

# frontier

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## On Other Pages

COMMENTS	..	2
<i>View From Delhi</i>		
BENGAL LIGHTS FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT	..	6
STRUGGLE FOR OIL A. K. ESSACK	..	7
CALCUTTA DIARY GYAN KAPUR	..	10
BORGI ELO DESHE BY A DRAMA CRITIC	..	12
HELL HATH NO LIMIT MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY	..	12
KATTHAK, THUMRI AND KINDRED SONGS BY A MUSIC CRITIC	..	13
<i>Clippings</i>		
NIXON'S WAR ON GEOGRAPHY	..	14
LETTERS	..	15

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## BATTLE OF BARANAGAR

MR Ajoy Mukherjee is trying hard to live up to his reputation as the craftiest showman in West Bengal politics. His frequent political somersaults, though a reminder of a performing clown, have always a direction; they catapult him invariably to the Chief Minister's gaddi. In 1967, he reinforced his claim to chief ministership by his dramatic decision to fight the then Congress Chief Minister, Mr P. C. Sen, at Arambagh. Taken in by the stunt, other parties withheld themselves, and he was able to defeat Mr Sen by 800 odd votes. He repeated the gimmick in 1969, more as a token of expiation for his conspiracy with Mr Sen to topple the UF ministry and head the successor ministry with Congress support than for anything else. By that time his anti-Congressism had worn thin, though he remained as loud-mouthed as ever. To be Chief Minister again he had to make himself acceptable to the left. He proved himself a shrewd political calculator, for though he was defeated by Mr Sen by a very big margin, he was able to sneak into leftist favour. He bagged the chief ministership; his name was proposed by Mr Jyoti Basu, and he returned the compliment by proposing Mr Basu for deputy chief ministership. On neither occasion he had failed to contest in his home constituency of Tamluk, which has, all through his erratic political career, provided him with a safe berth in the Assembly.

The slick operator is at his old game again. This time he has pitted himself not against any Congress leader but against Mr Basu, twice his deputy in the UF. His objective is to underscore that the CPM is the main enemy now, just as the Congress was in the two previous elections. This has been his political line for the last fifteen months, and during this period he has worked assiduously for an alliance of all anti-CPM parties. He has failed not because these parties are lacking in hostility towards the CPM, but because some shied at an open liaison with the Congress while others could not agree on how to share the cake. The Bangla Congress, which had been blown out of all proportion to its strength by the left parties, each for its own reason, was the worst sufferer. It found itself abandoned except by some political fall-outs and discards who are more of a liability than an asset. Mr Mukherjee's challenge to Mr Basu at Baranagar is for salvaging himself and his party. The party will perhaps be put in its place by the electorate

withstanding his efforts, but he may be able to arrest his own downward journey. By not putting up any candidate at Baranagar other parties have already yielded to him the pivotal position in the anti-CPM camp. The CPI's show of demur was for extracting a concession: the bargain was struck when the Bangla Congress agreed to withdraw its candidate from the Basirhat parliamentary constituency and support the CPI candidate there. If Mr Mukherjee is able to worst Mr Basu, his claim to chief ministership in a non-CPM coalition will be irresistible; if he is not, he loses nothing. And if Baranagar sets off a chain of clandestine alliances, he will have achieved his original objective. He has fished himself out of oblivion and put his rusty image of a crusader at the centre of the stage.

If results of the fourth general election are any guide, Mr Basu faces a tough situation in Baranagar. He had defeated his Congress rival in 1969 by 3,000 odd votes. The CPI claim that it had worked for Mr Basu then will be disputed by the CPM. The fact, however, remains that in a straight contest, except for an independent nonentity who forfeited his deposit, Mr Basu could win by a margin unflattering to him. That he trounced the same Congress candidate in the first mid-term poll is irrelevant, for the left was united in 1969. He cannot expect to derive any advantage from the split in the Congress either, for Mr Mukherjee is being backed by both the Congresses. The decisive role may, however, be of the Naxalites who exist in strength in Baranagar. If their influence works against Mr Basu alone and not against both, Mr Basu may be in a predicament. He may scrape through even then. But if he does not, that will not be altogether bad for him and his party. A setback will knock off some fatty complacency from both. A dose of disillusionment with elections may do them good, though Kerala discourages such hopes.

## Beliaghata Again

Do people bother these days about how the police are behaving? The impression was that the activities of armed thugs in plainclothes let loose in October-December—to make the State safe for elections—are no longer so widespread. But on Monday the police killed five young men in Beliaghata. According to Beliaghata citizens, the young men were dragged out of their houses, made to stand by the side of a wall with their hands tied and shot. Four died on the spot while the fifth was dragged to the nearby thana and killed. All of them were college and university students. The police officers, before their action, asked people at the point of revolvers to close their doors and windows so that there would be no eye-witnesses. But a large number saw what happened. There was no bomb attack on the police.

There was a silent procession in protest on Tuesday.

The PVC Act has been accepted by all the parties, after some symbolic protest, as necessary for the elections and, by and large, the government is leaving the parliamentary parties alone. Of the 1,800 arrested so far under the Act, some 18 or 50 have affiliations with the CPM. The attention of the Governor has been drawn to these cases. What about the rest? Besides, there are thousands of others in jail, waiting for god alone knows what.

With the PVA Act detenus, the police can proceed in a leisurely way. In the meantime they are victims of prolonged under-nourishment and continuous maltreatment. There are clashes with warders—and deaths—but no demand for enquiries.

Most of those not arrested under the PVA Act have nightmares waiting for them before they are produced before a magistrate. When they are presented, some of them can hardly walk. People from outside who have

been arrested in Calcutta lawyers to defend them nor any means to inform their relations. When a battered-up boy was produced the other day, lawyers defending another case were so shocked by his condition that they demanded that the boy be sent to jail, not police custody. The request was granted.

The boy was lucky. There was a time when the court-rooms used to be invaded by police in plainclothes who made it obvious that if the magistrate granted bail he would be in trouble.

It is not known to the public that after the escape of eight prisoners from Presidency Jail, Calcutta, on February 5, quite a number of prisoners were taken to Cells Nos. 22-24 and savagely beaten up by hardened criminals. They were given no medicine, no water. The torture was so brutal that many even of the jail staff were shocked. The crowded cells in which the prisoners have been packed like sardines look like morgues. Their relatives are not allowed to see them. One of the five who actually tried to escape but was caught on the kitchen roof had one of his eyes uprooted.

Political parties busy electioneering have no time or inclination to take up these cases. Men without conscience continue to strut and rave on the political stage. What a country!

## Black Is White

Such is our obsession with parliamentary elections that the first question to crop up, after the public revelation of the U.S. General Accounting Office proposal to devalue the rupee, was why Mrs Indira Gandhi or her ruling chums should be discomfited by the Americans on the eve of the general elections. That the rupee has become worthless has been evident to anyone who cared to know; the hippies in India would rather starve or sell their blood than dream of converting their dollars into rupees. The blackmarket exchange

rate of the rupee (1 dollar=12.50 rupees) is after all the real one, no matter what the official rate (1 dollar=7.50 rupees) is. It was merely a question of time when the realistic Americans would ask the mayavadi Indians to admit that black is white and therefore to give the rupee at a preferential rate of exchange to the US Government agencies operating in India. But why has the U.S. sprung the uncomfortable, even if foreseen, surprise at a time when Mrs Gandhi needs all the boost-up? Has the American-Indian relationship been reduced to that of the unconcerned God who cares two hoots about what happens to His protege, Man? Or perhaps we are seeing things upside down. The negotiation between the Indian Government and the U.S. Government on this rupee-dollar deal has been going on for the last six months. It has been Mrs Gandhi who has chosen the time to decide that she must look tough and refuse to accept the GAO proposal. It must be then her brave pre-election, anti-imperialist, anti-comprador stance!

But what a defective stance leaving all the wickets vulnerable! Leaving inflation to take its own way, production stagnate, plan expenditure come down and current expenditure spiral, trying to live with deficit budgets and bad economy year after year, she can hardly expect to hold to the wicket for long.

