

frontier

Vol. 3: No. 7

MAY 23, 1970

PRICE: 35 PAISE

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PRINTED AT MODERN INDIA PRESS,
7, RAJA SUBODH MULICK SQUARE,
CALCUTTA-13 AND PUBLISHED WEEKLY
FOR GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS (P) LTD.
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HUNTING WITH THE CENTRE

ABOUT 2,000 Naxalites are reported to have been arrested by the police in two months of President's rule in West Bengal. As the Centre has not yet armed the State Government with a preventive detention law, it may be presumed that all of them have been arrested on specific charges. Whether Naxalite actions, in spite of the wide publicity that is being given to them all over India, presumably to provide an alibi for unrestrained police repression, have been on a scale to warrant such mass arrests is doubtful. The courts will decide whether the charges are trumped up, provided those arrested are all sent up for trial. The Government's insistence on a quick enactment of a preventive detention law would suggest that the charges against many of them may not bear judicial scrutiny. Its reluctance to divulge the names of those arrested, especially of the "top" leaders who are claimed to have been caught in the dragnet, may have more sinister implications. Normally, the names should have been announced gleefully. Governments are not known for reserve when collection of kudos is involved. The self-denial may mean that it does not want the public to know who have fallen into police clutches so that it may not have to answer for the fate that may overtake some of them. The horrid tales of torture in police custody that are circulating suggest that there is need for such precaution. They have come to light because the Government has not been able to prevent bail to all. But there must be untold stories also; for people suddenly whisked away and detained in secrecy cannot tell their tales; nor dead men.

The Government is not yet done with the round-up. Arrests are continuing, and many more will follow when the projected measure for preventive detention is enacted. A list, by no means definitive, is said to be ready. The number of the detained and to-be-detained disproves the contention that Naxalite politics has few adherents; perhaps in its sadistic frenzy the Government has overlooked this implication. That so many, most of them young men, have lost faith in parliamentary politics should have been an eye-opener to the left parties which are absorbed in the shady game of ministry-making. But they are insensitive with greed. Not one word of protest has been uttered in sincerity by them against the mounting State terrorism to suppress the Naxalites.

The CPM, whose leaders have fallen into a habit of petitioning the Governor daily to seek his intervention in police excesses against their party-men, is maintaining a condescending silence over the witch-hunt. Some of its leaders have gone to the length of suggesting that the Naxalites are in league with the police and their actions are designed to provide the police with a pretext to come down on the CPM. Curiously, the CPM had levelled the same charge of complicity with the police against the Naxalites during the first spell of President's rule on the ground that they were quiescent in order not to embarrass Mr Dharma Vira. The Naxalites are active this time, and they are being dubbed agents-provocateurs.

The other parties are trying to appear more sympathetic, hypocritically though. They know that the party immediately threatened by Naxalism is the CPM many of whose cadres are groping in the twilight between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary politics. Other left parties are so far removed from Naxal politics that their cadres cannot turn Naxalite in one hop, at least not in numbers sufficient to cause alarm. These parties are now engaged in "isolating" the CPM, each in its own way, so that a ministry without the CPM may be formed later. Eight parties of the half-buried UF which have not yet given up their leftist and anti-Congress pretensions are moving from one direction; the Bangla Congress and its associate parties are moving from another. When the pincer will have the CPM in its grip firmly enough to uproot it from the politics of united front is not clear. The parties are not in a hurry; they need not be, for Mr Chavan is prepared to wait indefinitely for a painless extraction of the CPM. He has refused to dissolve the Assembly as that will end the ministry-making efforts of the non-Marxist parties; he has refused to transfer the Governor so that he may continue as a modern Bharat waiting devoutly for another

spell of Ramrajya with the active collaboration of the Congress of Mr Jagjivan Ram. Maybe, the time will come in October when Mr Ajoy Mukherjee develops his annual Gandhian itch. In the mean time, nothing which may appear to help them in their bid to weaken the CPM will be repugnant to the non-Marxist parties. They are trying to fraternise with the Naxalites out of a purely selfish consideration, because the Naxalites are their enemy's enemy. It has been seen in Kerala how these parties propose to tackle the Naxalite problem if they come to power. The Centre knows it; so do its agents here. They are not, therefore, going to be moved by phoney protests from the non-Marxist left. They are confident of the support of these parties as long as they work for a non-Marxist coalition in West Bengal.

Cambodia And The Kremlin

Immediately after Nixon ordered his troops into Cambodia commentators still suffering from the hangover of the cold war days direly predicted a strong Russian counter-move, if not, at least a setback to the detente. Yes, Moscow did react—but with a whimper. Premier Kosygin solemnly called a press conference, the first in six years but only to whine like a jilted lover or at best to argue like a dissenting Republican Senator about the perils of the course undertaken. "This (aggressive) course followed in the past has led and continues to lead", argued a grief-stricken Kosygin, "the U.S. foreign policy (not once in his speech did Kosygin irreverently refer to 'U.S. imperialism') to failures". "The deeper the United States gets bogged down in its military gambles on the soil of Vietnam, in Laos, and now in Cambodia", he persuasively argued, "the more of their kith and kin will American families lose". Comrade Kosygin was also very pained to discover that

"President Nixon's practical steps in the field of foreign policy are fundamentally at variance with those declarations and assurances that he repeatedly made". He was further worried that Nixon's Cambodian adventure might "further aggravate the overall international situation". Situations on the American campuses or in the Middle East did aggravate it, but, thanks to the pragmatism of the Soviet leaders, the arms limitation talks in Vienna were as cordial as ever. After all neither Israeli aggression, nor American bombing in Vietnam could prevent a heart to heart talk at Glassboro in 1967.

