategy might still be regarded sound and fool proof by her admirers. But what is in revolt is her arithmetic. If she is confident of sweeping the polls as is suggested in some quarters, she would not have held forth on the virtues of a stable one-party rule at the Centre and raised the bogey of instability when she addressed her meeting in Delhi. An absolute majority for her is anything but certain now though it is beyond doubt that she would win up to 220 seats. The critical figure is 260 to give her absolute majority but the chances of achieving this are slender.

Mrs Gandhi's own allies and potential allies contesting in adjustment with her party or without adjustment should take about 90 seats: the CPI, the DMK, the Akalis, the

Muslim League, the Telengana Praja Samithi, the PSP, the Bangla Congress, the Republican Party, the RSP, the Majlis and a few other groups. In most cases, if her allies lose a seat it would go to the alliance sponsored by the Congress-O. In addition the CPI(M) which is now belligerent towards her would win a few seats. Independents would be a sizable bloc, of 20 if not more. Thus the parties outside the Congress-O-sponsored alliance and independents would account for as many as 140 seats. Many of them might back her after the elections but the Election Commission will not recognise them as Congressmen at the point of their election. Mrs Gandhi would be left with 378 seats from out of which she has to win 260 if she has to achieve the objective of the dissolution of the Lok Sabha. Thus, if she fails to keep the alliance victories down to 120, she would have lost the battle.

The chances of the alliance are anybody's guess. If the Congress-O manages to return 50 to 60, the Jana Sangh 40 to 50, and the Swatantra Party and the SSP between them 40, they would together have deprived Mrs Gandhi of a House majority.

There is no doubt that the Alliance does not entertain any hope of winning a majority at the Centre and all it is interested in is denying Mrs Gandhi a majority. Mrs Gandhi is anxious to avoid a situation where she would have to seek a coalition with any party or parties. If she seeks one with any of her traditional allies, Mr Jagjivan Ram or Mr Chavan might be able to exert their leverage to block it or to demand in turn a coalition with the other Congress party. Mr Kamaraj has been credited with a plan to unite the two Congress parties after the elections on the basis of a simple formula: both Mrs Gandhi

and Mr Morárji Desai should go out of the running for Prime Ministership.

The rationale behind the drive of Mr Jagjivan Ram and Mr Chavan to have returned sizable blocs of their own to the next Lok Sabha is quite clear if one takes into account the nostalgia for "unity" among the ruling Congress party's candidates. Many of them secretly hope that Mrs Gandhi would fall short of a clear majority.

Mrs Gandhi's short-term strategy has been in conflict with her ultimate objectives. Besides, she has not been able to have her way with the lists. Whatever spadework she has done for a long-term accord with the CPI has been demolished by Mr Jagjivan Ram. The arrangement in Bihar has virtually broken down. But in Orissa there seems to have been a secret deal between the CPI and the ruling Congress. The deals have been open in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. In the States controlled by the "mini-Syndicate" led by Mr Chavan (Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan) the CPI has been kept out of any alliance by the ruling Congress. In fact, the CPI is alleging that Mr Chavan's Congress has entered a deal with the Syndicate to hand over all the Bombay city seats to the Grand Alliance.

So it is just touch and go for Mrs Gandhi, her hopes of a majority depending on the promised or expected landslide. If it is a predictable quantity which could be computed in advance, it would be no landslide at all. So it is difficult to see logic in the optimistic estimates being contrived all the time in New Delhi to bring cheer to the Establishment. Even the Elections Cell of the Government's intelligence agency is trying to do this in its day-to-day reports prepared for the edification of those put on tranquillisers during the last two weeks. The same cell predicted a landslide for the Congress in the Maniram by-election. It is possible that Mrs Gandhi staked her prestige on the Maniram contest after intelligence reports had assured her that Mr T. N. Singh would lose. A wise

prophet always makes sure of an event before he predicts it, perhaps.

With barely three weeks of campaigning left, the political bookies are hedging their bets. In the Central Hall of Parliament House sombre discussions centre on the possibility of the elections not being held to schedule because there is every danger of the India-Pakistan tension escalating. In which case, the elections would have been hijacked and the Opposition parties which have already sunk their resources driven from pillar to post in a battle that would be extended indefinitely.

The possibility of an emergency

being declared in West Bengal to exclude the State from the Lok Sabha is very remote but cannot be ruled out. Reports suggest that from the earlier pattern of political violence, the incidents are tending to take the form of inter-party clashes. Maybe because all the anti-social elements are returning to their parent parties in view of the elections. This would prove a part of the official expectations correct. The larger uncertainty about the pattern violence would take in the next three weeks remains nevertheless.

February 6, 1971

West Bengal

Danse Macabre

SUMANTA BANERJEE

THE political drama on the West Bengal stage is being relegated to the background by a sort of danse macabre. The question of seizure of power, whether by competing with rivals for parliamentary majority, or by launching a guerilla warfare, is drowned in an orgy of meaningless murders.

The participants in the orgy are a motley crowd of political and non-political elements, police and lumpen-proletariat masquerading as CPI(M) or CPI(ML) supporters, whatever affiliation suits them according to convenience. The net result is a gradual and calculated elimination of some of the best and most dedicated active cadre of the CPI(M), CPI(ML) and other Leftist parties.

The impending elections have lent a sense of urgency to this task of elimination, each participant having a different motive. The CPI(M) is eager to clean its strongholds of Naxalite elements to prevent disruption and ensure smooth sailing for its candidates; the CPI(ML) is naturally retaliating, but it is also interested in allowing an atmosphere

of terror to prevail to prevent the holding of elections or at least to ensure poor polling to claim later that the people had responded to their call for boycotting the elections. Taking advantage of the mutual hostilities, the police are busy finishing off the active cadre of both the parties by organizing anonymous assassinations in a bid to put the blame on either of the two parties. The anti-social scum of Calcutta have found an opportunity to settle their old scores and are contributing their bit to the bloody mosaic of dead bodies and mangled limbs.

Perhaps an amount of blood-letting was inevitable in West Bengal. A purging of the bottled-up rancour, accumulating since the fall of the last United Front Government, was necessary. But the targets are misplaced; the wrong people are getting killed while the real culprits are getting away with it.

The dissipation of militancy in mutual hostilities leading to the large-scale loss of ranks of both the parties could have been avoided, since although fundamental policy differences

kept the CPI(M) and CPI(ML) apart, the general activities of both the parties during the last two or three years were serving a common interest—radicalization of the political atmosphere of West Bengal. Whatever basic contradictions there might remain in their policies, their actions appeared to be complementary, helping each other indirectly of course, to create objective conditions for a more revolutionary situation in the future.

In spite of basic differences between the two parties, their lapses have a common character. The CPI(M) proclaims that it thinks in terms of forming governments in States where it is strong, precipitating confrontation with the Centre, exposing the limitations of the Constitution and launching mass movements to seize power. The last stage of the programme has never been spelt out in concrete terms and a tendency to depend on spontaneity in some distant future is evident.

The CPI(ML) on the other hand believes in working outside the parliamentary framework, its main forms of operation being annihilation of jotedars, moneylenders and businessmen in villages and cities, undermining the faith of the people in the administration and police, a mini-cultural revolution by attacks on schools, colleges, examinations, statues of national leaders and other symbols of the culture of the ruling class and arming the peasantry to create a liberation army. It hopes that the proletariat of the city will join the peasants in the final stage to seize power. Here again, the last stage is kept veiled in ambiguous terminology. There seems to be a naive belief in the spontaneous uprising of the people and a lack of understanding of the calculated counter-strategy of a better prepared army of the State.