And if her fellow Indians refuse to be impressed by her pyrotechnics, she will have to blame her predecessors for the damp squib. The 1966 devaluation of the rupee is too fresh a memory. All the rationalisation that Mr Sachin Chaudhuri had then fabricated to cover the American blackmail, has been exposed in due course as fraud, well and good. Exports have not picked up. This year's performance will not even reach a four per cent annual growth, against the booming world export business and the ridiculously low Indian target of 7 per cent annual growth. But export boost-up was allegedly the primary motive for devaluation of the rupee. And in the process,

the public debt of the Government of India to the U.S. Government trebled at one stroke. Loans from the U.S. were in 1965-66 Rs 749 crores; these became Rs 1,915 crores in 1969-70. PL480 Rupee loans standing at Rs 528 crores in 65-66 became Rs 1,492 crores in 69-70. If the present GAO suggestion is accepted, and why the hell not, the Americans have all their economists and—Foundation-happy Indian economists too—to prove why that is essential for Indian welfare, and the loans will get automatically doubled again. Mighty good investment it was by the Americans. The PL480 loans standing in 1961 at Rs 77.48 crores are now about to become Rs 2,500 crores! We thought that the PL480 loans were an aid; we still refuse to admit that it was trade; we are still under the impression that black is white.

## More About Hijacking

*A correspondent writes:*

It is not as if planes had not been hijacked earlier, by others, to dramatize a political conflict. Till hijacking came to India, the reaction of the majority of our people to a report of hijacking was one of tolerant amusement; the only excitement was in keeping count of the number of planes hijacked to Cuba. The PFLP hijackings and blowing-up of planes last year evoked nothing but admiration among the vast majority of our people, and even the leadership in the country barely concealed its approval and approbation. Mrs Gandhi, 'progressive' as she evidently considers herself to be, could not condemn Miss Khaled and her companions. To be fair to Mrs Gandhi, it is even likely that she and her whole progressive retinue genuinely felt admiration for and sympathy with the Palestinian commandos.

But of course, such things are to be admired only from a safe distance. Long Live Revolution, as long as

it happens elsewhere, far off. But unfortunately for New Delhi, such things have a habit of getting contagious. Whether New Delhi likes or not, there is in the offing a national liberation movement in Kashmir. West Pakistan, of course, might encourage the revolt in Kashmir out of its anti-Indian spite, but the nature and the substance of 'outside' encouragement does not affect the objective reasons that have to exist for an insurgent situation to develop. In handling the Kashmir situation, the Government of India, as always, seems to be following American footsteps. New Delhi has tried every trick in the book to 'pacify' Kashmir: jail the leaders, try to bribe them, try to create dissensions among the leadership, exile, mass arrests, censorship. The 'liberalization' too is another leaf from the American book, and New Delhi might yet go on to further sophistications learned from its American masters: protected villages, counter-insurgency, winning the Hearts and Minds of the people, &c., &c. But the one trick that might solve the problem—accept the principle of self-determination for the people of Kashmir—is of course out of the question. Even to suggest it would be treason.

If one had any illusions about the 'progressiveness' of most of the organized political parties in India, the reaction of these to the hijacking should have come as a rude awakening. The reactions of parties like the Congress, the Swatantra, the CPI, the Jana Sangh &c, were of course predictable; but even a party which calls itself Marxist saw it fit to rush to the press with a statement condemning the hijacking and the 'vandalist act' of burning the plane down. (The plane was presumably fully insured; but perhaps the party is upset over the 'loss' suffered by international insurance underwriters). One would have thought that at least the CPI(M) would have refrained from adding its voice to the chorus led by Mrs Gandhi and Mr Madhok.

Everybody, practically everybody, seems to be desperately anxious to

preserve the 'territorial integrity' of India, an 'integrity' that has to be accepted only on the basis of two premises: the British administrative unity which we inherited, or "Bharatvarsha" which forms the ideological foundation of the RSS and the Jana Sangh. But the completion of the Indian revolution need not necessarily take place within a territorial and administrative framework which is at best an artificial inheritance. History did not stop with the tryst with destiny.

## The War In Laos

"Here is at least a war" said Senator Jacob Javits "that succeeds". The American war in Laos was intended to be a success in terms of tonnage of bombs dropped and population wiped out and made homeless. But the greatest American success in Laos is the veil of secrecy with which it has been covering its crimes. Now with the U.S.-South Vietnamese-Thai invasion of Laos the success story has been knocked off. Notwithstanding Senator Javits' satisfaction, the desperate American venture (the operation of course has been ordered by President Nguyen Van Thieu!) into Laos has uncovered not so much North Vietnamese arms caches as the total failure of the criminal "secret war". The ground invasion of Laos denotes not only the defeat of the most ruthless operation in human history but of an entire counter-insurgency strategy as well.

Professor Samuel Huntington, one of the principal architects of the Pentagon's counter-revolutionary strategy, thought he had at last hit upon the answer to Maoist people's war: destroy the countryside before it can surround the cities and dry up the ocean in which the guerilla fish can swim. If the direct application of American mechanical and conventional power, wrote the professor-strategist, "takes place on such a massive scale as to produce a massive migration from countryside to city, the basic assumptions underlying

the Maoist doctrine of revolutionary war no longer operate. The Maoist-inspired rural revolution is undercut by the American-sponsored urban revolution." The firepower brought to bear upon Laos was truly massive. Early in 1969 *Newsweek* estimated the annual cost of American bombing in Laos to be \$1 billion. Since then bombing in Laos has reached a record ferocity of 700 sorties a day, one sortie unloading explosives worth \$7,000-10,000. And the purpose of this bombing, as openly admitted in the report of the Kennedy sub-committee on refugees, is to "destroy the physical and social infrastructure of the region controlled by the Pathet Lao". For the benefit of readers not accustomed to the Pentagon jargon the report gives a simplified list of targets: "buffaloes, cows, rice paddies, schools, temples, shelters outside the villages and of course the whole population." This was perhaps going a little too far from Professor Huntington's prescription for refugee-generating bombing. But he wouldn't mind. A sizable part of the Laotian population was exterminated and 40-50% of the male and 25% of female and children of the Meo tribesmen were finished off. And a steady stream of refugees pouring into government-controlled areas evidenced the macabre success of "the American-sponsored urban revolution". According to official Vientiane estimate, 60% of the peasants living in Pathet Lao areas have left their villages since February 1970. And the American contribution to "the forced-draft urbanization", to quote the professor, again does not relate only to bombing people away from the countryside. Washington also has been making generous financial assistance to lakhs of refugees living like animals in hovels around Vientiane. According to the estimate of *Le Monde*, annual American aid to Laotian refugees amounts to the total spent for bombing Laos for six days.

The urbanization strategy seemed to be succeeding at first. In October 1969 the *New York Times* noted that "the bombing, by creating refu-

gees, deprives the communists of their chief source of food and transport. The population of the Pathet Lao zone has been declining for several years and the Pathet Lao find it increasingly difficult to fight a 'people's war, with fewer and fewer people'. Not unnaturally Senator Javits drew great comfort from these happy developments.

But developments since the winter of 1969 made it plain that despite the success of American carnage, despite "urban revolution" something has gone wrong. The capacity of endurance and fighting spirit displayed by the Pathet Lao seemed to upset the entire strategic calculation. Dealing blow after blow the Pathet Lao virtually drove the Americans and their Vientiane puppets to the banks of the Mekong. In 1970 officials in Vientiane privately admitted, "for all that it has undoubtedly demoralized civilians, refugees report that the bombing has raised the morale of Pathet Lao fighting forces. Unlike most other soldiers in Laos, they finally have a clear idea of what they are fighting for. Refugees also say that volunteers for the Pathet Lao army have doubled... in the last few years. Before, many village youths were reluctant to leave their villages. Now the attitude has become, "better to die as a soldier than to die hiding from the bombing in holes in the ground." And now on the eve of the invasion of Laos the *London Times* admits that despite "relentless, continuous and horrifying" bombing "no more than twenty per cent of the supplies" along the Ho Chi Minh trail could be impeded. Small wonder Americans would now make a last-ditch bid to wipe out the Pathet Lao on the ground—a task which thousands of tons of explosives, toxic chemicals and mercenary Meo troops failed to achieve. Eighty-eight aircraft were downed in a single week and thousands of soldiers wiped out. Nothing could be a more telling testimony to the defeat of technology-based counter-revolutionary strategy than the ruins of the CIA headquarters in Laos—Long Cheng.

## Egypt: War Of Words

President Anwar Sadat has made a perfect emulation of the later-day diplomatic moves of his predecessor in that he now knows how far the demonstration of militancy can be safely indulged in and when to be 'reasonable' with one's adversary. In December Mr Sadat first insisted that there would be no renewal of the cease-fire unless Israel gave an undertaking to roll back from the occupied territories, but later 'the battle of destiny' was deferred till February 5 on some specious grounds. This time his fulmination had some comic elements—Mohammed el-Zayyat and Yosef Tekoah were making frequent visits to the office of the Swedish diplomat when it was said that the negotiations had got bogged down in a procedural mess; when there were blackouts and practice air-raid alerts the Egyptians were found getting ready for Bairam holidays instead of taking notice of the fateful day. But to be fair to Mr Sadat it must be said that he had not had an easy going in the National Assembly in declaring a further extension of the non-shooting period till March. While the resumption of fire across the Suez Canal would have disturbed the political balance in Egypt, the continuance of Israeli occupation could only make it difficult for the Arabs to regain the lost territories. Mr Sadat must be thankful to Mr Thant for bailing him out of a difficult situation. The UN Secretary General's 'cautious optimism' and appeal to the disputants 'to withhold fire, to exercise military restraint and to maintain the quiet which has prevailed in the area since August 1970' helped Mr Sadat to contain the radical elements in the National Assembly.