Apart from the inveterate cold warriors nobody, to be sure, was ever in any doubt as to the length the Russians might go about Cambodia but few expected them to be as frigid as they turned out to be. For nearly a month after the coup in Phnom Penh Moscow maintained a curious silence that was in sharp contrast with the promptness showed by the Russian Ambassador in Phnom Penh in meeting the new Cambodian Foreign Minister. While the world held its breath in shock at the brutal massacre of the Vietnamese in Cambodia by the government troops, the news media in Moscow vaguely referred to an anti-Vietnamese campaign in Cambodia. Not a single word against the puppet Lon Nol clique that perpetrated this crime. Even at the height of the pogrom the Soviet Ambassador at the UN broached a proposal, to be withdrawn the next day, about convening a peace conference. Even Nixon, who has no doubt about the Russian peaceableness, was taken by surprise at the proposal.

It was on March 23 that Prince Sihanouk announced the formation of the National United Front of Kampuchea but Kosygin seems to have learnt about it only last week when he sent a cable congratulating the Prince for the achievement. The Prince was apparently shocked to see Kosygin so badly posted about developments in Cambodia. Kosygin appears to be unaware as are his cronies in Eastern Europe that Prince Sihanouk is not only the leader of NUFK but also

the Head of the Royal Government of National Union formed in Peking and recognized by about a dozen countries including Syria, Iraq and the UAR. The very day he received Kosygin's congratulatory cable Prince Sihanouk cabled back Moscow with "an official request for official recognition". But for Mr Kosygin the Lon Nol regime in Phnom Penh obviously is preferable to a government headed by a man who chooses to call Mao (a new Hitler in the eyes of Moscow) "the beacon of our Asia". But Kosygin would do well to remember the Prince's statement of May 5 when after announcing the formation of the government he said "the duty of foreign governments is to withdraw their embassies and consulates from Phnom Penh. After victory the Cambodian people will take into account the attitude of each government. It is during this period that we will know who are friends and who are enemies of Cambodia." And the Prince must still be remembering the words Chou En-lai uttered at the Indochinese summit conference late last month: "some people have expressed in words their readiness to support the Cambodian people's just struggle but facts have proved that they are tailing closely after American imperialism."

Senile Decay

Whether or not Shri Shanti Swarup Dhavan read about Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar at school is unlikely to be of much interest even to one who might be paid or persuaded to write a biography of West Bengal's present Governor. But it is now clear that a stupid fuss was made over a false allegation; the Governor did not want to know about Vidyasagar before deciding whether to lend his name to a memorial committee. The allegation was also denied by the committee's Working President, Dr S. N. Sen. Yet certain MPs, inevitably including the incorrigible Mr Samar Guha, did not hesitate to

kick up a row in Parliament evidently on the basis of a mischievous rumour. Immediately thereafter, however, the story was changed to suggest that it was not the Governor but his Personal Assistant who had made the ignorant inquiry, and Mr Pranab Kumar Mukherjee, a Bangla Congress MP, was indignant that Mr Dhavan had not shown the minimum courtesy of replying personally to the committee's request. This Mr Mukherjee is said to be the committee's Secretary, but his version is not borne out by what the Working President has said. Was the entire episode part of a deliberate campaign of slander? The Swatantra-Jana Sangh-Congress(O)-PSP-SSP-Bangla Congress tie-up may not have been altogether accidental.

That, however, is no great catastrophe; a threat to Mr Dhavan's reputation or job-security is unlikely to cause general distress in West Bengal. What is sickening about the whole thing is the Bengali obsession with the past. More precisely, with certain euphoric notions about the past, for not many Bengalis know much about the past of which they are so tiresomely proud. The pathetic nostalgia feeds merely on a few great names, and anniversaries are observed with the ritualistic routine of the Thursday worship of goddess Laxmi. Vidyasagar, the rationalist and dissenter, would have been shocked to see how he too has become a part of the Hindu pantheon. It is altogether doubtful if the MPs who were so angry over an allegedly illiterate enquiry have ever read much of Vidyasagar's writing or tried to comprehend the social and cultural significance of his work. Why, how many of our MPs have even read Tagore seriously? For that matter, the self-appointed preservers of Tagore culture are no better; these semi-literate culture-mongers could not conceivably grasp any kind of substance and are therefore content with as many symbols as they can acquire and exhibit.

So, people who have probably not read even a line of what Tagore wrote at Shilaidaha became greatly

agitated over a report that the East Pakistan authorities were not taking proper care of the house in which Tagore lived for some time. People who may not immediately recall when Tagore died were lately worked up over erosion of the Nimtalla bank threatening the spot where the poet was cremated. When the contemporary scene offers so little to sustain the Bengali ego, the Bengalis dote more and more on hazy notions of vanished glory. Inevitably, the plight of refugees from East Pakistan becomes less important than the manner in which an old house at Shilaidaha is now being used; a new memorial at Nimtallah acquires priority over a school or a hospital; the extent of Mr Dhavan's knowledge of Vidyasagar becomes a wider concern than the social evils Vidyasagar fought all his life. This can happen only among a people whose character—in the sense in which Tagore wrote so perceptively about Vidyasagar's character—has reached an advanced stage of senile degeneration. And, come to think of it, how many Bengalis know much about distinguished men belonging to other cultural traditions in India? Dr B. C. Roy, we are told, had not heard of Bibhutibhusan Bandopadhyay (who, after all, was a Bengali), let alone read *Pather Panchali*. No comparisons are intended, but the fact remains that West Bengal's fate will not depend on Mr Dhavan's knowledge about Vidyasagar—although it may do the Bengalis themselves a lot of good if they improve their own knowledge of the subject. The Pandit, who pleaded for the teaching of Western philosophy on the ground that it was more relevant to modern life than Vedanta and Samkhya, would have also urged Bengalis today to acquire a greater awareness of contemporary reality—and then do something to change this reality.

Dialectical Mercantilism ?

Among factors that determine the course of a revolution, there can be, admittedly, a number of impondera-

bles. It is widely believed, for example, for all it's worth, that if Lenin were held back by the Germans in March 1917, there might have been no Russian Revolution.

Recently a Russian has discovered another probable imponderable. Had there been a large progressive business community in Russia in 1917, as there is now in India, there would have been no Russian Revolution either.