The present leaders of both the parties thus have one thing in common—a tendency to depend on the automatic course of a movement, a certain amount of "tailism" that has been plaguing the Indian communist leadership for the last few decades.

The pathetic role of the CPI(M) during the strike in Durgapur last year is a concrete instance of this tendency. Obviously the leaders hoped that the Centre would cow down in the face of a threat of continuous strike. They sought to bolster it up by issuing now and then calls for general strike. The Secretary of the party's West Bengal unit, Mr Promode Das Gupta, even went to the extent of promising the people a "blood bath" in the State if the Centre did not agree to accept the demands. The twin belief in the vulnerability of the Centre and the spontaneity of the masses spelt the debacle of the party, which had to withdraw the strike in the face of massive retaliatory measures by the Centre. The leadership's complaint later that it did not apprehend the severe police retaliation, speaks poor of their political foresight.

The naive optimism of the CPI(M) leadership is paralleled by the wishful thinking of the CPI(ML) leaders. In its eagerness to claim every murder as a triumph of its policies, the CPI(ML) has failed to dissociate itself from murders committed perhaps by the police or anti-social elements. The readiness with which the party leaders hailed the sporadic attacks on statues and examinations is another instance. They admitted: "Instead of awaiting the directives of the centre, the youth and students of the party started this movement in accordance with the central political situation and the popular mood"...["In Defence of breaking statues"—North Eastern Calcutta local committee of the CPI(ML)]. This kind of emphasis on spontaneity has led to a situation where even common murders and petty burglaries pass off as Naxalite activities.

Yet, to some extent both the parties have succeeded in furthering the process of radicalization of politics in West Bengal. The CPI(M) contributed to this by trying to infiltrate its own men into the administration and the police, during the UF regime. Both these pillars became emascula-

ted as a result of the divided loyalties that followed the CPI(M) efforts. While the common people's loss of faith in the bureaucracy was complete, the active cadre of the CPI(ML) took advantage of this by extending their base of operations.

In the countryside, the Naxalbari uprising in 1967, led by the present leaders of the CPI(ML) who were then still in the CPI(M), had its impact on the policies of the Marxist leaders when they came to power again in 1969. They tried to distribute land among the landless and roused in the process the hitherto dormant militancy among the peasantry. The success with which the landlords could frustrate the efforts at land distribution by getting injunctions from courts furthered the process of disenchantment of the peasantry with the social system. Along with this the systematic annihilation of jotedars in some areas by the Naxalites sharpened their militant mood.

In the industrial sector, restoration and protection of trade union rights of the workers by the United Front Government led in some cases to manifestations of militancy prompting a capital strike in the form of closure of factories and refusal by industrialists to invest in West Bengal, leading to the present economic crisis. The swelling of the ranks of unemployed workers and the realization among them that pro-labour reforms within the present structure can hardly succeed, might create conditions among the workers for more radical forms of Leftism like Naxalite activities.

Thus, the measures taken by the CPI(M) while in power willy nilly helped the CPI(ML).

Next Act

West Bengal today is poised for the next act of the drama. The CPI(M) is the most organized among the parliamentary Leftist parties with a wide mass base. It is likely to come to power as a dominant partner of a united front. The ranks of the party before the announcement of the elections were in the grip of uncer-

tainty. The leadership, particularly after the defeat in the Kerala elections and the failure in Durgapur, had little to offer the ranks by way of a programme. The only political activities in the State since the promulgation of Presidential rule were the actions of the CPI(ML). If this state of affairs continued for some time more, the CPI(M) would have had to face a large-scale erosion in its ranks. The announcement of the elections has therefore come as a boon to the party leaders helping them to keep the ranks engaged.

But the main problem will have to be faced by the Marxist leaders after the elections. If they can form a government, the chronic problems of the State will loom large before them awaiting a solution. Judging from past experience, efforts at carrying out the unfinished reform programmes of the past like redistribution of land or improving labour relations in the industry would again face the old in-built obstacles in the present social order. The police might be utilized to finish off the Naxalites, but can hardly be relied upon as loyal minions. Their shifting of loyalties immediately after the dismissal of the UF Government should be a warning for the CPI(M).

It is likely that the Marxists after coming to power will try to take a more belligerent attitude towards the Centre and movements might follow on demands for more powers to the State. But it is doubtful whether the CPI(M) would translate into practical action its demand for West Bengal's share of 75% of the taxes collected by the Centre from the State. Would it dare to confiscate the amount? Is it prepared for the next course if the Centre retaliates?

Apparently the CPI(M) leadership, true to its habit of leaving everything to spontaneity, has not

bothered to answer these questions. The results would be an escalation in the expectations of the people followed by frustration of their hopes. This would create fresh openings for the extension of Naxalite footholds among the people.

Although the CPI(M) professes to expose the hollowness of the Constitution and prepare the masses for its complete overhauling and ultimate seizure of power, the party's decision to run governments within the present constitutional framework has made it embody some new status quo supported by those very forces—the police and the bureaucracy—which the CPI(ML) seeks to destroy.

One is not sure how long these experiments with united front governments will continue in West Bengal. But it is clear that if the CPI(M) is serious about living up to its pledges of seizing power through mass movements, it will be forced soon by circumstances in the State to resort to more militant and violent actions. It is yet to be seen however whether its supporters in the bases are prepared only to vote for the party or take up arms in its defence.

In the meantime, a civil war type situation is likely to prevail in West Bengal. Shifting loyalties or defections as they are more commonly known today, are no longer confined to the floors of the legislature. The administration, police, industrialists and every other powerful stratum of the population are involved in the game. These elements lend their backing to political forces, irrespective of colour, to safeguard their own interests. Cases of donations to the funds of one Leftist party by industrialists to prevent labour trouble or keep away other rival parties away are not unknown in West Bengal. Spheres of influence in the cities are being demarcated by each party. With the loss of faith in civil administration, the citizens are likely to seek protection of either of these parties. They are awaiting the emergence from these inter-party clashes of that decisive political force which will shape West Bengal's destiny.

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN WEST BENGAL ?

WILL IT FALL APART FROM THE REST OF INDIA ??

THE DISINHERITED STATE
A study of West Bengal 1967-70

by

Sankar Ghosh

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Naxalites In Chotanagpur

N. K. SINGH

NAXALITES are not a new phenomenon for Chotanagpur. Their presence could be traced to the militant adivasi movement of 1968. It is said that they were the real force behind it and it was they who had formed a popular mass organisation, viz Birsa Seva Dal, to infiltrate into the tribals. A good number of supporters and sympathisers of the Naxalites were in the leading bodies of the B.S.D., which gave the call of election boycott during the mid-term poll of 1969. Massive armed demonstrations were organised by the B.S.D., whose leaders, under Naxalite influence, had adopted the method of underground functioning. The Naxalites too characterised the B.S.D. as a progressive national organisation—without considering the class character of its leadership.

Later on, the Naxalites had to confess that their strategy in dealing with the adivasi movement was wrong. The first Bihar State Conference of the CPI(ML) reported: "It was wrong for the district leadership of Ranchi and also the State leadership to set up Birsa Seva Dal as a nationality mass organisation and expect it to initiate and lead anti-feudal and anti-State struggle. Behind this erroneous line was the wrong concept that the problem of emancipation of adivasi people from non-adivasi exploiters and the problem of emancipation of the adivasi peasantry from landlords and moneylenders were separate problems."