During the last three months the only noticeable development in the peace negotiations has been the end of the procedural logjam which is a consequence of submission of position papers by Israel and the UAR. Although the papers are supposed to be confidential both the countries

made it a point to leak these to the Press. Except that it is somewhat politely worded, the Israeli paper has not made any concession on the known policy—to continue to occupy most of the conquered territories, and get 'secure and recognized borders'. In contrast, Egypt has given up a number of prepared positions which the Israelis could not dream of only a few months ago. Besides her readiness to make firm commitments on Israel's right to exist as a State, the UAR has promised navigation right to Israeli ships in the Suez Canal and the Strait of Tirana. Quite predictably, Mrs Golda Meir is strongly opposed to the Egyptian proposal for stationing a UN peace keeping force in demilitarized zones to be established on both the Israeli and Arab sides.

In any negotiated peace the Arabs stand to lose territories. In a recent message to the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Mr Mahmoud Riad, the U.S. Secretary of State, Mr William Rogers said that his country would help in reaching an agreement which would enable the Arabs to get back all but insubstantial territories lost to Israel during the Six-Day War. In 1967 America was committed to Israel's territorial integrity within the 1948 armistice lines and the maintenance of military balance in West Asia, but today she favours the Israeli retention of every bit of occupied land until a final settlement is reached. For this Washington has been providing Israel help in all possible ways—from a per capita aid of \$14,000 to the supply of sophisticated military equipment. Russia knows it well that in no case will America allow Israel to lose to the Arabs in a conventional war. Which is why there was overt Russian pressure on Mr Sadat to hold fire.

It is not unlikely that Mr Sadat's proposal that if Israel would pull back from the East Bank of the Canal, Egypt would start clearing the waterway for navigation was inspired by Moscow, since Russia is interested in having easier communications with the Indian Ocean.

It should be noted that

while the Hashemite Monarch has given a free hand to his Prime Minister, Mr Wasfi Tel, to decimate both politically and militarily the Palestine liberation movement, in all diplomatic moves of the UAR Government there is a clear indication of disengagement from the Palestinian problem. According to a recent *Al Ahram* report, the PLO has unanimously decided to back any political initiative taken with a view to eliminating the 'sequels of aggression' if this does not run counter to the interests of the Palestinians. The report has been firmly denied by the commandos. Some time ago in an interview with a correspondent of *Free Palestine* Mr Yassir Arafat said that a peaceful solution 'concocted' by either the big or the small States could only mean humiliation for the Palestinians. If the present generation is unable to liberate Palestine, it should not commit the crime of presenting future generations with a fait accompli by agreeing to a peaceful settlement of the Middle East crisis.

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### NOTICE

Articles cannot be returned unless accompanied by return postage.

Business Manager  
Frontier

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### CORRECTION

The 44-page January 23, 1971 issue of *Frontier* should have been numbered 42-43 instead of 41-42. No separate issue numbered 43 was published. No. 44 was the issue of February 6, 1971.

## Bengal Lights

FROM A POLITICAL  
CORRESPONDENT

TO be unable to hold peaceful elections in at least one State without the help of the army is candid admission that the legitimacy of the present parliamentary system is being doubted in some parts of the country. More than two infantry divisions (that is over 50,000) are to be thrown in for the Bengal poll operations. It is almost a corps strength and an uncanny reminder of the fanfare with which a special corps was raised for the NEFA operation in 1962. Perhaps we have progressed from mere democracy to guided democracy with the army to prop a system and give it a new lease of legitimacy.

In New Delhi, it is non-government now. Almost all the ministers are out campaigning or raising party funds or organising defections and there is no more decision-making except the stampede of licences to industry as a quid pro quo for donations to the ruling party's funds. In official New Delhi, West Bengal is a nightmare. There are reports of experts examining the implications of postponing elections in parts of West Bengal though no one knows what the postponement is meant to achieve. A senior Cabinet Minister, asked about West Bengal two months ago, is known to have quipped, "Alright, it is West Bengal now... Do you want elections to be put off in several other States next year?" That was his argument to clinch his demand for a mid-term poll. Maybe he was right. After two years, elections may not be possible in a number of States.

The Centre cannot deny franchise to West Bengal, as things stand today. It is past the point of return. At one stage, Mrs Gandhi is reported to have thought of declaring an emergency in West Bengal or parts of the

State to exclude them from the purview of the March elections. There were serious second thoughts and coupled with pressure from her party-men from the State, she had to settle for elections there in the usual course.

The latest reports from Calcutta about the new factor in the city's underworld, the "mastans", lends credence to certain disclosures by Mr Kuldip Nayar in his latest book *India: the Critical Years*. What are often dubbed as Naxalites are the anti-social elements owing allegiance to various political parties. The Congress-R and the CPI must have been using their *mastan* following for anti-CPI(M) ends and it suited the police and the Centre to describe every group as a Naxalite group. Talk to the CPI leaders and they are not in the least concerned about the terror campaign in Calcutta. All that they say is they are not in it but they seem to be happy that somebody is attacking the CPI(M). Thus the CPI is successfully pretending to be the innocent in the Calcutta nightmare. It thinks it can secure the defeat of Mr Jyoti Basu [that will have a salutary effect on the CP(M), no doubt] by supporting Mr Ajoy Mukherjee. The arithmetic contrived to establish this possibility is impressive. Mr Basu won by a narrow margin in 1967 and if any party lost its cadre in Baranagore it is the CPI(M). So if the "Naxalites" abstain from voting, there is a fair chance of defeating Mr Basu.

The Centre still has no answer to the West Bengal problem. As was to be expected, violence in Calcutta has taken a predictable pattern—of inter-party clashes as it should be as the elections draw near. It is a curious example of extra-parliamentary weapons like bombs and small arms reinforcing the parliamentary weapon of the ballot.

It is strange that the Big Business press which has been writing its head off about the "red" terror in Calcutta is now advocating the CPI(M)'s return to power in West Bengal with a stable majority. The logic behind this is based on the assumption that a stable CPI(M)-led Government

would mean a long-term detente between Big Business and the government and the resultant restoration of law and order. So the CPI(M) has turned out to be the best bet of Big Business in West Bengal, and Mrs Gandhi-at the Centre. The nostalgia is for stability.

What if the CPI(M) makes it at the polls but the Centre subverts the parliamentary process once again? Time was when the CPI(M) seriously believed that it might lose the election in West Bengal and the party would have to go underground. That was on the eve of the mid-term elections in 1969. A few months later, when the Congress split wide open it feared that the right would take over in New Delhi and backed Mrs Gandhi. That did not prevent her from toppling the two CPI(M)-dominated ministries, in Kerala and West Bengal. If Big Business thinks it can buy its peace in West Bengal from the CPI(M) and in the rest of the country from Mrs Gandhi, it might be right. A strange correlation between the CPI(M) and Mrs Gandhi would develop if she realises that she has to deal with a reality in West Bengal and the Kerala pattern of mini-front politics would not work. It is a fair guess that the mini-front politics, a new-fangled contribution of the CPI-Mrs Gandhi grand alliance, is on the way out.

The CPI's morale has been restored at the possibility of Mrs Gandhi not winning an absolute majority. But the Soviet lobby in New Delhi wants Mrs Gandhi to bag 350 seats and to hell with the CPI. It is good to do business with a stable government whatever its ideological complexion and whatever its composition. The CPI's own fortunes are of secondary importance to the Kremlin. Meantime, the next CPSU Congress is round the corner and the CPI can be psyched into accepting another new theory that would help usher in a state of national democracy, under the joint hegemony of the national bourgeoisie led by Mrs Gandhi and the AITUC led by Comrade Dange.

February 13, 1971

# Struggle For Oil

A. K. ESSACK

A feature of imperialism in its twilight of life is that chinks in its armour show in the most unexpected of places, in the frontline puppet States of Asia, Africa and Latin America whose function is to act as shock absorbers. Some of these very States have now turned or are in a process of turning against their former masters. A spokesman of some of these is none other than the Shah of Iran whom imperialism restored to power after it overthrew Mossadeq in 1951. The struggle is over oil. True enough, the Shah, now the spokesman of the Gulf countries producing oil, has not gone anywhere near Mossadeq's position, but what he says is enough to send oil shares sliding on the stock exchange a few shillings. Unease and alarm are pervading the houses of international finance capital.