The authenticity of this startling theory is of course dubious. Mr B. M. Birla referred to the theory in course of a presidential address to commemorate the diamond jubilee of an Ahmedabad business magnate. He did not name the Russian. However, since we can entrust just two business houses with one fifth of the nation's total capital we can as well depend on one of their representatives for the veracity of just a piece of information. Moreover, the Russians being what they are now, the theory or its imputation to a Russian may not be wholly Mr Birla's concoction!

The Russian dignitary, who appears to be a capable disciple of Comrade Suslov, came on behalf of his government to examine the nature of the present Indian economy. What else he found was not divulged by Mr Birla but this much was officially stated by the Russian, says Mr Birla, that the business community of India was extremely virile, active and progressive. And this profound admiration gave birth to his theory.

This being the situation, Mr Birla fails to understand why the Government of India continues to be so malignant towards the Indian business community. With hundreds of businessmen serving the people selflessly, it happens to be the most abused and accused section of the society, he says sadly. The Government has been adopting measures which block enterprise and its efficient functioning. Even then the businessmen are trying their best to provide all goods to the people and employment to the unfortunate young men. The shops in the country are always full of goods and when certain things—like drugs—are not available within the country, they try

and obtain them from abroad just to serve the needy. What are the rewards of such dedication, asks Mr Birla? Losses by public sector undertakings, those sleeping beauties as they have been described by a Russian team, are being recouped by a heavy dose of taxation on trade and commerce. When businessmen try to forge out some profit to reinvest in trade and thus create better employment situations, the government burdens them with some more taxation!

Look at the Russians, said Mr Birla. Aren't they making up for their past deficiencies, namely, the absence of virile businessmen? West European, British and American businessmen are offering them a helping hand and they are not so squeamish as not to accept it. Henry Ford has been participating in the construction of a huge truck plant on the Kama river in northern Russia. Ford will not only build the plant, the largest of its kind in the world, he will also keep financial and managerial interest in the plant after it is built.

Long live the Soviet Communist Party and its mercantile internationalism!

Aid Junkets

It is relentless summer, the heat is on in New Delhi and the Budget session of Parliament is ended. So run rabbit, run; let us beat the heat, travel to Bonn, Paris, London, Washington, and beg more aid. The ruling politicians may utter brave words for the sake of record, but the civil servants who subsist on what can only be called aid junkets have other ideas. Mrs Indira Gandhi may wear a different face this year, but the character of begging does not change. It is business as usual. As usual, the Aid India Consortium is meeting in Paris to thrash out the quantum of the year's alms for the country; as usual, the World Bank has come out with a report which, amidst much humming and hawing, asks for a drastic revision; as usual, those same civil

servants who have made it a passion to beseech aid on the most humiliating terms—irrespective of whether the country needs the aid—will be speaking on behalf of the people of India, and will attempt to leave behind an impression that, deny aid, and this wonderful democracy will face dark disaster.

And yet, what will this wretched government do with the aid which its droll officials will beg of the affluent Western countries? One has only to take a look at the statistics of the so-called aid that has been authorised in recent years. It seems the pipeline of aid earmarked for India has gone on bulging with every year. That is to say, what in jargon will pass as 'absorptive capacity' of aid, has steadily declined. The reasons are fairly straightforward. Much of the aid is couched in impossible terms, either tied to purchase of equipment or services from the "donor" country at fantastically exorbitant prices, or tied to projects only remotely on the horizon. The good foreigners pretend to satisfy their international conscience by making a commitment which is hetero-hypothetical. Projects of their choosing, terms enormously unreasonable, preparedness on the part of the Government of India nearly non-existent, it is in this setting that the civil servants, with absentminded or maybe not-so-absentminded acquiescence on the part of the politicians, go out every year and do some extra begging.

On the face of it, the whole exercise is not only distasteful, but uncalled for. All the time one reads in the newspapers about how French and Italian credits keep piling up, and there are no takers. One reads about the enormous burden of debt servicing, so much so that by now net 'aid' received annually has come down to a bare one-third of gross 'aid'. One also reads about the dearth of worthy projects in the public sector which could pass the technical feasibility test for qualifying for foreign aid. This is a frightening situation, and which means that there is no relationship at all between the contents of the Plan and the endeavour to

attract external assistance. Whether the country needs it or not, whether the quality of the aid is consistent with the stated objectives and programmes of the Plan or not, the hegemony of civil servants will continue to contract for aid. By now the part has become bigger, much bigger than the whole, and the foreign aid lobby goes its own way whatever the dominant impulses in the economy may be.

It is difficult to believe this is merely because of the inertia of the system, or on account of sheer incompetence. The game is deeper. Once a large stockpile of authorised and unutilised external aid gets built up, stories will be fed in the newspapers about the shocking state of affairs, and about how government perfidy is blocking the use of available foreign exchange for the growth-giving private projects. The case will then be made to look awfully cogent; after all, the aid funds are there, and Messrs Mafatlal, Singhanian, Tata and p and q and r and everybody else are there with their lovely schemes; why should the wretched government then follow a dog-in-the-manger policy? The name of the game is pre-emption. Already the satraps in the Ministry of Foreign Trade have launched a not-so-covert campaign for lifting the ban on the further expansion of the so-called Big Industrial House so that the cause of efficient exports may not suffer. There is a distinct possibility that the Ministry of Finance might now chime in, and demand that Plan priorities be changed, private industrial activity must be allowed to expand in order that aid funds could be rapidly used up. This would be marvellous strategy, since it would scuttle the Plan, re-establish the suzerainty of private industrial tycoons, and allow the Western countries to dump their obsolete junk on this land.

But Rammanohar Lohia's dumb doll would not care to interfere with the private passions of her bureaucrats. Or could it be that, as in many other things, Lohia was wrong in this judgment as well—could it be she is nobody's dumb doll?