After the adivasi struggle, two successive years have passed during which many a new development took place. The CPI(ML) was formed, and it switched over from crop-cutting movements to the annihilation movement. Naxalites working in Chotanagpur have the same *modus ope-*

randi as elsewhere in the country. Here, they are particularly active in Ranchi and Singhbhum districts. Areas bordering Orissa and West Bengal are a natural breeding ground for Naxalite violence. Besides adivasi peasants, they are said to have a good hold among the working class of the steel city of Jamshedpur.

At the time of writing, the Naxalites have killed at least 26 of their class-enemies in the region. The list includes zamindars, moneylenders, rural kulaks, police informers, businessmen and those who serve as the law and order arm of the Government. Besides this, raids in peculiar Naxalite fashion have been conducted on many educational institutions, Government offices and properties etc in various towns of the region. Instances of attack on police pickets and individual policemen have also been reported.

The hills of Chotanagpur drew the attention of the whole nation in May, 1970 when 54 men were arrested by the Bihar police after an extensive operation in the jungles of Jaduguda. The massive operation in which about 500 policemen participated with the help of helicopters to comb the entire forest resulted in a rewarding catch after six full days: 54 persons, almost all of them Bengalis between 16 and 26 years of age, along with large quantities of arms and ammunition. But the entire thing became more sensational and caught the headlines of the dailies particularly due to the presence of a 26-year old British blonde, Miss Mary Taylor. The incident created quite a sensation at the time.

The arrested members are said to strongly believe in the "man, money and gun" (MMG) principle. They however claim to be true followers of Mao. Admitting the total

failure of their mission, Mr Subroto Roy, the leader of the group, said that it was mainly because of the lack of adequate knowledge of topography of the area and physical inability of his team to negotiate the rugged terrain of forests and hills. The fact is they failed because of their wrong notion of "revolution without three Ps" (party, politics and people).

Jamshedpur

Jamshedpur, a very important industrial town, is called the "little Calcutta" of Bihar in view of the growing Naxalite activities in the town. It has become the most disturbed town in the State. Not a day passes without the news of some Naxalite 'action' in some part of the town. Bomb explosions, murders, raids on educational institutions and government concerns have become a regular feature.

The credit—or blame—for all this goes to the Naxalite organisation among the working class of the town; Jamshedpur is being claimed as the only town (barring Calcutta) where the Naxalites have some base among the working class. The militant mood of the workers was revealed in a strike in 1970, which developed from an economic into a political struggle. Here it will not be out of place to point out that Mr S. N. Singh, a veteran Naxalite leader of Bihar, has worked for a long time in Jamshedpur trade unions. The CPM-controlled trade unions have lost much owing to the exit of Mr Singh from the party.

The recent growth of Naxalite activities in Jamshedpur is attributed to the 'import' of many hard-core Naxalites from Bengal, particularly from the Midnapore area. Till now, Naxalites have murdered at least eight men in "little Calcutta" besides injuring many. Educational institutions, Government offices and properties, police pickets etc have been attacked many times.

The first ever murder to be committed by the Naxalites in Jamshedpur town was that of a member of

the Tata Town Security Department—an alleged police informer—on September 20, 1970. Previously bombs were hurled in one of the rooms of TISCO Dog Squad, owing to which one guard was seriously injured. In October a TELCO worker, said to be a CPI-supporter, and in November a TISCO security guard were stabbed to death. Next month a TELCO employee met the same fate and a TISCO security guard sustained bomb injuries when the Naxalites attacked a local higher secondary school. Later, he succumbed to his injuries in the hospital. After a few days a wealthy businessman too was done to death. Besides this, many persons, including police officials, have been injured following attacks by alleged Naxalites.

The first attack on educational institutions in Jamshedpur took place on August 1, 1970. Thereafter various secondary and higher secondary schools in the town were raided more than eleven times. It becomes clear from the arrests made by the police in this connection that the school-boys themselves are implicated in such 'actions'. And the students never protest against these 'actions', they rather sometimes favour them indirectly. The students of a TISCO-managed higher secondary school—said to be the main centre of Naxalite activities in the town—went on strike in protest against the arrest of one of their colleague in connection with a raid on the school.

Besides raiding clubs and bars, which are the main meeting centres of the bourgeoisie, the Naxalites have attacked Government offices, such as the office of the Labour Commissioner. The local Gandhi Peace Foundation Building was raided two times. On August 13, 1970, on the eve of independence-day, the Naxalites tried (unsuccessfully) to blow up the 12-foot bronze statue of Jamshedjee Tata, erected in a local park. In January 1971 four buses belonging to the State Transport Corporation were burnt by the urban guerillas—all within a week's time. In the same month the Naxalites made their biggest

sweep; a Pushpak aircraft belonging to the Jamshedpur Flying Club was bombed and burnt to ashes. (A rehearsal for blowing up of Jumbo jets?)

Jamshedpur is the only town in Bihar where Naxalites are launching attacks on police officers. Besides three or four bomb-exploding attacks on patrol parties, there have been some unsuccessful attempts to kill individual police officers.

As a result, 200 alleged Naxalites have been arrested in Jamshedpur town alone. But they are not silent even inside jails. Four walls do not a prison make. In November 1970, a peculiar situation arose when more than four hundred prisoners stayed on the roof of Jamshedpur sub-jail for nearly 13 days following a clash between the warders and the prisoners. They stayed there despite every attempt (even bursting of tear gas-shells) on the part of the authorities to bring them down. They came down only after their demands were fulfilled. But the important part of the story is yet to be told—this struggle was fought under a red banner, which was furlled on the top of Jamshedpur sub-jail!

In view of growing Naxalite activities, the new SVD Government headed by Mr Karpoori Thakur has decided to strengthen the police administration in the steel city. A special budget of Rs 5 lakhs has been sanctioned for this purpose under which three new police stations are to be set up besides strengthening the existing four with mobile wireless sets. At present, three-fourths of the police machinery are engaged in tackling the Naxalites and only one-fourth is left to look after routine jobs. As the SP of Jamshedpur admitted recently, the Naxalites have posed a big problem for the police force.

The police are not satisfied with the 205 arrests it has made and a special combing operation jointly undertaken by the local and Central Reserve Police has been launched. Over four hundred houses in different parts of the town were 'searched'. The outlets of the town have been sealed

and all the trains passing through Tatanagar railway station are being thoroughly watched. As a consequence, few more young men have been arrested and a police inspector engaged in the combing operation was shot at.

The Jana Sangh also has come forward to fight the Naxalite 'menace' in the steel city. Two or three processions have been brought out by the party which concluded with burning the effigy of Mao Tse-tung. In reaction, two of its workers were stabbed by suspected Naxalites.

Singbhum

In the rural areas of Singbhum, the Naxalites are particularly active in the region bordering Gopiballapur of West Bengal. At least ten persons, mostly zamindars and moneylenders, have been killed by them. The Naxalite violence has resulted in the posting of two companies of Bihar Military Police all through the areas bordering West Bengal.

Chaibasa, the district headquarters of Singbhum, has never witnessed any violence on the part of the Naxalites. However the police found some Naxalite elements in this silent town when they raided the hostel of a local college and seized 'Mao literature, posters, Mao thoughts and teachings.'