The Shah in his first public statement for 12 years warned the powerful cartel of the 22 giant oil monopolies about to meet the six Gulf members of OPEC (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries): "If the question is not settled by the OPEC deadline (February 3, 1971) there would be indeed a crisis in the oil world; there would be a stoppage of oil flow from producers and other sanctions... if they refuse to meet OPEC demands then the oil producing countries will have to follow the example of Venezuela to seek legislation to guarantee themselves 60% of the oil income." Exposing this monstrous combine of oil companies whose tactic was to stall with issues like a global agreement covering a period of five years, he said: "This would be delaying tactics and cannot be accepted. We accept only what we are entitled to, no more no less."

OPEC consists of ten States—Algeria, Libya, Venezuela, Indonesia and the Gulf States of Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Abu Dhabi, and Qatar. The OPEC States bet-

ween themselves produce 85% of the world's oil outside the socialist bloc. It was formed in 1960 and its aim was to see that the oil producing countries had a common policy. All these years the super oil monopolies and their Western governments behaved publicly as if OPEC did not exist, but privately spent fortunes to remove any member of these OPEC countries involved in petroleum negotiations who sowed dangerous ideas of nationalisation. However, despite initial difficulties some of which were due to the different systems of member States, OPEC survived. The overthrow of the puppet Idris government by the Ghadafy military leadership led to a qualitative change in OPEC itself, for this new government took a tough line against the oil monopolies.

Last December OPEC members met at Caracas in Venezuela and formulated a broad strategy. These were (1) Removal of existing differentials on posted prices between member States; (2) an all-round increase; (3) rise in the tax rate on oil companies' income from 50 to 55%. It set February 3 as the deadline by which these demands were to be met with the Gulf producing nations of OPEC.

The significance of this is not so much in the three demands, for these are paltry and niggardly in relation to the "tons of gold" coined by the oil companies, as in the agreement of the States that the only way to confront the united action of the oil monopolies led by Standard Oil and Shell B.P. was united action of the oil producing countries.

The three points were the minimum demands on which the oil producing countries could unite, and what this meant in effect was that they should receive 1.25 dollars per barrel of oil from the oil monopolies. And the Shah exposed the greed, avarice, and merciless plunder of

their countries' resources in two simple sentences when he added, "The oil producers want 1.25 dollars a barrel compared to 12-14 dollars paid by the final consumer. Where does the rest go?"

Even this pittance monopoly capital was not prepared to grant. Standard Oil and Shell B.P. dragooned the rest to present a united front. Only ENI of Italy had reservations. Their plan of attack was to undermine the confidence of the States with threats and bribes and then divide them, adopt delaying tactics and make an offer of token concessions.

The Gulf States are ruled by feudal monarchies as a rule and have all along sought the umbrella of imperialist military bases for their own protection. The point then made, which amounted to blackmail, was that should these States persist in their stubbornness, the umbrella would be withdrawn and they would be overthrown by "communists". The other threat was that should the OPEC members persist in their "unreasonable" demands, then alternative sources would be resorted to, namely Alaska, North Sea and Nigeria. This was just bluff and deceived nobody.

## Campaign

A campaign was launched to isolate what they called the "hardliners" of OPEC, namely Algeria, Libya and Iraq from the rest. Special overtures were made to the three "moderates", namely Iran, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. In fact the strength of the

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super-monopoly corporations is such that they can order their own governments about and make them do errands. Thus Nixon was "persuaded" to send emissaries to the three moderates before the confrontation at Teheran.

At the "confrontation" meeting, the oil companies adopted a tough attitude and treated the OPEC States

as children. They came with a list of impossible and unacceptable demands. Believing that the OPEC countries were no different from their own reformist trade union leaders whose officials they have in their pockets, they wanted to tie the OPEC countries to five-year agreements.

They offered a 20% rise. They dangled this as a tempting bribe

stating that this would mean \$700 million for them all in 1971 (290 million in sterling) which would rise to \$1,600 million (£666 million) in 1975.

The oil cartel, acting and speaking with one voice, wanted the oil producers to fight amongst themselves over spoils and at one time it seemed that it was succeeding, for, as one Venezuela delegate said: "The oil companies are trying to stir up trouble inside OPEC". OPEC unity held, however slender and frayed the threads were at the end, and on the deadline date the talks with the oil companies collapsed, with OPEC States refusing to budge. Far from being disheartened, the OPEC States found added strength in this new-found unity. This was revealed in a tougher stand which emerged after their meeting. The oil companies were given ten days to accept the offer of the OPEC nations. If there was no response the Gulf States would pass legislation to increase the oil revenue. The increase would be based on the principle laid down by Venezuela. This Latin American State gets 60% tax on oil produced and thus has the most favourable terms of the OPEC countries.

The Shah thus was not bluffing when he said that OPEC countries would also be tough and the Iranian Oil Minister Amouzeggar said, "From now until February 15, the companies have time to come back and say they are ready to accept our terms... We have left the door open for the companies to come back and accept our demands".

What if the oil companies refuse? The Algerian Power and Industries Minister, Belaid Abdessalam, said, "They will be digging their grave". And what this meant immediately was spelled out by Ezzed Harbrouk, Libyan Petroleum Minister: "The first step after failure of negotiations would be legislation incorporating producers' demands. If the companies do not act according to legislation, effective measures will be taken against them including the stopping of oil".

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**S. P. Sen-Varma**  
**Chief Election Commissioner of India**

davp 70/617

Overshadowed, but nevertheless crucial for the oil-producing nations as to the direction, have been the talks between the Algerian and the French governments over oil. These have again been postponed. Here too neither side is budging. The tough stand taken by Francois Xavier Ortoli has been met by an equally tough stand by Aziz Bouteflika who reported on the last adjournment, "I can simply say that the French requested time for reflection".

Here Algeria is seeking a new agreement to replace the 1965 one which bound her hand and foot. In her new proposals she is seeking 3.24 dollars as reference price—at present she is only receiving 2.08 dollars. This is ridiculously low and even the American and British companies give at least 2.21 dollars. Secondly, although Boumediene is not seeking nationalisation he wants 51% controlling interest in the French-Algerian partnership.

Algeria has already nationalised six oil companies which are Shell, Amif, Elwerath, Sofrapel, Phillips, and Drilling Specialist Company. Amif is associated with the Italian Montecatani, Elwerath and Sofrapel are both German, while Phillips and Drilling are American. Only France which controlled 30 million tons of oil out of the total of 45 has not been touched so far. The present negotiations are aimed at bringing France into line with the rest. The French know only too well that with the direction now pursued by Boumediene, the 51% control would amount to a noose being put round their necks to be tightened at a later date. And Algeria has an army which cannot be trifled with by any power.

The OPEC demands now are just the first phase of the struggle. The second could well be the control of the oil industry and the final being the realisation of their cherished dream of full nationalisation.

In this respect it is well to remember and to pay tribute to Mossadeq who was the first of the nationalist leaders to be felled by the iron fist of international finance capital and

its arm, the CIA. He represented the aspirations of the Arab peoples and also their illusions. He nationalised the oil industry of Iran so that its riches could serve the people. But an action which hurt or hit imperialism could only be maintained by an armed might of a politically mobilised people whom it was supposed to benefit. Genuine nationalisation without a vigilant people politically mobilised to ensure its success and implementation leads to a successful attack by counter-revolution. Mossadeq did not understand this

and this led to his overthrow. Other African, Asian and Latin American leaders have also attempted nationalisation with Mossadeq's illusions and they too have been overthrown. But tiny Cuba understood this. It had no illusions. Its nationalisation was without compensation but a politically mobilised people, vigilant and alert as well as armed, scattered and smashed the invasion by counter-revolution backed by the late Kennedy.

In the coming battles against imperialism in Africa it will be well to learn these lessons.

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**EASTERN RAILWAY**

# Calcutta Diary

GYAN KAPUR

THE people at large do not have any illusions about the police. They know what to expect from them and that is pretty little. The police have their own ideas of what is important and what is not. That is one side of the picture. On the other side of course is the touching faith of certain leaders who never tire of charging the police with failing to do their duty when it is a question of their own men being beaten up. They forget that a sense of duty means different things to different people and the police are no exception.

In spite of everything, however, one would have supposed that in their own way at least the police would be quite efficient and in their holy of holies, Lal Bazar, quite impregnable. Quite a hue and cry was raised some time back when a bomb was found inside Lal Bazar itself and big guns of the force went into conference trying to find out how it came to be there, suggesting that it was a next to impossible thing. Facts, however, appear to be otherwise.