View from Delhi

Left Communalism

FROM A POLITICAL
CORRESPONDENT

MAJORITY communalism is per se fascist but the answer to the challenge is certainly not the brand of minority communalism that is euphemistically described these days as secularism. Mrs Indira Gandhi's denunciation of Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's call for a genocide of the minorities would have been much more effective had not the ruling party always tried to ride two horses. It has placated majority communalism in the past, side by side with support to minority communalism with the singular objective of maximising its electoral appeal. So at the end of the five-hour inconclusive debate in the Lok Sabha last week, all the platitudes and clichés one heard at the time of the Ahmedabad riots last year were repeated over the Maharashtra riots. From Prof Balraj Madhok's cry for "Indianisation" of the Muslims to Mr Vajpayee's manifesto for civil war was not a far cry. If anything, Mr Vajpayee is the moderate among the Jana Sanghi moderates. There is little doubt the aggressive edge that majority communalism has now acquired has something to do with the minority communalism those in power have found it necessary to promote as part of a political game.

There is an inexorable logic to seemingly unconnected events. Back in 1966, on the eve of the general elections, the Government leadership, more specifically, Mrs Indira Gandhi, succumbed to the Jana Sangh blackmail over the cow. Though cow protection is a State subject and the Centre has no locus standi in the matter, a cow protection committee was appointed just to undercut the Jana Sangh in the elections. The dormant cow agitation is being revived by the Jana Sangh now, with symbolic defiance of the pro-

hibitory order in Parliament Street by groups of four or five cow politicians. The prima donna, the Puri Sankaracharya, courted arrest on the first day of the agitation.

The Muslim minority became a crucial factor in the election of Mr V. V. Giri as President. Nationalisation of banks was adequate to take care of the kulak class which controls the Hindu vote. The Al Aqsa desecration came in handy. A whole generation of Muslims which had forgotten the community's loyalty to the Caliphate was made to believe that the Government was the greatest saviour of the religious minorities in the country. The culmination of the exercise was Mr Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed's clowning act in Rabat, India's claim for recognition as a Muslim nation at the Rabat conference was the obverse of the Government of India's general policy of majority communalism within the country. The Ahmedabad riots broke out close on the heels of the Rabat fiasco.

But the Presidential election campaign held out dangerous portents. The appeal to the voters was downright communal. It might be a good gimmick to explain minority communalism as a kind of defensive mechanism. But then the appeal to Muslim voters in the election to support Mr V. V. Giri was communalism alright. A reactionary Muslim should logically have voted for a reactionary candidate like Mr Sanjiva Reddy but if every Muslim voted for Mr Giri, is one to presume that Muslims as a rule are "leftists" and "progressive"? A similar communal appeal was directed to the Akalis. It was a caste appeal to the Harijans. Communalism and casteism were vested with certain ideological respectability in the election. The Hindu vote is split in any case and it is necessary for the ruling party to stabilise the non-Hindu vote on its side.

From the trend of the debate in the Lok Sabha, it was clear the Government has no positive thinking on

measures to combat communalism. The National Integration Council's recommendations have not been implemented. Nor is there any worthwhile follow-up on the decisions of the meeting held about two years ago. There is no certainty that after all the pious speeches from the Prime Minister down to Mr S. A. Dange, communal riots would not break out again between now and the monsoon session of Parliament.

Manhunt

The Government has found it easier to keep the focus on the Naxalites and build up a climate of frenzy for a massive manhunt of the political extremists. At the Bombay AICC in December last, Mr Y. B. Chavan fashioned his new philosophy on behalf of the ruling party—equating Naxalites with the communal forces. Later on, when it came to banning all extremist forces, the Government found it could not carry the Jana Sangh with it where organisations like the RSS were involved. Well, Mrs Gandhi cannot carry her own party with her if she wants to ban the Shiv Sena. So a surreptitious attempt at a consensus on banning only the Naxalites and leaving the communal and parochial forces alone. The total Naxalite “annihilations” and killings in West Bengal since Naxalbari add up to nowhere near the shocking toll of a mere two days in Mr Chavan's home State. Yet the Government will sooner ban the Naxalites than the RSS, Shiv Sena or any other private army.

Mrs Gandhi, significantly, had no word of denunciation for the Shiv Sena which is becoming the major anti-Muslim storm-trooper force in Maharashtra. Where no South In-

dian lives, the Shiv Sena's only target has been the Muslims and the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress leadership has been patron saint of the Shiv Sainiks. In fact, the Bombay AICC in December got its volunteer force from the Shiv Sena because the party has no base in the city and it is too expensive to ferry volunteers from the hinterland.

Mr Chavan is a sad, disillusioned man, with his chances of becoming Prime Minister blighted for ever. Between the Naxalite problem in West Bengal and the communal violence in Maharashtra his image has been tarnished. The Muslim minority in Western India is in a state of panic but will nevertheless vote with the ruling Congress because there is no alternative to the Shiv Sena-Jana Sangh combine that is emerging.

Significantly, the four Southern States have been free from communal violence while every other State (Punjab and Haryana just do not have Muslims!) has been affected by the virus to some degree or the other. But the Government's attitude to minority communalism does not weaken majority communalism. For instance, why is the Government so apologetic about changing the personal law? Islamic countries (Pakistan and Turkey) have changed it but the Government of India would not, for the fear of losing the Muslim vote. Mr Panampilly Govinda Menon promised on the floor of the Lok Sabha that a committee to be headed by Chief Justice Hidayatullah would go into the question. Two newspapers had commented on this assurance and one of the editorials had welcomed the step. But now Mr Menon pleads that either he did not say it or if he had said it, it was just a slip of the tongue and he did not mean it. When somebody says the Indian Parliament cannot interfere with the Muslim personal law, it is the climax of minority communalism because it was time the country went in for a uniform personal law for all communities to prove its secular bona fides.

May 17, 1970

Naxalites In Assam

KAMRUPEE

WHETHER the Naxalites are on the point of launching a violent insurrection in these parts—of course ‘in collusion with China and Pakistan’ as a first step towards the ‘liberation’ of Assam is far less important than the fact that the public is now led to believe that a such a move is afoot. The ground is surely being prepared for the promulgation of further repressive legislation. Newspaper reports in Assam since the first news-items about the Naxalite movement in these parts throw some interesting light on current and future political trends in Assam; the present stir that is being caused about the Naxalites also seems to have a bearing on the fortunes of the Congress party in Assam.