More or less, the same is the case with Ghatshila, where a higher secondary school was raided in the peculiar Naxalite fashion in August, 1970. No untoward incident has been reported.

In the rural areas of Singbhum, besides killing ten, the Naxalites attacked the house of a police sub-inspector in Kharswan, 20 miles from Chaibasa, in September 1970. Bombs were also hurled on the house of a mine manager, in the same locality.

Ranchi

After Singbhum, Ranchi is the second biggest centre of Naxalite activities in Chotanagpur. There are four main areas where they are ac-

tive : Kolebara in Simdega subdivision, bordering Orissa ; Mandar, Burmu and Khelari on the Palamau-Hazaribagh border ; Silli on the Ranchi-Purulia Road and Ranchi town itself. In rural areas, the Naxalites have 'annihilated' eight class enemies.

So far as Ranchi town is concerned, besides extensive wall painting, the Naxalites have confined themselves to throwing bombs and crackers. The first ever attack to be made by the Naxalites in Ranchi town was on September 1, 1970, when a few crackers were hurled at the local Jana Sangh office. The Jana Sangh represents the Ranchi seat in the Bihar Assembly. Thereafter the local branch of the British Council Library and a bar were raided in typical Naxalite fashion.

In Dhanbad district, the Naxalite elements seem to be active among the student community mainly. In the Bihar Institute of Technology (Sindri) many movements—said to be inspired by Naxalite students—have been organised. The students of Jharia took out a procession to protest against the police firing in Calcutta University in September 1970. The processionists, who were in an angry mood, clashed with the police.

In November, a statue of Mahatma Gandhi was demolished in Dhanbad town. Next month a much bigger action was conducted. Six armed young men raided the microwave relay station situated on a 500-foot high hillock on the outskirts of Dhanbad town and tried to damage the equipment. However the plan was foiled by the police, which arrived on the spot and arrested one man. In January, the Registry office of Dhanbad was set afire. In the same month the office of the Life Insurance Corporation was raided at Sindri.

The Naxalites have been communicating 'death sentences', too. One such sentence was communicated to the Regional Labour Commissioner (Central) posted at Dhanbad. He was charged by the "people's court"

with "anti-people activities." Following it the police took all precautions to protect his life.

Naxalites have been active in rural areas around Sindri. Besides threatening several rural kulaks, one village temple and the houses of two zamindars were burnt.

The other two districts of Chota-

nagpur—Santhal Parganas and Hazaribagh—are not yet on the Naxalite map. In both the districts a few suspected Naxalites have been arrested. However, one incident has been noted in Santhal Parganas. In August 1970 bombs were thrown on the house of the officer in-charge of Madhupur thana.

Radicalism Cut To Size

R. S. RAO

THE Government of India in a series *Towards Social Justice* has published for mass circulation the paper of Dr B. S. Minhas entitled "Rural Poverty, Employment and Growth". The paper gives a 'realistic radical' programme—an 'integrated programme for compulsory consolidation of land and complementary public works'—for the 'benefit of the poor masses'.

Acknowledging the 250 and odd million citizens who live in abject poverty, in the preface, Dr Minhas starts with a committal to parliamentary democracy and defines the contents of a positive economic policy in the context of 'new radicalism' in the country. They are (1) measures to remove disabilities from which the poorer segments of the community suffer and (2) measures by which income and employment opportunities for the poor and productive capabilities of the economically weak producers can be significantly increased. Having given the commitment, the objective and the need to distinguish 'realistic radicalism from political demagoguery', the paper comes to the essential requisites of an implementable plan. Broadly the requirements are that the existing inequalities should not be touched, compulsion be limited to the 'democratic political framework' and the aroma of development planning like the use of unutilized resources, and mobilising resources locally be there.

Simultaneously with the poverty-stricken masses, Dr Minhas notes the

acute and ever worsening parcellisation in Indian agriculture which inhibits effective planning. Taking into account that consolidation measures are under progress, the paper suggests that to make them effective a public works programme should be taken up simultaneously and all village land be developed and redistributed. The development of villages is to be determined by a host of surveyors, engineers, agronomists and administrators.

Sensing the difficulties in redistribution because of over-indenting of demands in relation to fixed supplies of specific grades of land, an elaborate mechanism, which may be called a pseudo-auction of land, was prepared to solve the problem of redistribution in an equitable manner. The mechanism consists in choosing that set of relative prices for the various grades of land and the corresponding demands, among the sets of relative prices announced, which equates the demand and supplies of various grades of land at the village level. This method gives a measure of overall improvement and gives the authorities an index of gain to each individual for recovering the costs.

The plan deserves attention mainly from three angles. First, how far it helps in eradicating rural poverty and secondly, whether the measure will have a lasting effect in terms of rationalising agriculture. The third aspect is whether the plan is likely to increase the inequalities by making the smaller cultivators poorer by

some amount of land. Given the set-up, it is not any implementable plan, but a plan that removes poverty which gives the author the credit of not being demagogical. But it is to be seen whether the credit is due.

The basic problem of Indian agriculture is the low level of capital accumulation, which consequently results in unemployment. This is often visible in the form of poverty breeding poverty. The prevalence of the semi-feudal form of agriculture does not permit sufficient capital accumulation which is a necessary pre-condition for the healthy growth of agriculture and better utilization of resources. The characteristic features of semi-feudal agriculture are the operation of tenant-based farming and the peculiar combination of enterprises—money-lending, trading and farming. There is no economic agent to improve farming on sound lines. Hence one finds the paradoxical situation of productive resources remaining non-productive. So long as the system of production remains semi-feudal, the problem seems to evade a solution. Efforts to convert the semi-feudal elements through the process of giving incentives like favourable balance of trade, are unlikely to be successful because of the stranglehold of the trading-moneylending complex. Thus a transformation which is a necessity can take place either if the State becomes an active agent in the process of capital accumulation, or initiates drastic land reforms. Pleading ignorance of land reforms, Minhas opts for the first approach.

The programme envisages developing the village land through public works and realignment of property rights after development. The development works include: (1) Surveying and levelling of land so that water is available if a major or minor irrigation scheme is there to help the village in irrigation; (2) for dry villages contour bunding and construction of storage tanks for collection of rain water; and (3) alignment of village and feeder roads,

It is a welcome departure—going to

the village as a unit and trying to settle the problems locally. There cannot be much objection if the hitherto fragmented villages acquire a beautiful appearance with rectangular green blocks. If simultaneously with the development of the village, the inhabitants are also developed, the problem is more than solved.

Not so Simple

But the thing is not so simple. The emphasis on a public works programme to cash the benefits of scale and externalities is rightly done in the plan but the role it can play in the upliftment seems marginal. Just as the levelling of land can be done at various levels, the development of a village or rather the type of development can be at various levels depending on the national perspective and the consequent allocation of funds. For example, if the perspective is to encourage private initiative, *i.e.*, farmers' initiative to increase the irrigation potential, the development of the village remains at a marginal level, and the village as a unit can act independently, compared to a situation where the Government has a plan to link all major rivers through a network of canals. In the latter case, the Government has not only to allocate more funds to irrigation but gets an opportunity to reshape the vast stretches of land covering many villages. The concept of a village being dry or getting irrigated by a major or minor irrigation scheme appears in the Minhas Plan. A dry village can be irrigated if an irrigation scheme is taken up near by. Hence the development works of the village are determined only after the major schemes are prepared. The central point of the State becoming an active agent, making a major allocation of resources spent by its agencies on agriculture, is something of a datum, exogenously determined, to the Minhas plan and will not be suggested by the plan. It does not prescribe a perspective but operates only when it is specified and to that extent it has only marginal effects. In the present circumstances what is to be doubted

about governmental policy is its having a perspective. Hence the Minhas plan as such does not lead to a direct transformation of agriculture, but may effect rationalisation.