It is no more difficult to enter Lal Bazar and loiter here and there if one goes about it in a determined way. Perhaps the majority of policemen who have to do the dirty work are plain disinterested. Perhaps it is just the general malaise which is slowly overpowering government and even other organizations as a result of which the right hand does not know what the left is doing.

Otherwise it is difficult to explain the curious case of the office of the Police Association inside Lal Bazar itself. Unauthorised occupation of Sealdah Station by refugees we are all used to. But it was unthinkable that the same thing should happen inside Lal Bazar itself. The big question, however, has been left unanswered by the police spokesman. Who actually were the people who had occupied the office room of the

Association? Were they outsiders? Or just members of the force who had become refugees from their usual places of residence due to the present sense of insecurity in certain areas?

The Commissioner of Police, of course, is going out in a big way to hire flats of all sizes for members of his force. After all they have to live somewhere. If in the process some nice deals are struck, that is just by the way. But what of the new refugees among the common people in Baranagore, Beliaghata and other places? Who will arrange flats for them? Most of them belong to the lower middle class of employees who can hardly pay their present small rents. And still they are fleeing the places where they have lived for years, unable to bear the fear and police terror, hoping to come back after the elections are over. As far as sympathies go, among them are men of all shades of opinion. They have already started voting by their feet ahead of March 10 and giving their verdict on the inter-party blood feuds. But who will read that verdict?

\* \* \*

Wonders will never cease and ours being a land of miracles, it is no wonder. Still the demand, among others, of some Government employees that all business should be disposed of within 15 days is breathtaking. It is no secret that Government officers spend more time in discussing their future and how to please their bosses whoever they may be than in working on matters in hand. But that is a thing much talked about openly. It is equally no secret that pretty little work gets done lower down also but that is something about which you have to speak a little guardedly. Whether dilatoriness at the top leads to disgust for work at the bottom or vice versa is one of the eternal posers easier raised than answered, like which came first, the egg or the chicken. It seems unlikely, however, that the employees are crying to be allowed to do more only if the officers will let them. In the end it

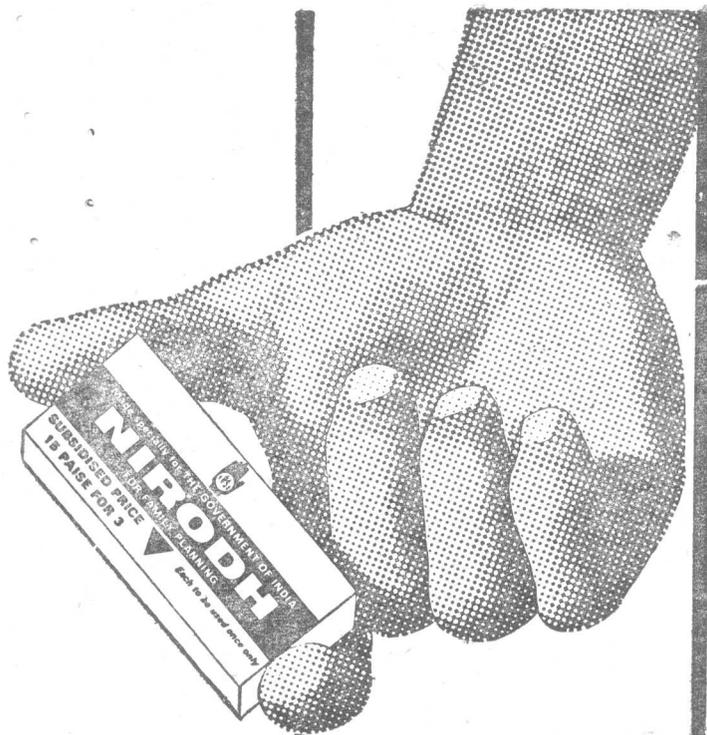
will be only a demand for more men to be employed to share out the available work. With the present state of acute unemployment and things in Government offices being as they are, even this is a laudable objective. Which brings us to the vexed question of overtime which has become an issue in the city of late.

Time was when Marxists frowned upon overtime work as only helping the process of exploitation further. But gradually a vested interest in overtime developed involving both workers and employees and the managements. With wages insufficient to meet their bare needs, workers and employees were eager to supplement their earnings with overtime pay. On the other hand the owners were no less willing. By having recourse to this system they could avoid increasing their fixed Salaries and Wages Bill and at the same time managements had a ready weapon in their hands to dispense gifts to men of their choice. Even the Government rule that overtime should not exceed per man 10 hours in any month and 120 hours in a year has had little effect in the majority of establishments.

Of the many novel slogans which have appeared recently stopping of overtime is one. It is anybody's guess whether it will catch on. But already in certain establishments it has become an issue and some workers and employees at least have started understanding that by hankering after overtime work they are only playing a losing game as a class. They enfeeble themselves by the long hours and blunt the edge of their rational demands. At the same time the more unfortunate of their class who are unemployed are deprived of their chances of jobs. That among those who have raised the slogan are those with whom they cannot see eye to eye politically should not take away from the validity of the argument.

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# Borgi Elo Deshe

BY A DRAMA CRITIC

**B**ORGI *Elo Deshe* (The thugs have come), directed by Utpal Dutt who is now associated with Bibek Natya Samaj, did not quite carry the day at the Rungmahal on February 14. The theme is contemporary—police atrocities. A boy of 17, arrested for his alleged complicity in the murder of a policeman, is shot dead in police custody, the authorities saying that he had to be killed because he was about to throw a bomb as soon as he had stepped out of the police van. The parents succeed in arranging for an enquiry, but legal loopholes prevent justice being done though it becomes clear beyond doubt that the boy was falsely implicated in the murder at the instigation of the owners of a factory and that the policeman had been killed by the police for his union activities.

Utpal Dutt as the lawyer appearing for the dead boy is brilliant. The man, cynical, fond of money and not caring a damn about Naxalites and Marxists, is, however, remorseless in his determination to expose the system once he is convinced of the innocence of the boy. His cross-examination of the 'Principal Adviser to the Government' is great fun; with an array of statistics and data he proves that the evils of West Bengal are due not to the anarchists, but to the deliberate policy of a comprador Central Government to exploit the eastern region like a colony; that violence, far from being an imported creed, was justified by Vivekananda and Subhas Bose (the heroes die hard!)

But as the cross-examination of the

second witness, the manager of the factory proceeds, the tragedy of police torture tends to be forgotten in the hilarious comicality of the babu and his pompous Bengali. The scene of police brutality on the brother of the dead boy arouses pity rather than anger; and the last episode, with the mother coming forward to appeal to our conscience, sounds more sentimental than heroic.

In his 150-minute presentation without a break Utpal Dutt wants a united democratic front against the thugs. His approach will not placate those who call the Naxalites police

agents and ride with the Home Secretary to point out Naxalite strongholds. Those who are sympathetic to the Naxalites will not forget this role of the CPM, the massive rapping on the Naxalites. Of course the play succeeds in depicting the cynical brutality of the police raj, though there is the qualifying depiction of a 'good' policeman, the sub-inspector who killed the boy but whose conscience was so stricken that he confessed it all. But will our conscience be roused? Even on Friday and Saturday last week two boys, one of them asleep, were shot dead by the police in 'encounters'. The unspoken attitude of some of the CPM-swearing friends of this critic was, 'served them right'. On Monday there was good riddance of another five in Beliaghata.

## Hell Hath No Limits

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

**T**HE central theme of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* is the tragedy of super-intellect and it penetratingly portrays the agony of a man of knowledge hankering after more power which can only be attained by enlisting the help of supernatural agencies. So he befriends Mephistopheles, Lucifer's aide, and becomes the devil's disciple. His contract gives him back his youth and all the mundane glories but he sells his soul to the devil. In fact, this yearning for knowledge and power was a direct offshoot of the European Renaissance and Marlowe, aptly described as "the Elizabethan Icarus," combined in him the "brave translunary things," "raptures all air and fire" and a touch of "fine madness," almost all the major traits of Faustus' character. Dr Faustus is, of course, not without conflicts and doubt, and at the last moment, when the fatal midnight hour strikes and he is on the eve of his final descent into hell, reason dawns on him and he urges time to

stop so that he could still have his redemption. Richard Burton's film completely fails to maintain this complex alchemy of emotions and despite the pyrotechnics of soft-focus, lap-dissolves, third colours and weird special effects, the style tends to be grossly naturalistic, totally ill-suited to the materials which seem always to be crying out for expressionist abstractions. While Burton continues to hem and haw, throughout the film, Faustus' mental turmoil never comes into his proper focus. The scenes of oscillating between the forces of good and evil as represented by off-voices, are corny and childish; the Inferno sequences and the spectacle of Seven Deadly Sins are hopelessly derivative of the third-rate Hammer movies. Elizabeth Taylor gives a bewitching performance as Helen of Troy, the silent temptress, but Burton's acting is quite heavy, which is only a euphemism for roaring ham.