As is well known, there is now going on a bitter struggle for the leadership of the CLP in Assam (in effect, the Chief Ministership of the State). In the coming weeks, one may see something like a competition as to who between the two rival claimants is going to assure the establishment of “law and order” which is alleged to have either broken down, or is on the point of breaking down. If Mr Chowdhury seems to favour the “law and order” view, his rival would be expected to make the finer distinction of seeing at the root of the Naxalite movement “socio-economic factors”, to use the current jargon of Mrs Gandhi and her coterie in their attempt to present a ‘radical’ image. But whether it is the big stick that is going to be wielded, or subtler methods of repression are going to be evolved, a period of political victimization seems to be ahead of us.

Who are these Naxalites of Assam that are so much in the news nowadays? Or, more importantly, who are they made out to be? (In this case, the public image is even more important than the reality). Up to now, newspaper reports on the Naxalite activities in Assam can be consi-

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Business Manager
Frontier

dered under three distinct phases. The first phase was the news of the arrest of Mr Syed Hussain Shah, a former member of the CPI(M) provincial committee (expelled for following a 'left adventurist' line), in March. The police were after him for nearly two years; on his arrest, the story put out was that he was the leader of a conspiracy to create an 'independent' Assam, of course in predictable collusion not merely with China and Pakistan, but the rebel Naga and Mizo elements as well. Since the time he went underground in early 1968, the story was that he had 'absconded' to Pakistan; though those who know can tell that he had no reason to seek a sanctuary that afar; being a 'local man', it would have been comparatively easy for him to evade arrest, and it is clear that but for betrayal, he could have continued to be at large, in Assam.

The second phase was the statement made on the floor of the Assam Assembly in Shillong by the present de facto leader of the ACLP, Mr M. M. Chowdhury. The headline to the story as it appeared in *The Assam Tribune* is a pointer to the shape of things to come: TOP W. BENGAL NAXALITES ENTER ASSAM. These troublesome elements were not merely subversive, but alien as well! Earlier, Shah Syed could not be smeared this way; so, by virtue of his Muslim name, he was made to 'abscond' to Pakistan. It is amazing how often, and in what a variety of ways, these 'outsider agitators' seem to crop up to disturb peace in a community which otherwise is known to possess no problems of any kind. In Selma, Alabama, it was the New York agitators who were responsible for all the trouble. The New Yorkers blame the Californians for the trouble in their city. One thus wonders whom the good Bengalis ought to blame for all their 'extremist' trouble; probably they all come from Assam. Anyway, the Minister's statement, based entirely on police 'intelligence', did not provide any facts, though it provided enough scare to inspire countryside

editorial comments, the substance of all these later being a demand for the restoration of the Preventive Detention Act. Poor Mr Chavan had at least something to be pleased about.

Third Phase

The third phase was the arrest of about sixty persons (April 26) from near Ghograpar, and the discovery of an actual conspiracy afoot. Thus the report in part:

Police said that the Naxalites had established a full-fledged district committee of the Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist) in Goalpara district bordering Pakistan besides setting up a chain of "shelters" in various parts of the State, mostly in rural areas... The Naxalites, according to the police, had established training centres in Goalpara and Cachar district which "significantly border East Pakistan"... The police have listed eight top Naxalite leaders from West Bengal who had been operating in Assam during the last more than one year (sic) and indoctrinating landless peasants in their ideology of violence.

Several select batches of potential Naxalite workers had also been taken to Jalpaiguri and other places of North Bengal for "higher training" in guerilla warfare during the past several months, the police said. (*Assam Tribune*, April 28, 1970)

Incidentally, almost the whole of this police 'intelligence' derives from the openly available leaflet of the Goalpara District Committee of the CPI(ML). But what is disturbing is the quite open suggestion that all Naxalite activities are Bengali-inspired and led. It is here that one finds a strange contradiction. On the one hand, from the most 'chauvinist' to the most 'progressive' political groups in Assam, every one recognizes that the land and employment situation is pretty desperate. In fact, the issue of the newspaper that carried Mr Chowdhury's statement had on the same pages the latest of the innumerable report/analyses of the problem of the educated unemployed

in Assam. Even from the most conservative standpoint, the economic crisis gripping the State is pretty desperate. But while recognizing and indeed repeatedly stressing that the objective situation is desperate, the way out sought by the Naxalites is seen as the result of a diabolic conspiracy directed by hostile and alien elements. Assam is neglected; Assam is gripped by an acute economic crisis; everybody is agreed on that. But the Assamese peasant, bless him, is such a peaceable chap that, but for the wicked Bengalis, he would just continue to be quiet, and perhaps once in a while go on an irresponsible, misdirected rampage, which would have limited cathartic advantages (à la the events of January 1967 at Gauhati).

Whether the Naxalites will be able to provide a proper revolutionary direction to the peasant masses of Assam is yet an open question. Much depends on the emergence of indigenous leadership; and there is every reason to believe that such a leadership is emerging. But it is also true that attempts will be made to brand the movement as 'un-Assamese'. The most subversive combination right now is that of a Bengali and a Muslim, for such a person would combine in himself a variety of conspiratorial roles. Significantly enough, Mr Chaliha himself came out recently with a statement that 2,36,511 Pakistani Muslim infiltrants were detected in Assam in the period between March 1, 1961 and February 28, 1970.