Looking at the effects of consolidation, if one forgets the institutional structure, it is easy to argue that consolidation gives the compactness of the holding to the cultivator. This helps to plan effectively and increase productivity. But productivity does not seem to be the casualty mainly of the lack of compactness but seems to be governed by the socio-economic conditions in which the cultivator is placed. Providing an opportunity is not ensuring the use of it.

Assuming that consolidation does initiate the process of development, another and more important issue is whether the benefits of consolidation will be permanent. The fragmentation of land seems to have taken place mainly owing to two factors. One is the existing inheritance laws and the other is the process of gradual dispossession of the land of small cultivators by what is commonly known as the moneylending-cum-mortgaging class. In some cases it may be a straight purchase by the big holders. The predominance of the second practice can best be seen in the increasing number of parcels per holding as the size increases, with the top group, *i.e.* 50 acres and above registering 9.94 parcels against an all-India average of 5.66 parcels per holding. Historical experience confirms the belief that further fragmentation will continue to be a problem after consolidation.

The report on "Evaluation of Consolidation of Holding Programme"¹ gives some details. In the case of Maharashtra, the report says, "the strength of respondents having holdings in 3 to 9 fragments which declined from 15.9% before consolidation to 4.8% after consolidation again increased to 11.1% in 1966-67. These trends were more prominent in villages Shirudi and Turkabad-Kharodia. This may be attributed to subsequent partitioning of land." (Page 16) On Punjab and

Haryana the report has this to say: "A comparison of the fragments in 1966-67 with those obtained after consolidation indicates an increase in general and more particularly in Ranike and Sanjarkot villages of the Amritsar district, Jatasimala village of Ferozepur district, Beri village of Gurdaspur district and Mensarh village of the Karnal district. It thus appears that the need for consolidation is again increasing due to partition or sale of land in these villages." (Page 19). Even after consolidation, there is no permanent solution as the problem repeats itself in a few years' time. If the property relations are left as they are, there has to be some permanent machinery for consolidation year in and year out.

To sum up, the programme of Minhas does not seem to tackle the problem of mass rural poverty either directly by providing more employment or indirectly by transforming agriculture. Its attempt at rationalisation seems to be transitional in nature.

Changes in Inequalities

The author took elaborate precautions to ensure that the plan becomes implementable by making it pass the test of not touching the existing inequalities. But it appears that what makes a plan implementable or acceptable is that it should have a potential to increase the inequalities and it looks that the plan passes the latter test. Let us substantiate. The change in the existing inequalities can occur at the point when each cultivator's land endowment is valued. This valuation has to be done before development and

consolidation and after development. Let us quote from the report already cited, about the valuation before consolidation and its effects. On Maharashtra the report has the following to say: "The composition of village committees was such that it did not generally tend to inspire confidence among the cultivator. There was perhaps a feeling that the members of the village committee could influence consolidation according to their preference" (Page 20). A milder comment. On Punjab and Haryana the report says, "the staff working on consolidation programme was not considered to be impartial. . . . It was alleged that valuation of land was not fair since by deliberate overvaluation some have gained in the exchange of land" (Page 24). The Uttar Pradesh report is not different and possibly more firm. "Valuation of land was not generally considered fair. Deliberate and successful attempts seem to have been made to get inferior land valued at higher prices. Pressures from various quarters have also affected proper valuation of land" (Page 22).

Let us look at the second valuation. The author prepared an elaborate scheme to ensure an equitable redistribution of the developed land; broadly speaking the plan consists in announcing sets of relative prices for the various grades of land with the price of first-grade land taken as numeraire, and collecting the demand of each of the cultivator for various grades of land, with the restriction that no cultivator will become better off in terms of endowment. After collecting the sets of demands, the process involves choosing that set of relative prices for which demand equates supply.

This procedure, apart from assuming that the relative prices of the different grades before and after consolidation are the same when the number of grades does not change due to development, poses another difficulty when the number of grades changes in the process of develop-

ment. Further, it appears that the system may not permit a stable set of prices unless one puts some additional restrictions on the cultivators' rates of substitution between different grades of land. Allied to the problem of existence is the important case of imperfections in the market owing to the existing inequalities. Big holders can, by clever switching in of the combinations of the grades they demand, dictate a price to the small holders.

Being not very familiar with the 'games one can play' with the cultivators, this note is limited to presenting some doubts about the nature of equity and democratic character of the mechanism. However, it is clear that this existing power structure does militate against the interest of the poorer sections in the first valuation. Hence it appears that if the plan is implemented compulsorily it would increase the inequalities, not by intention but by the compulsion of the situation.

Dr Minhas started his paper with a bang—presenting the gravity of the situation, discussing the contents of a positive economic policy, and cautioning against political demagoguery—and finally ended with a whimper. His programme does not conform to any positive economic policy.

"Evaluation of Consolidation of Holdings Programme—Case Studies of Maharashtra, Punjab and Haryana and Uttar Pradesh" Published by Programme Evaluation Organisation, Planning Commission, Government of India, 1970.

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Poverty And Our Pundits

RANJAN SENGUPTA

EXPERTS have burned a lot of candles deep into the small hours of night to find a definition of poverty. Finally they have caught one: henceforth whoever eats less than 2,250 calories a day will be considered as below the line of poverty.

During the last decade as many as 40 per cent of the rural population and 50 per cent of the urban population were so poor that they could not afford a diet with even this little of calory, let alone the deficiencies in other respects. Put in simpler terms, these people had to make do with less than 50 paise per day per head on an average. The parade of five-year plans has completely by-passed them! They are outside the growth orbit.

Don't worry; our experts can produce custom-made solutions also. If you relish the theories of two-person-cooperative-games, or at least the neo-classical competitive bidding for Pareto optimality, there is a solution in which the problem will dissolve like instant coffee. Or, if it is plain arithmetic which is your cup of tea, then try this: Tax the consumption expenditure of the top 10 per cent rich in towns and villages at the rate of precisely 12 per cent; it would yield about Rs 850 crores. Now get the rural poor to make roads, irrigation canals, etc. with their bare hands; in exchange you feed them a little calory. The poverty-fever will come down in a whisk.

The rich man's burden is thus not at all heavy. After all, he consumes more than three times what is considered to be the basic minimum under Indian conditions. He should see reason; and make this mini-sacrifice of 12 per cent. That is the counsel of the wise men.

As they have designed, land-holdings of course will be consolidated;

capitalist farms will blossom. And the rural poor (10 million of them) would have to give their blood and sweat—for a few crumbs—to build roads, irrigation canals, warehouses, and all that which will criss-cross the "green revolutionary" capitalist farms. All this is part of the grand design. The proverbial emperor's clothes however reveal too much of his nakedness: it is going to be the largest slave trade in world history.

Our comprador big bourgeoisie and landlords are but part of the matrix of imperialism. The armoured convoy of their army needs roads; so does the arm of their colonial exploitation. Any one familiar with the history of railroads all over the world will recognise that never before have the imperialists got such a cheap source of labour so easily. No need of ships for transport across the oceans; no need for sending detachments of forces to burn, loot and destroy villages. All that is needed is a 12 per cent sacrifice! And the manna is expected to be unprecedented in scale.