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# Katthak, Thumri And Kindred Songs

BY A MUSIC CRITIC

AN interesting programme of *katthak*, *thumri*, *dadra* etc. was presented recently at the Kalamandir under the auspices of the Calcutta Music Circle.

Thumri was a type of folk song which in olden days used to be called *Jhomri* owing its origin to *Jambhalika* of the Sanskrit scriptures. It was prevalent in the old region of *Braja* comprising the districts of Mathura, Agra, etc. and vocalised by the local dialect, the *Brajabhasha*. Like the *tappa* of Lahore this form of semi-classical music also sprang up in the decadent period of the Moghul Court.

As is the case with most musical forms so also *thumri* in its primary stage used to be accompanied by dance which afterwards was discarded most probably under the influence of its chief patron, Nawab Wazed Ali of Lucknow. In this way sophisticated *thumri* freed itself from the tutelage of dance and came to be known as *baithi* (sitting) *thumri* while the previous form continued to be known as *khari* (standing) *thumri* accompanied by dance. The independent dance-form came to be known as *katthak*, being based on the *katha* of the Radha-Krishna mythology of the middle ages.

*Thumri* was subsequently given a semi-classical form by adding an *adagio* (vilambit) portion set mostly to some variation of the *tin tal* such as *addha*, *sitarkhani* etc. Thus a classical bias was imparted to the folk song, *thumri*. *Khari thumri* is still sung and danced while the *baithi* one is only sung. It is interesting to recapitulate the historical process of how a folk-style of music was recast in a pseudo-classical model which in course of time was invested with the tonal and tempo characteristics of classical music. Although both *tappa* and *thumri* were born near about the same time, *thumri* retained its uniqueness by avoiding the influence of *tappa*.

## Regional Classification

After the downfall of the court of Oudh towards the second half of the last century the protagonists of *thumri* and *katthak* were obliged to seek the patronage of the feudal chiefs of Varanasi, Jeypore, Lahore etc. Thus the style was divided into the *purvi* (eastern) style of Lucknow Varanasi and the *pachhav* (western) style of Lahore and Patiala. The former is characterised by *bol vistar* and graces of *morki* and *gitkari* while the latter incorporates the *tarkips* of *ghazal* and *chhut* of *tappa*. The song depicts either the gay mood of the eternal heroine (Radha) in her secret encounters with the eternal hero (Krishna) and relishingly narrates his naughty behaviour, or portrays the pangs of her separation from the hero who has been so cruel as not to enquire after her well-being since he left Vrindaban for Mathura very many days ago. This has been the burden of the song and 'there can be no song without Kanu' in our song-books. This medieval eroticism has been the perennial lot of *thumri* since the days of the Moghul Court.

Strictly speaking *dadra* and *ghazal*, both songs of the erotic variety, do not reasonably come under the purview of *thumri* but they were freely dished out in the Kalamandir festival. The historical inter-relationship of *katthak* and *thumri* can hardly be denied and therefore the inclusion of *katthak* in the festival organised by the Calcutta Music Circle was not without any basis. But Pahari Babu in his introductory speech failed to elucidate the correlationship.

The Kalamandir environs were quite congenial. The stage decor with gorgeous carpets, flower railings and medieval window screens were well contrived to simulate a feudal atmosphere. Inmates of the houses of company directors and covenanted officers in costly attirements added lustre to the show. But their inte-

rest seemed to be more in social contact than in music proper which was manifest in the fact that many of the seats booked by the so-called connoisseurs remained vacant for almost two hours before the holders hastily appeared to utilise their costly tickets in the midst of the singing of Siddeswari Devi. Genuine love of music or musical snobbery or what?

Although unannounced in the press, Malabika Kanan was a pleasant surprise. Inclusion of her *kheyal* programme in a festival of *thumri* may be debated but I would justify it on grounds enumerated earlier. Delineation of her *kalavati* was deft and graceful. Her rich and sonorous voice added variety to the festival. Her improvisations and graces were as masterly as they were melodious. She demonstrated commendable conception of form and content or first class *kheyal*-singing, though it is strange that in a festival of *thumri* she was not offered an opportunity to render a *thumri*. She was ably supported by Afaque Hus-sain on the tabla.

Naina Devi, a disciple of the late Girijashankar Chakraborty, charmed the audience with her delicate singing. Her *ghazal* also was well received.

Siddheswari Devi, the prima donna of the evening, initiated her recital with the famous song of the late Abdul Karim, *Piya bina nahi awata chaina* (there is no peace of my wind without my beloved) in *jhin-jhoti*. The twists and turns of her *bol vistar* were applauded again and again. At the age of past-seventy she showed a wonderful command of vocal range especially in the upper octave. The *shairs* of her *ghazal* were often interrupted by loud appreciation of the audience. It was indeed a rare aesthetic experience to listen to her singing. Shyamal Bose gave her good support on the tabla.

In the concluding item Uma Sharma gave a good account of herself in *bol*, *paran* and *gat* in her demonstration of *katthak*. She depended on short compositions with the orchestra rather than over-elaboration of *tala*

and *laya* maistroism. Her movements were highly graceful. She also seemed to be alive to the danger of tiring out the audience with over-elaboration of the abstraction of the *tala* aspect of *katthak*. Instead she was well advised in having her items shortly composed in the pattern of *Bharatanatyam*.

The members of the circle could have been fully commended for their enterprise if only they had not omitted Begum Akhtar, the princess of *thumri*.

## Clippings

### Nixon's War On Geography

The attack (on Laos) seems to confirm... President Nixon's determination to forcibly isolate South Vietnam from the socialist camp and the revolutionary movement in South-East Asia while opening it to American and Japanese aid, including the recent project for the development of its oil resources.

The sealing-off of South Vietnam has long been part of American strategists' dreams. As secretary of defence in the Johnson administration, Robert McNamara studied a plan for an electronically controlled "no man's land" stretching along the 17th parallel. On that occasion, too, geography emerged victorious over technology.

American bombing raids on North Vietnam, carried out over a period of three years, were an utterly vain attempt to bring Hanoi to its knees. After North Vietnam, it was the turn of Cambodia, where the Vietcong and North Vietnamese "sanctuaries" constituted a threat to President Nixon's Vietnamization programme. The most obvious result of the American and South Vietnamese intervention was the extension of fighting to most of Cambodia, and latterly to the very outskirts of Phnom Penh.

That left Laos. Especially that part of Laos crossed by the Ho Chi

Minh Trail, the network of jungle paths which had been enlarged in the spring of 1970 by the advance of the Communist forces. The invasion of Cambodia got under way before Washington or Saigon informed General Lon Nol of the action, and there are indications that the Laotian government has just been treated to the same procedure.

Today, the Royal Laotian Army, financed by Washington, seems to have no role in the attack being mounted against what constitutes the heart of revolutionary Indochina, since North Vietnamese, Vietcong, Pathet Lao and Cambodian United Front troops all cross paths here.

American bombers are pounding the country, but the terrain is so rough and the forests so dense that it is unlikely much territory will change hands. When the Americans tried to establish a foothold in the Cambodian province of Ratanakiri last year, they were soon obliged to beat a retreat.

South Vietnamese troops may be able to occupy a few positions in the region for a time. But to achieve the obvious aim of the offensive—cutting the Ho Chi Minh Trail—would require the permanent presence of several divisions.

North Vietnamese Defence Minister Vo Nguyen Giap has been through it all before: a conventional army pitted against guerillas can defend its "enclaves" but in so doing it must abandon the rest of the country to the insurgents.

Alternatively, the army can be spread out over a wide area, but at the cost of increasing difficulties which ultimately force it to concentrate once again.

Military strikes like the one now being staged in southern Laos have little chance of fundamentally altering the situation. A force which lacks the tacit support of the peasant population cannot hold Indochina. And recently, peasants on the edge of the Bolovens Plateau, the objective of the present offensive, were moved out by force.

There is a risk that the new escala-

tion will continue. What is to be feared is that once the Laos operation turns out to be a failure, President Nixon will carry out his threat to resume the bombing of North Vietnam.

## Old Scenario

History is repeating itself in South-east Asia. The insidious insertion of American military power into Cambodia (and Laos) in support of a faltering regime ominously parallels the events of early 1965 which entrapped the United States in a major war in neighbouring Vietnam.