Two Phobias

In Assam, the Muslim phobia and the Bengali phobia, considered separately, are significant enough; but combined, they promise to take formidable proportions. Before one starts congratulating oneself how 'progressive' one is, let us bear in mind that this 'fear of the alien' is in no way peculiar to Assam. A bourgeois social structure seems to need such external enemies to keep it from falling apart as a result of its internal contradictions. In Assam the situation holds the promise of

an even greater danger because the 'racial' question is much more delicate here than in other parts of the country. The 'Assamese', quite apart from having had to face the problems arising out of a confusion between his geographical and cultural identities, had had further frustrations to endure, including the absence of a widely distributed Assamese capitalist elite. A belief in 'external enemies' comes easier to him at least partly because of the considerable objective reasons that exist to sustain such a belief. The Naxalites are seeking to show the enemy within, and because of this, even the extremely limited capitalist elite of Assam has a stake in wiping out this 'menace'. So, one can expect the ruling class to employ every device at its disposal to isolate and destroy the Naxalites, and if a little bit of stirring of racial and communal hatred is going to do the trick, the government machinery can be trusted to do all the stirring. In this connection, the present writer might be permitted to recount a bit of political 'intelligence' he heard from a friend. Talking about the new direct bus service between Siliguri and Gauhati (luxury class), this friend said that it would facilitate the movement of Naxalites from West Bengal into Assam. There you have, an instance of the wickedness of the enemies of established order, who make use of the advantages and freedoms provided by a 'liberal' society to sabotage it from within.

"A single spark kindles a prairie fire": Thus the latest issue of 'Liberation' quotes, and the single spark, according to this journal, has been the murder of two landlords in Goalpara district (three by the latest count). Maybe; but this writer, hampered as he is by his non-proletarian background and training, finds it difficult to believe that revolution is round the corner in Assam. But what does seem to be round the corner is growing radicalisation and militancy, particularly in the rural areas; there is also the prospect of this

militancy being matched by various forms of official repression. Also, it is extremely likely that agrarian violence, when (not if) it breaks out, is going to take on a racial and a communal overtone, at least in its initial stages. Only a genuinely revolutionary leadership seems to be capable of directing the ensuing violence along correct class lines. I think it would be premature to identify the revolutionary peasant movements in Assam entirely with the CPI(ML). The proximity of areas of North Bengal have caused such an identification to establish itself in the popular mind. But in the long run, any mechanical application of a slogan, say like the one which says that China's Chairman is Our Chairman, is not going to work in Assam. What is needed is a creative application of the slogan, and no doubt the lessons are going to be learnt as the movement marches along. But here again, one who is outside the movement can hardly presume to lay down the correct line; but it seems to me that cultural revolutionary gestures as those symbolized by the raid on the railway colony school at Lunding—not merely hold no promise of a real change, but on the contrary provide grounds for a regional identification of the revolutionary 'elements'. But here again, it is difficult to be categorical. Each day, each event, seems now to hold promise of a sustained and continuous revolutionary activity. Some of these no doubt are going to be 'childish pranks' (which are also in the same breath going to be condemned as threats to the security of the State); the less publicized, silent work of party cadres in rural areas is going to yield fruits in the long run. The government machinery will certainly put out news to the effect that the Naxalites (anti-social elements, Bengali agitators, Pakistani spies etc, as they will be dubbed as occasion will demand) are on the run; but increasingly, it will be the government machinery, and the system that it represents and protects, that is going to be on the run.

Calcutta Diary

GYAN KAPUR

TO fry fish in its own fat may be an impossibility but the idea is an attractive one, to our industrialists and big businessmen. Most of them may come from Vaishnava areas of the country, and fish, meat and eggs are anathema to them, at least at home in the company of their equally devout wives and families. But they are the first to pick up anything really good in the land of their adoption. And this homely Bengali saying is, in essence, something after their heart, leaving aside the unfortunate reference to the hated fish.

Better than having their vegetarian cakes and eating them too, our business tycoons like to have something for nothing, a feat not always possible. When the two are combined, it is just heaven on earth.

Periodically sympathetic noises are made by different sets of businessmen at the sad plight of Calcutta, to which it is taken for granted that the contribution of industry is nil. Occasionally concern is voiced at the decline of industry itself in the State. Responsibility for this of course is never stated clearly but obviously it is not these gentlemen who have anything to do in the matter. You can place it on the shoulders of the State or Central Government or the cussedness of the workers who will never take no for an answer, according to your particular affiliations.

Now presidents of six chambers of commerce in Calcutta have come out with a scheme which in any way is an ideal one, from their own point of view. They propose to start a Development Bank in Calcutta for the purpose of rehabilitating old industries and starting new ones. Who says the industrialists and businessmen do not think for the City from which they make their huge profits? Here is the proof that some of them at least have been thinking hard and may be losing a good deal of sleep over the matter.

Opportunists all, the presidents' scheme wants the three nationalised banks in Calcutta to pool their compensation money and jointly start the Development Bank. They are sad at the thought that a few crores should go back to the shareholders and want the money back in industry, of course, industry controlled by the few. Even leaving aside shareholders who cannot recognize a good thing when they see it and want their money back, the chamber presidents hope to have Rs 7.50 crores from this alone. And against this would come Rs 15 crores, free of interest from the Central Government. What happiness! Blessed are those who do good to others! Apart from this another Rs 10 crores can be expected from selling shares mainly to the various government-controlled institutions with money to invest.

And how much will the six chambers of commerce, whose members must have assets amounting to hundreds if not thousands of crores, contribute? Nothing definite is said. Their probable contributions are included in the Rs 2.90 crores expected from "firms and individuals."

Obviously these chamber presidents have decided on one thing. They would not mind playing with a few crores if they are given to them. But risking their own money, well or ill-gotten? They have had enough of it and would like to call it a day.

Perhaps it is just the heat and a few more showers will cool tempers to dull placidity. But as of now things appear pretty confused all round. Wrecking of examinations continues. Witness the mess in the B.Com. But it is no longer left to hardliners alone. So we had the amazing spectacle of 200 young men in the Maulana Azad College getting up in a body, calmly tearing up question and answer papers and walking out. And in a different context, another young man, a First Class First, seizing the mike wanted to know what he was supposed to do with his degree.

The sham of our educational system is wearing dangerously thin and may not last very much longer.

With students symbolically refusing to take their examinations and colleges reluctant to allow examinations to be held in their premises, the time may come soon when young men will realise that going for a degree is a useless exercise for most of them. At the best it is just postponing the evil day when they have to face the facts of life in our socialistic pattern of society. When that time comes they may perhaps realise they have to work hard to change society before they can expect anything in return.