Why Poverty?

Paradoxical is the fact that geographically the incidence of rural poverty has a rather *positive* correlation with the agricultural productivity of land. In 1960-61, Madras, for instance, had a net value of agricultural output per acre which was 76.1 per cent *above* the all-India index; but the percentage of its rural people *below* the poverty line was also *higher* than the all-India average by a wide margin. The same phenomenon obtains, by and large, in Kerala, Orissa and West Bengal as well.

The fact also remains that the extent of rural poverty is proportionately higher in areas where *agricultural labour households* are relatively large in number. West Bengal,

Bihar, Assam, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Madras at one end, and Kerala and Maharashtra on the other, are areas of acute rural poverty. It is no simple coincidence that these areas are adjacent to the two industrial centres of India, one in the east (West Bengal-Bihar-Madras) and the other in the west (Gujarat-Maharashtra).

Landlords help themselves by exploiting agricultural labourers. In the process they also help drive out the rural poor into urban slums, where the bourgeoisie are waiting in the wings to welcome them—red carpet, garlands and all.

To further strengthen this elaborate, double-edged machinery for exploitation, the comprador bourgeoisie and the imperialists are now conspiring to march right down to the main source—into the villages. Side by side with the feudal warlords.

This is indeed part of the global strategy of imperialism in its life-and-death battle against the advancing revolution. Scared by the revolutions in China, Cuba and Vietnam, the imperialists are trying in vain to buy off the rural poor and at the same time logistically fortify themselves in villages.

The tactics of B-52 bombing and spraying toxic, defoliating chemicals can reduce a country to ashes; but evidently it cannot stop the war of liberation. For the imperialists, a detail of standing army in every village is perhaps somewhat cheaper, at least for a while.

So they need roads.

For Frontier contact
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The Human Condition

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

IN *Nabarag* Suchitra Sen plays a character straight out of a Jacqueline Susana novel, a simple village girl hustled on to the top of the social strata and seeking the solution of the problems of her maladjustment in alcohol and barbiturates. The film attempts to lay bare the conflicts of her dual entity and her search for a sense of belonging but the efforts misfire because of the superficial treatment of the vital issues. As the film moves into the high-society parlours, we have the conventional images, the white telephone, dressing-gown, lounge-suits, cocktail-glasses and occasional smattering of ludicrous and out-of-place English idioms. The director tries to employ some of the contemporary technical devices, freezes, the juxtaposition of physical and filmic reality, a couple of not-too-bad jump-cuts, and a more or less effective flash-forward, but the essentially banal content makes all these stylistic exercises appear like awkward graftings. Uttamkumar as the business tycoon wavering between the sordid, mundane duties of an industrialist, and his wife's humanistic hysterics cuts an extremely sorry figure and Suchitra Sen in bikini is not a pleasant sight.

Richard Attenborough's directional debut *Oh! What A Lovely War* was an enjoyable piece of bleak humour. The film's commitment is clear, the pacifist pronouncements are sharp and pungent and the beautiful blending of fun and bitterness absolutely valid. The film interprets World War I as a big game, a grand revue of human follies on a life-size stage and as a massive slaughter-parade in the actual theatres of operation and the Pirandelloean shifts from the realities of the theatre to the realities of life achieved through some brilliant bits of parallel cutting, and evocative musical numbers are real feats of dynamic montage. Some of the images linger

in the memory; the magnificent opening sequence showing the European political figures arguing about the balance of power and preparing for the war, the champagne parties in London where the British military top-notchers start oiling the grinding war-machine, the British soldiers in mud-capped trenches trying to sing

away their agony, the moving Christmas encounter between the British and the German troops and, of course, the shuddering finale when the entire screen is dotted with burial-crosses, and suddenly the film shoots into large dimensions, it becomes both a diagnosis and a prognosis.

Clippings

Integration Buried December 7.?

REHMAN Sobhan, a close adviser of Sheikh Mujib and Amirul Islam, an elite Awami League MNA-elect, maintained that... the concept of "national integration got a decent burial on December 7". They were speaking at a debate on "Is ideology sufficient for national integration?" The debate was sponsored by the youth club, Nexus, and held at the auditorium of the Pakistan Council, an organisation set up by the Ayub Regime with the specific task of promoting national integration.

Rehman Sobhan blasted the notion that Pakistan was created in the name of Islam with the purpose of establishing a "mythical ideological state." He held that Pakistan was created neither on the basis of the Lahore resolution nor on the initiative of Mr Jinnah, but because Nehru and Congress rejected the "grouping system" of the Cabinet Mission Plan. He thought that the Congress made a mistake by considering the whole of undivided India one nation and the rulers of Pakistan also committed a similar blunder by claiming that the whole of Pakistan was one nation. Tracing the post-partition development in Pakistan's politics and economics, he concluded that the idea of integration of Pakistan which had five distinct nationalities, two economies and at least six major social and cultural groupings, was absurd and what could be the maximum possibility was "co-existence" in the form of a "loose federation" as envisaged by the six-point pro-

gramme of the Awami League.

Amirul Islam alleged that the concept of Muslim nationalism was in fact a "conspiracy for exploiting the masses."

He said that "we are Bengalis by nationality though Pakistanis as citizens of the state of Pakistan." He pointed out that the very concept of "national integration" was ridiculous because without integration there could not be any nation and nations could never be integrated.

Atiquzzaman Khan, Head of the Department of Journalism, Dacca University, maintained that the very concept of national integration was fallacious. He said, "physical, semantic and cultural differences cannot be integrated." (*Holiday, Dacca*).

"Joi Pakistan"

It was at the Race Course maidan on June 7 when Sheikh (Mujibur Rahman) detailed his grand strategy for election campaigns that he first owned the "Joy Bangla" slogan of his militant followers and it was also at the Race Course maidan on January 3 that he first successfully carried through 'Joi Pakistan' slogan on his audience. Of course, Sheikh has now a legitimate claim to represent the electorate of the whole of Pakistan. But the next day, at the students' league function at the Ramna Green he took caution not to raise this slogan, coined by himself. This happened, may be, for the simple reason that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who is now in active politics for thirty

years, thought that 'Joi Pakistan' sounds irrelevant in an angry atmosphere electrified by the slogan of "independent socialist Purba Bangla" whatever it may signify. (*Holiday, Dacca*).

Sullen Mood

A mood of sullenness has overtaken the people in the valley, although India's defeat in Asian hockey and the hijacking of an Indian aircraft to Pakistan were openly celebrated in Srinagar with crackers and in some cases by illuminating houses with candle lights. The sullen mood appeared soon after the externment of Sheikh Abdullah and Mirza Afzal Beg from the State and the ban on the Plebiscite Front under the Unlawful Activities Act. Protest meetings were not held. Nor were processions taken out. But one could not fail to notice hostility in many sections of the people. This development, according to political observers in the valley, is far more serious than the open reaction which was the order of the day earlier. Besides, the the secessionist elements are taking to "sophisticated" means to achieve their nefarious ends.

Gone are the days when gangs of subversive elements were run and managed by uneducated, crude mercenaries. In their place have come young men with good academic record and training. (*Hindustan Times*)

CIA City in Laos

Long Cheng, once called Laos' "secret city" but too frequently penetrated by journalists to warrant the title now, has served as headquarters for the CIA and (Meo General) Vang Pao for a decade. Secrecy is a way of life at Long Cheng, and to the press corps in Vientiane is a symbol of a barrier between the American public and its government.