Faced with political stability in Saigon and a deteriorating military situation in the South Vietnamese countryside, the U.S. Government in January of 1965 ordered air strikes against Communist supply routes in Laos. Sen. Wayne Morse warned: "We were heading toward a 'massive war'," but Richard M. Nixon, then a private citizen, said the United States would be "thrown out" of Vietnam if it did not change its strategy. He called for the use of air force and Navy planes to interdict communist supply centres and destroy military staging areas in both Laos and North Vietnam.

On Feb. 7 American carrier-based aircraft bombed and strafed a Vietcong base in North Vietnam. The White House said the attack was a limited one in retaliation to a raid on Pleiku, an American helicopter base in South Vietnam, and that the United States did not seek 'a wider war'. Three days later Mr Nixon declared the air strike as inadequate response and called for "day and night" bombing of Communist supply routes.

The bombing of the North was intensified and later that month it was disclosed that United States jet planes and helicopters were giving direct fire support to South Vietnamese ground forces. Mr Nixon on Feb. 23 proposed: "we use our naval and air power... short of atomic weapons... to cut off all supplies

from North Vietnam to South Vietnam".

On March 8, the first American combat troops, 3500 Marines, landed at Da Nang. The Defence Department said their mission was limited to defending U.S. bases. The U.S. ambassador in Saigon said there had "been" no "fundamental change" in American policy. In a speech on April 2 Richard M. Nixon offered his support for President Johnson's policies in Vietnam.

During the following two months the Marines were reinforced and were reported in a number of actions against communist forces. The State Department conceded on June 8 that the President had authorised the American Commander in Vietnam to commit his troops to combat. But the White House quickly asserted there has been no change in the mission of United States ground combat units in Vietnam.

That is the kind of bland assurance the American public is receiving today... But the elements of the 1965 escalation in South Vietnam are all there—the deteriorating local situation, the sharp increase in American air activity and the beginnings of a wider commitment of ground forces under such deceptive labels as "air borne coordinators", "logistics personnel" and "military equipment delivery teams".

Has the White House learned nothing from the tragic experience that grew out of President Lyndon B. Johnson's rash decisions and private citizen Richard M. Nixon's bad advice just six years ago? (*The New York Times*)

### The Canal

In the evening, I took leave of my canal.

The black fume from napalm-charred cajeputs mingled with wreaths of white smoke from rice cooking in devastated orchards. Glow-worms were flitting about leafless trees, twinkling like far-off stars.

Every time I leave such desolate

areas, I cannot help thinking of our aggressors.

Yes, the Americans had been here, their chemicals had left scars on branches and in shelters. Swarms of them are in Saigon and other cities in the world. They bear on their chests their names and the inscription: "US Army."

...They look formidable with their air armada, they lavishly spend their dollars, they bring here their crack generals and troops, but they are constantly haunted by defeat and death. Their despair can be seen in such acts of senseless barbarity as target practice on Vietnamese buffalo boys.

Though they are not yet in a position to plunder our mineral resources and our crops, and set up safe military bases, they have had to pay blood debts for their cruelty. They fall into craters dug by their own bombs, on shelters which they have flushed with gas, in gardens stripped of all leaves, on the banks of our green canals...

I know why the deeper I go into a landscape of desolation and ruin, the more familiar the sounds which conjure up memories within me. A grove of coconut palms on some bank of a canal is devastated by bombs. But green groves of coconut palms and fertile banks of canals are enshrined in our memory. These images cannot fade away, they have lived with us for thousands of years, they are our flesh and our blood.

Good-bye, dear canal of my native village, you who have instilled in me your own invincible strength! I had the same feeling as when a child, I had bathed in your fresh water, lulled by some song from a familiar garden. Somewhere, the voice of love, of confidence and pride is rising in the air.

I slung my rifle over my shoulder and started off

(Nguyen Thi in *South Viet Nam*).

### The Only Path

I asked him: "Your father?"

—"They shot him."

I asked him: "Your mother?"

—"They stuck her."

I asked him: "Your wife?"

—"Bombed to pulp,  
With our baby in her womb."  
I asked him: "Your house?"  
—"They set fire to it."  
I asked him: "Your village?"  
—"Devastated and desolate,  
Bereft of its inhabitants  
Herded in strategic hamlets."  
I asked him: "Whither?"  
Then he dried his tears  
And burst out laughing:  
—"The only path to take,  
That of my whole people:  
Wipe out the foe."  
(Le Tan Loi in *South Viet Nam*).

### Letters

#### Visting A Detenu

I am the mother of a detenu in Midnapore Central Jail. My son Nabakishore Dutt was a research student at Kharagpur IIT, from where he was called one day to the director's room (by the director himself) and handed over to the police. So far the authorities have not been able to frame any charge against him, but even then this 'democratic' government has found 'enough grounds' to detain him for the last five months without even a fake trial.

It has now become a fashion with the gentlemen in authority to come out on and often with stories that the prisoners are trying to dig tunnels in their cells in an attempt to escape. Anyone who has the least idea about the security arrangements in the prisons as well as the physical condition of the prisoners will find this quite unbelievable—not only are they heavily guarded but most of them have become physically disabled owing to chronic ill-nourishment, as a result of which almost all of them are suffering from various ailments.

On the night of February 4 I phoned the jailor and asked about the condition of my son (a detenu in Ward No. 7, where prisoners had been assaulted according to the radio news of that night). I received a curt reply stating that if interested, I might visit my son. Immediately, on

the 6th I went to Midnapore and met the jailor, who, however, flatly refused me permission to see my son. On repeated pleading, and specially because I had been informed by him over the phone that I might see my son, I was asked to wait in the corridor through which my son would be taken to the X-ray department. I met my son while he was being led to the X-ray department and gathered from him that both his hands were very badly fractured. I had practically no chance of any discussion with him, but I knew from him that almost all the detenus in his ward were seriously wounded and that very little or no arrangement for treatment was available there.

I am at a loss to understand the callous attitude of the authorities who had severely beaten the helpless detenus inside the jail and the inhumanity of our 'socialist' government which does not even care for their treatment. I wonder whether we are residents of a free and civilised State.

LILA DUTTA  
Calcutta

## Police Raj

In Orissa elections are again knocking at the door. The villages are being fed with many kinds of deceptive stories. In the last election, some foresighted people raised the slogan 'oust Congress' because the masses thought that the Congress was the only party that could win. That belief or attitude no more exists. Gradually, people are realising the importance of their opinion and that the future of their country depends on their opinion. Starting from the poor, helpless and ignorant in the villages to the half-educated, well-educated people in present position: throughout the country what is in operation is not democracy but a brutal police regime. And apart from it, exploitation, chicanery and lordism that breed overt and covert violence. Unable to withstand all these and finding no other way out to confront this vio-

lence and oppression, some well-educated people have decided to resist it by violence, which can be called a kind of shock treatment. On the one hand sermons of non-violence from Gandhi are being showered on them in deprecation of their activities, on the other endeavours are being made to repress them by military and police rule without analysing why they have resorted to such a path.

As for the oppression being perpetrated on the innocent people, I have seen it with my own eyes in the district of Koraput. Any citizen visiting Koraput Jail can see how the police have thrust red-hot iron into the breasts of adivasi women. A child was killed in the village of Kanpur in Cuttack district; and Pradipta Misra was murdered inside the compound of Ravenshaw College.

In this situation, everywhere 'kick out the police regime' should be the first and foremost demand of all conscious people in the pre-election period. Gandhiji who saw the British police as a true servant of the people thought of a similar police force in India. Now, in this country, the police are only the incarnation of oppression on our innocent people.

Before the people exercise their precious franchise, my humble appeal to my countrymen is to give top priority to the slogan 'Defeat the Police Raj.'

MALATI DEVI CHOWDHURY  
Angul, Dhenkanal, Orissa

## Whodunit

I should like to point out one error that has crept into your correspondent's report "Whodunit" in the issue of February 6. Your report about the "brutal beating" of two "Naxalite" boys who had appeared "mysteriously" on the scene, is correct only up to the beating. The boys are not Naxalites, but known non-political students of the university, one of three and the other of five years' standing. Sunil De is a student of Third Year Economics. Ahmed Hussein is a distinguished

graduate of the University and a triple "blue" who appeared in the last M.A. examination. He is a member of my family and my husband is his local guardian. Both of them are products of the same residential school as the lecturer in question.

There was no mystery in their appearance, but a very natural anxiety for their lecturer who was in grave danger of life.