Barring the Naxalites, all the parties appear to have established a love-hate relationship with the police. As President's Rule continues, the police are coming into their own once again. By all accounts they are not giving the soft-glove treatment to anyone, even if he might belong to one of the parties who ruled over them only a short time back. But all that the Left Establishment can think of is to send in petitions and remind the police that the people will not forget it. And every member is happy when it is someone else who is attacked and feels stunned when it is its own turn.

In spite of appropriate noises about attacks on the working people, the eight-party shadow mini-front views attacks by the police on the CPM with ill-conceived glee, they can never have enough of it. The CPM leaders in their turn were not pleased at supposed police inaction against the Naxalites. The police in turn have tried to please everyone; two thousand Naxalites have been arrested but there is hardly any let up in their activities. Which shows that either all those arrested are not what they are taken to be, or the Naxalities in Calcutta are far more numerous than we are asked to believe.

The letters written by the CPM MLA, Mr Benoy Konar, and his colleague Mr Gokulananda Roy, to the Speaker of the Lok Sabha are instructive in more ways than one. According to the letter, which one can readily believe, they were handcuffed with a rope tied to their waists and

paraded in an open lorry with Congress hoodlums jeering, spitting and throwing stones at them with the active connivance of the police. But this is just a foretaste of things to come, from which no party is going to be exempted unless they can combine to fight together. Another thing which is curious is that the only result of this shocking incident seems to have been a petition to the Speaker followed by one more to the Governor. Of action, nothing, except a warning that the people will not tolerate it. However, at the time it happened they seem to have tolerated it very easily.

Tailpiece: Mr Hiren Mukherji of the CPI, speaking in the Lok Sabha said that the Government was showing utter callousness to the problems of West Bengal and looking at all this "sometimes I feel like turning a Naxalite myself."

Frankly Speaking

SANJOY

WE are all born the same way but we die differently. When a man like Rabindranath or Russell dies in ripe old age, their faces are supposed to wear a peace that passes understanding. But for many people the fate is a pain that is beyond comprehension. We are not thinking of death from disease. Some diseases are respectable—a sudden heart attack, for instance. Others are rather coarse because somehow they are connected with squalor and poverty—cholera is an example. One cannot be sure about cancer—it afflicts both the 555-smoking burra sahib and the pan-chewing peasant or worker. But natural death is something we understand, and the final look of it may depend on what sort of treatment the sufferer has received, if at all, and where, whether it was an airconditioned nursing home or a cabin or a free bed in some hospital. The question does not arise in myriad villages.

The pain that is beyond compre-

hension is associated with violent death. A contemporary the other day published the picture of a jotedar's head hanging from a tree in Srīkaku-lam district as an example of Naxalite atrocity. Does what happen to the body is all that important after the soul that cannot be burnt or drowned but perhaps can be bought has departed? To some extent it matters because a mutilated body violates our love of ourselves. There is, of course, a difference in appearance between an electrocuted man and a man who has been guillotined, but people do not wax indignant over the form of capital punishment. The penalty is imposed by the State, so the question of aesthetics does not arise. It is when individuals mutilate the body that our disgust is aroused, naturally.

The faces of death are many. In this country savage death is often inflicted on the innocent. But it is not the practice to publish pictures of the victims of, say, the Ahmedabad or Maharashtra riots. It is not in the public interest. The details are overlooked. But they won't be if the deaths are inflicted by an extremist political party.

In the infliction of torture, ghastly death and devastation on a mass scale, two nations—or two governments—have so far scored over all in the present century—Nazi Germany and democratic America. The French in Algeria and the British in most of their Empire were ruthless, but the American rulers, because of their ancestry and their unmatched mastery over science and technology, have surpassed them all—even Nazi Germany. Hitler, exploiting the theme of a down-and-out Germany, propounded a theory whose inevitable consequence was genocide. He and Goebbels and the rest had a dogma and put it into practice. Some Germans protest that large numbers of their countrymen who adored Hitler did not know how the dogma was being translated into the murder of millions in gas chambers and concentration camps. Maybe this ignorance is a pretension, a sort of self-defence against the world outcry when the camps and gas chambers came to light after the

war. Or, maybe rumours were in circulation, not the details.

The American Government is guilty of worse criminality. The U.S. is the zamindar, moneylender and gendarme of the Free World. It has fattened on two world wars, from which it made astronomical profits, has lost no territory and should suffer from no revanchism. It has also a statue of liberty as we have our Ganesh. Certain political principles which read very well are enshrined in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights of Man and millions even of non-Americans, both white and coloured, are crazy about the American way of life. But the Government of the United States carries on, without hesitation, genocide in Vietnam and invades other countries when it feels it necessary. And the most curious thing is that the gruesome details of this genocide as also of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are more than an open secret, unlike in Nazi Germany. Most Americans now know about My Lai. They may still believe that it was an aberration, while evidence has already made it clear that the massacre was no exception. What is baffling is that the monstrous military-industrial complex that is the U.S. is allowed to mutilate, kill, burn with napalm a brave people and defoliate their country while the world looks on and yawns. The power of money, the cash nexus that ties the world with the USA, is tremendous and makes whores of once respectable nations. Sometimes one wonders why the world screamed so much about Belsen and Dachau and other camps. Was it because the victims were whites? Nothing succeeds like successful murder. Americans can get away with murder whereas Hitler failed.