Not even promises to avoid reporting operational matters gain permission for the press to visit the town. Subterfuge and accident have been the only means of entry and they are frequently expensive as well as dangerous visiting methods.

Earlier this year (1970) the *Review's* T. D. Allman, with two companions strolled away from a press tour to a nearby refugee centre, then hiked and hitch-hiked 10 miles to Long Cheng. They weren't the first "outsiders" to visit, but were the first to print the story. Their "rescue" by American aircraft cost them \$450.

The trio saw a 7,000-foot paved runway, a few propeller-driven bombers with Lao markings, others unmarked, a few cargo planes, the tin-roofed shanty town, General Vang Pao's mountain mansion and the CIA compound bristling with antennae. No American soldiers in uniform, no heavily armed American civilians—but uniformed Thai soldiers.

Long Cheng is said to be the CIA's largest field headquarters outside Saigon. From its compound it directs Vang Pao and his 10,000 troops—plans, organises, directs, supplies and pays them independent of the government in Vientiane...

From Long Cheng the heaviest bombing in the history of warfare, six times heavier than over North Vietnam at the peak of bombing, has been directed on Laotian territory. Virtually every military activity carried out at, or through, Long Cheng, observers say, contravenes international law by virtue of guarantees for Laotian neutrality. (*Far Eastern Economic Review*)

Letters

"Politics Of Murder"

One has to risk one's life if one wants to say something critical of what the CPI(ML) group of Naxalites are doing in the name of revolution. And your weekly goes on championing and encouraging their anarchist activities. You magnify the minor and negligible mistakes, if any, of the CPI(M) with inordinate venom and malice; and at the same time the success and achievement that it has to its credit are never mentioned or appreciated. You do not point out the evils of the politics of murder

which is being indulged in by the CPI(ML) leadership. While the revolutionary potentialities of the masses are yet to be explored and large masses are still totally unprepared to take up arms, the return of Dracula is being staged. On the one hand ardent and dauntless revolutionaries are being brutally butchered by the repressive forces of the ruling class and on the other valuable lives are being taken by the followers of Charu Mazumdar. Some of the best revolutionary elements in the country are being wilfully led astray by the bureaucratic leadership of Charu Mazumdar who, showing flagrant disregard for the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao, has been deflecting them into petty bourgeois adventurism. And as a result of all this the white terror has physically annihilated or maimed the revolutionaries of the genuine variety. In order to keep up the collapsing morale of the ranks, the CPI(ML) leadership has started concocting stories of liberated areas.

Frontier's silence over the blood-thirst that Charu Mazumdar has inculcated in the minds of the young cadres leaves us in serious doubt. Can you explain why Charu Mazumdar has exhorted the cadres to finish off the CPI(M) workers, why his cadres attack educational institutions and burn books on the pretext of a cultural revolution? Can a cultural revolution be initiated before capture of power? Can the superstructure be changed before the base is changed? One redeeming feature is that many disillusioned CPI(ML) members of West Bengal and Bihar have raised the standard of revolt against the leadership of Charu Mazumdar who is serving the purpose of counter-revolution. Dear Editor, Sir, the services that you are rendering to the cause of counter-revolution will not long be winked at. And remember, no Charu Mazumdar will come to your rescue.

With best regards.

TARUN DE
Calcutta

Objectivity indeed. It was quite depressing to read the letter by Subha Ganguly. (January 23). Describing the CPI(ML) activists as some kind of murderers with motiveless malignity is really raping facts a little bit ; what is more, not a word on the CPM which started killing political rivals both spiritually and physically, not a word about the unprecedented police atrocities that are not confined to Naxalite menfolk alone. When inevitable reaction sets in, these people feign innocence ; they do not wonder what sombre thoughts are beating inside the young hearts. And it is perhaps too much to expect of such people that they would feel a sense of shame when some of the members of the noblest profession turn police informers against their own sons, their pupils. Srimati Ganguly is indignant but utters not a word about how capitalist profiteers and jotedars raked gold in shovelfuls and devitalised, in the process, into slow death, not a few scores but thousands—quietly and democratically of course !

Mr Tarun Datta's (January 23) concern for the small man is even more touching and I am invariably reminded of *The Statesman* Editor's solicitude for the rickshawpullers and the street vendors whenever a general hartal takes place. Mr Datta reminds me of the accusation that a British author made a few years ago against the *New Statesman* editor, stating, 'In fact I cannot remember any occasion of your mentioning, much less condemning Vietcong atrocities.' There are feelings and feelings—the question is feeling for whom and against what.

Young Naxalites who, forsaking their careers and comforts are defying death do move *Frontier*. No doubt these young and inexperienced people not only defy death, they also defy public opinion and committ grave mistakes. And it would be a tragedy if the mistakes are repeated, although the very lack of experience of the Naxalites has been a virtue in that they have instinctively brushed aside the cosy pattern of discreet, cap-in-

hand marches and have brought us back to fundamentals.

Opposition to or difference of opinion with the authorities must involve a heavy responsibility on the part of journalists. The easier course is that of compliance with the authority established or about to be established. Independence or opposition is the harder task. *Frontier* chooses the harder task.

SUDARSHAN CHATTERJEE
Calcutta

Police Tricks

Believe it or not, the fascist Punjab police have got printed some 5000 copies of a CPI(ML) organ *Lok Yudh* (The People's War) of Ludhiana. They have badly failed to trace out the guerillas and their hideouts. So they are troubling and torturing innocent people by planting literature and weapons on them. In a vain attempt to fool and misguide the people about the Naxalite movement, they are committing dacoities and thefts and labelling them Naxalite activities. But we want to tell these scoundrels that the revolutionary peasants, youth and writers cannot be pacified with guns and bullets. These dirty conspiracies are creating further class hatred.

RANA PRIT
Bhatinda

Now, The Army

After EFR and CRP the army has now joined the battle against the revolutionaries. From now the rattle of machineguns will join the chorus of free-firing practice. The correct line and tactics of the CPI(ML) have raised the struggle to a still higher phase. The party is going to face yet another grim test.

As expected, the revisionists have not uttered much against the deployment of the army. As for the CPM, we hope that it can now safely wage its 'political struggle', with the help of the army, for the coming election. It

will not be surprising if we find Maneckshaw calling upon comrade Jyoti Basu for discussing the law and order situation.

R. Roy
Calcutta,

Republic Day Thoughts

Ours is a Republic where the Republican princes have their privy purses ; where the Republican judiciary most zealously upholds such purses when challenged by the Executive by way of an election stunt ; where with princes enjoying privy purses, people share food from dustbins with street dogs ; where all are leaders of the have-nots, yet the poor become poorer and the rich richer ; where everything is all right because non-violence is most violently maintained.

D. A. R.
Calcutta.

Constituent Assembly

There was a time not long ago when the glaring anomalies and inadequacies of our Constitution used to be exposed in all their nakedness by only a few among our politicians and people, and when they stressed the supreme need of overhauling it to the deeper social, economic and constitutional aspirations of the people they were called saboteurs by the political heirs of the founding fathers of the Constitution. The perspective changed enormously in the mean time and with the reversion of its own earlier attitude to the Fundamental Rights by the Supreme Court and its majority judgment on the abolition of privy purses and the princely privileges the many anomalies that riddle the Constitution have now posed a serious threat to the sovereignty of the people and Parliament.