It is not possible that these well-known students had not been recognised. Either the toughs who beat them up were outsiders or their identity was distorted with some ulterior motive. Before a large number of eyewitnesses a bomb was thrown at Ahmed Hussein and not by him and there was an open attempt to thrust a knife, incriminatingly, into his pocket.

KALYANI KARLEKAR (Mrs)  
Calcutta

## Left-Intellectuals

Our 'left' intellectuals will feel greatly comforted by Ashok Rudra's article (January 23, 1971) inasmuch as it justifies their caste privileges in the existing society. In fact the whole article, from its definitional to its prescriptive part, amounts, above everything, to the *negation of practice* by the left intellectuals. The author emphasizes that "left intellectualism ought *only* to mean leftism in one's intellectual life... the description ought to be *reserved* for one who is a leftist in his *intellectual field*" (my italics). Thus he does not take into account the *total* life of an intellectual. He on the contrary divides this totality into an intellectual part and a non-intellectual part and offers a good-conduct certificate to the intellectual who is 'left' only in the first part. Rudra is hardly aware that this is inconsistent with his another assertion—which is correct—that Marxism does not permit of any such compartmentalisation of a personality.

The 'activity' that Rudra prescribes for a 'left' intellectual in the university consists at most in the "replacement of the syllabus" or in conducting investigation from the "Marxist

standpoint'. In other words, the intellectual's work will, in the first place, be exclusively bookish and—this goes along with it—he is to work, in the second place, with the *existing system* and not question the system itself.

There is no reason to believe that the ruling class (or classes) in India today is afraid of introducing Marxism in its educational system as long as Marxism is *confined* to the syllabus or to the method of investigation. The ruling class will rather welcome it in the same way as it welcomes the 'left' intellectuals to serve its Establishment; it badly requires such a 'progressive' image.

The second section of Rudra's prescriptive part is still more astonishing. To start with, it is full of self-righteousness. The left intellectuals are assigned the role of the givers of knowledge and the "non-intellectual, literate masses" that of receivers. This seems to him natural; are not the intellectuals alone "competent" to do the intellectual exercise for the "benefit" of the "lay public?" He indeed justifies this arrangement with the argument of "division of labour" and "comparative advantage". Nothing, it may be asserted, can be more supercilious and, what is more, contrary to the spirit of Marxism. Besides perpetuating the privileges of the intellectuals as the special caste of knowledge-givers, having nothing to take from the "non-intellectual" masses, Rudra, in a typical bourgeois-metaphysical fashion, treats 'knowledge' as an *absolute* category. One may as well ask, paraphrasing Mao, where does the *correct* knowledge come from? Of course it comes from *practice* and Rudra takes away this very foundation of correct knowledge from under the feet of the 'left' intellectuals. Knowingly or unknowingly he wants to perpetuate the "division of labour" between the intellectuals and the non-intellectuals where, as one of the main thrusts of Marxism, from the very beginning to the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, has been towards its negation.

It is difficult to understand why Rudra denounces "Marx Clubs"; for what he wants to give life to, as ex-

pressed towards the end of his article, is *basically* the same kind of animal.

S. C.  
Calcutta

Mr Ashok Rudra's "Role Of The Left Intellectual" (January 23) seems to be a product of confused thinking and certain impulsive or emotional beliefs.

One such impulsive belief is his construction of imaginary 'Left Intellectuals' who "believe in the necessity of armed struggle" but who incidentally or accidentally, one does not know how, "occupy leading, decision-making positions in the very large number of research institutions." Such intellectuals are dreamers of armed revolution at night, but at daytime they are to advise the Government of India as to how best it can go in economic matters of this rotten society or to submit Farm Management Schemes to the Government for a Green Revolution in the poor dilapidated feudal countryside or to be involved in anything or everything of various administrative or accademic machinery in this society, the society which requires to their belief revolutionary destruction with the help of arms.

Of course Rudra knows that there would be some logical error in the life process of such a left intellectual, who may be vested with power by the bourgeois-feudal rulers of our country, but nevertheless should make Marxist study of Indian economics, history, and various other branches of knowledge affecting contemporary society, whether in private or office, Rudra does not mention.

This is not merely a logical error but an error in the very process of social dialectics and that is precisely the reason why Rudra's impulsive belief lands him in utter confusion about the actual state of things in the world of his Left Intellectuals.

One's subjective belief in something does not mean that one is a practitioner of the same. One's belief in armed revolution does not make one a Left Intellectual; one's

reading of Marx, Engels or Bhāgavat Gita does not make one revolutionary or religious. Not only that. Employment of the Marxist method of investigation for a study of social or economic problems may just be a pious wish; in reality such a method can be clearly grasped and used only when the intellectual is within the revolutionary army.

We say this because of two reasons: first, we have had enough of so-called Left Intellectuals who tried to write on Indian history, its different periods, on Indian economic problems but not single peace of work can claim to have succeeded in helping the cause of revolution. On the contrary they have been either revisionist Trojan horses to weaken the revolutionary potential of the communist movement from within, or cheap pamphleteers, feeding on data supplied by economic organs of the big industrial houses, the Reserve Bank of India and the Government of India in order to promote parliamentary understanding of the strategy and tactics of the ruling classes.

Secondly, a revolutionary intellectual having definite commitments should not be a mere "conveyor, interpreter and propagator of knowledge and information"; indeed anybody—any Gandhiite—can do and actually does such things in the name of revolution, because knowledge or information are not some physical entities like the Red Fort or army barracks to be captured first by revolutionary intellectuals—nor is reality—the reality pervading the social milieu—something external to an intellectual, an object to be photographed by research and scholarship.

Therefore there is a certain revolutionary way of knowing reality which is different from the non-revolutionary way. The basic premises of such a way are: (a) Reality necessarily has a much higher speed of development than human knowledge; (b) knowledge becomes more real the more the knower is involved in acting upon it, changing or creating it.

From the strategic point of view a

Left Intellectual's primary job is to change his society and his investigation should be directed towards this direction. His interpretation of reality is only a vehicle for his primary job, while a bourgeois intellectual tries to stabilise the Establishment, to prevent change, to hide reality away from the toiling masses.

Again from the point of view of tactics of knowing, the proletarian or revolutionary method of knowing is also fundamentally different from the bourgeois method. Revolutionary or Marxist theory of knowledge makes struggle a categorical imperative for the scientific process of knowing or understanding the social reality. A Left Intellectual believing in revolution should first become truly left through his practice of revolutionary struggle at the front, subject of course to the scheme of division of labour provided by the revolutionary army. Any 'radical' intellectualism short of this is a kind of individual egotism.

Arun Majumder.  
Santiniketan

### Medicine In Red China

The review of the conditions in today's Red China by Prof J. W. Gurley of Stanford University (The New Man In The New China, *Frontier*, January 23) is objective, evaluative, informative and illuminating. The methodology adopted by bourgeois economists to judge the standard and extent of economic developments in Red China is bound to lack objectivity because being anti-Marxists it is not possible for them to critically understand what Chairman Mao and his party mean by the oft-quoted phrase "socialist transformation of man" through the cultural revolution and the commune system.

For FRONTIER contact

SANYAL BROS.

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18

Marx himself said once—"Marxism is the return of man to himself." Chairman Mao as the greatest Marxist-Leninist of the contemporary world has only started the process of reaching that cherished goal and thereby has turned a dream into a reality. Mao's is the only way to liberate mankind from socio-economic exploitation and political oppression. But it needs creative application; as Lenin time and again warned, "Do not play with insurrection."

I want to point out some miraculous achievements of China in the medical field. Take, Insulin for instance, the most important medicine for diabetes mellitus. At present it is obtained from animal source. For the discovery and later on elucidation of its chemical structure two Nobel Prizes have so far been won, by Banting and Macleod of Canada in 1922 for discovery, and Prof Sangers of Cambridge in 1958 for elucidation of the chemical structure. Now, laboratory synthesis of Insulin is theoretically possible and is of great commercial and scientific importance. In this branch of synthetic chemistry, the Chinese biochemists are leading and have been successful in synthesizing Insulin with full therapeutic potency and are probably on the way to marketing synthetic Insulin for mass-scale clinical use. It will be cheap and safe.

The views of the famous pharmacologist, Prof Chen of California University, on the advancement of Chinese medicine is worth recalling. In a critical review on "Pharmacology in Mainland China" in the Annual Review of Pharmacology a few years back (published from the USA) Prof Chen said that the modern research in Chinese herbal medicine would one day unravel many mysteries of medical science.

Comparably, what is going on in our country in the name of research in Ayurvedic medicine? Wastage of crores of rupees and patronage of certain people. The treasure of Ayurvedic medicine is still hidden.

SISIR K. MAJUMDAR (DR)  
Ashokenagar, 24-Parganas

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