The reason for what has followed is not far to seek. The Constituent Assembly that framed the Constitution was elected indirectly under limi-

ted franchise (13 per cent only) and was based on property and education—and in those days even education was based on the capacity to pay—with the princely States represented by the nominees of the rulers. No wonder, the right to property is emphasised among the Fundamental Rights and that privileges of the princes were written into the Constitution. The Cabinet Mission plan under which the Constituent Assembly came into being said: "In forming any Assembly to decide a new constitutional structure the first problem is to obtain as...broad based and accurate a representation of the whole population as possible. The most satisfactory method obviously would be by election based on adult franchise but any attempt to introduce such a step would lead to a wholly unacceptable delay in the formulation of a new constitution." Consequently the Constituent Assembly was elected by members of the provincial legislatures on electoral rolls prepared more than a decade ago and were only partially revised, as the then Viceroy admitted.

It is pertinent to bear in mind in this connection that unlike in other dependent countries in the past, the people in our country did not assemble on their own to form a constituent Assembly and prepare a draft constitution which was their national charter on which they negotiated their independence. In fact the great majority of those who formed the Constituent Assembly in our country did not represent the struggling masses despite the eminence of some of them in other spheres. As a result they concentrated on safeguarding the interests of the privileged classes to which they belonged at the cost of the basic minimum needs of the vast majority of the suffering people,

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little thinking about the tremendous upheaval that came later with changes in the social and economic situation and emergence of new classes of people determined to end exploitation. What is no less galling is the continuance of the wide gap between the political and economic rights of the people created and sustained by the Constitution.

Under the circumstances it is quite natural that the need of summoning a fresh constituent Assembly for framing a new constitution is becoming increasingly irresistible despite the lack of provision for such mechanism in the Constitution. Constituent assemblies came into being under pressure of public opinion and as a result of determined struggles by the people. Will the people miss the opportunity of accomplishing a great and noble task before they are duped again?

SOMNATH BHATTACHARYYA
Santragachi

Agents Of Reaction

The Visitor of the University of Delhi has appointed Dr Sarup Singh as Vice-Chancellor, who was officiating as Vice-Chancellor after the exit of Dr K. N. Raj, the famous economist of the bourgeois press. Thus all kinds of predictions, rumours and bets between pro- and anti-Sarup Singh groups of teachers have completely subsided. The astrologers patronized by the aspirants have received the last instalment of their fees. Dr Singh has thus ultimately attained his cherished goal which eluded him on a number of occasions. But the young men in and around the University ask about the fate of that statement of Dr Singh, which he gave to the Press at the time of Dr Raj's resignation. He is reported to have said, 'If Raj goes I also go, as we jointly are responsible for the whole affairs of the university.' obviously Dr Singh depends too much on the proverbial short memory of the public.

The University community and the people of Delhi were obliged by Dr Singh in a very strange way. At least

they were not left to wait anxiously for months together to know who was going to be 'number two' in the University, notwithstanding the method he adopted, which amounts to highhandedness according to an influential section of the University community (vide, a letter in the *Indian Express*, 20-1-71, by Dr Govind Rai Chaudhury, member, Executive Council, Delhi University). He not only appointed the Pro-Vice Chancellor in an emergency meeting of the Executive Council, where the agenda was not circulated, but appointed Principal Shanti Narayan as Dean of Colleges in that very meeting although there happens to be no post of Dean-ship of Colleges and the U.G.C. Chairman denied that he had approved of such a post on telephone.

It seems one factor has amply helped him to attain Vice-Chancellorship: The Haryana-Delhi-UP politics in which Mrs Gandhi would go all the way to wean away the Jats from Mr Charan Singh's influence. She probably does not know that Mr Charan Singh and Dr Sarup Singh are brothers-in-law (wives of both Singhs are sisters) and the Jats cannot be won by such pranks. Dr Singh appointed V. P. Dutt, Professor of Chinese and Japanese studies as Pro-Vice-Chancellor. Dr Dutt became a member of the India-China Friendship Society in the fifties and went to China. After his return, he made himself recognized as one of the greatest China experts and hence attained higher and higher positions in New Delhi and old Delhi. In the days of India-China Friendship, he made use of that forum, but since the time of hostility he has chosen to be one of

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those Indians who throw as much mud on China as possible. One very interesting fact has come to light in connection with his appointment. The members of the CPM unit in the University were seen actively canvassing for Dr Dutt's appointment. It is a puzzle to us whether they were guided by the personal factor (Dr Dutt happens to be the brother-in-law, i.e., sister's husband, of the leader of the CPM unit) or they find anything revolutionary in him. The next appointment made by the V.C. is that of Mr Shanti Narayan, Principal, Hans Raj College. Principal Shanti Narayan is known for his association with the RSS, Arya Samaj and Jana Sangh and gives all possible patronage to all these elements in his college. Thus the V.C. has shown his shrewdness at the very outset by making these two appointments—one to neutralize the left and the other to win over the right fully.

The University community of Delhi is anxious to know what the V.C. has to say with regard to the reports of the Working Groups appointed by him and Dr Raj jointly as P.V.C. and V.C. respectively. Are the recommendations of those groups going to be implemented or thrown in to the wastepaper basket? What about that money which they lavishly spent on those Working Groups? The new V.C. has to explain these things. The students, teachers and karmacharis are crying for their full participation in the functioning of the University. The demand for democratization of the University set-up is being constantly ignored by the authorities on this or that pretext. The police have created a terror in the University. The authorities being the agents of the ruling classes had said goodbye to academic freedom and autonomy of the University. Will the University community rise to the occasion in building a real people's movement in order to safeguard their democratic rights and to overthrow the reactionary set-up?

SURAJ SINGH

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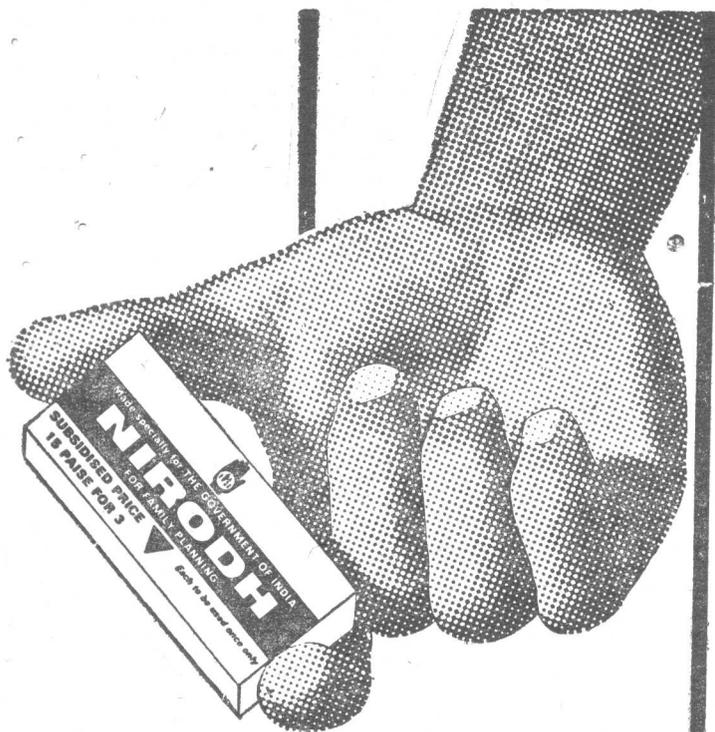
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