Also think of the American puppets, in Saigon and Cambodia and elsewhere. Corrupt to the core and hideous, they ape their Washington master. One has seen the faces of death at My Lai, all in colour, in the *Life* magazine. About the recent converts, T. O. Allman of the *Far East*

tern Economic Review writes in a despatch from Phnom Penh: the story of the Cambodian pogrom began when journalists discovered the bodies of 92 Vietnamese men, women and children in the village of Prasaut. The horror of their killings was exceeded: only by what immediately followed. The survivors, all of them terribly wounded, were left to bleed to death upon the ground by the Cambodian soldiers. The wounded lay among the dead until there were no more living. After another massacre elsewhere a few days later, the Mekong became a floating graveyard and the dead began to clog the river at a ferry crossing south-east of Phnom Penh. The dead, followed by hungry minnows, filled the river for miles and littered the shore. A group of Vietnamese, all civilians, were penned near the river bank. Their only source of drinking water was the river. The prisoners were forced to drink the fetid water while they waited for their turn to be shot.

Allman estimates the number of Vietnamese killed by Camodian soldiers at 5,000.

The number of Vietnamese, Vietcong and Cambodians killed by the Americans is not yet known. The mighty air arm of the U.S. has destroyed many villages and towns, and one has to think, for a change, that these places were once lived in by Cambodians. Or is everyone killed by the Americans a Vietcong? Where do the Cambodians live in Cambodia?

The faces of death are many. American photographers at this moment may be taking pictures in Cambodia and many middleclass Americans may be waiting to see them while having their breakfast or dinner. Genocide is the salt of life! In a way it is good that the contours of death are not published for the people of this country in great detail. If they were, the descendants of Gandhi who adore the moon-landing Americans would get many more ideas. What they practise already is more than enough for an underdeveloped or developing country. Science and tech-

nology, not accompanied by human values, can be terrible. As for the neo-colonials who acquiesce in the murder of Asians by Americans and their henchmen, they are at best living corpses.

* * *

Another scandal is titillating the Saigonese—a colossal case of currency smuggling. Out of a total of VNP 100,000—120,000 million in circulation a quarter cannot be accounted for. Last month, a Chinese woman about to board an Air Vietnam flight for Hongkong with four suitcases was stopped. The suitcases had been taken through several check points by a colonel declaring that they belonged to a general. On being opened at the last moment the suitcases yielded VNP 71 million. According to two Saigon senators, three of the most powerful generals in the Thieu regime are involved, including Thieu's assistant in charge of National Security and Pacification and the chief of staff of the armed forces.

Perhaps the money was being taken out for national security—for a government that might have to pack off.

Tailpiece: South Vietnamese land forces driving towards the Cambodian capital last week were ordered "not to get closer than 5 kms to Phnom Penh to respect Cambodian sovereignty." Almost a case of how one can behave with a virgin—on the verge, but not in.

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On Lenin—IV

MONITOR

WE saw earlier with what great care Lenin studied the 'economic law of motion' of the Russian society at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. This he did in order to know what was the stage of the revolution Russia had to go through in the immediate future.

Every revolution—that is, a social and not a 'palace' revolution—is a process through which one class seizes political power from the other class (or classes) and effects, in its favour, a fundamental transformation in the existing property relations. Marx and Engels spoke of two kinds of revolution in modern times—the *bourgeois-democratic revolution* and the *proletarian or socialist revolution*. The first is led by the bourgeoisie against feudalism and its political rule—absolutism, replacing the one by bourgeois or capitalist production relations and the other by parliamentary democracy. The second is led by the proletariat—basically the industrial working class—against capitalism and its political rule, replacing the one by socialist production relations and the other by a higher, proletarian democracy as a prelude to the abolition of all classes and class rule.

True to their dialectical view of history which distinguishes between the general and the specific and, at the same time, shows the necessary connection between them Marx and Engels, after speaking of the bourgeois revolution in general, carefully distinguished between what can be called its two principal types. The first is the 'classical' type that took place in England and France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—where the proletariat was just appearing on the historical scene and the bourgeoisie, by its leadership in the uncompromising struggle against feudalism "represented the whole of modern society vis-a-vis the representatives of the old society, the

monarchy and the nobility".¹ The second type is the one that was taking place in the middle of the nineteenth century in Germany—"a backward country", where the proletariat was already a force to reckon with and where "the bourgeoisie had developed so slothfully, cowardly and slowly (*träge, feig und langsam*) that at the moment when it menacingly faced feudalism and absolutism it saw itself menacingly faced by the proletariat and all factions of the middle class whose interests and ideas were akin to those of the proletariat . . . and inclined from the beginning to betray the people and compromise with the crowned representatives of the old society."² It follows that in this second case, unlike in the first, the bourgeoisie alone cannot be relied upon to lead the revolution against feudalism; the proletariat, in its own interest, must fight with it against the forces of the old society.³ In the second place and at the same time, this second type of bourgeois revolution, taking place "under more advanced conditions of European civilization and with a more developed proletariat" than under the first type, is the "prelude to the immediately following proletarian revolution"—unlike, again, what had happened in the first type.⁴

From his initial study of the 'social-economic formation' of contemporary Russia Lenin concluded that the main obstacle to society's further progress was feudalism together with its political expression, the absolute monarchy. Hence the tasks of the Marxists in Russia was to "support every social movement against the absolute power of the autocratic

¹ Marx—*The Bourgeoisie and the Counter-revolution* (1848)—*Werke*, Bd. 6, S. 108. Marx's emphasis.

² *Ibid.*

³ *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), Section IV.

⁴ *Ibid.*

government, against the privileged class of landed aristocracy and against the survivals of serfdom and the estate system which restrict competition".⁵ About a decade later, after he had completed analysing the basic features of Russian society he came out with the terse statements such as, "the Marxists are convinced of the bourgeois character of the Russian revolution"⁶ or that "the revolution in Russia is inevitably a bourgeois revolution".⁷

The bourgeois revolution that Lenin envisaged for Russia resembled what we have called the second type more than the first. But not quite either. Both the objective and the subjective factors specific to Russia Lenin took into consideration to define his line. Russia was more backward in 1900, compared to the principal countries of Europe, than Germany was in 1848 in a similar situation. The bourgeoisie in Russia was much less interested than its counterpart in Germany fifty years ago in carrying the bourgeois-democratic revolution to its logical conclusion. It was more interested in keeping the tsarist régime as a whip against the working class and the peasantry and hence wanted to come to terms with feudalism and its biggest representative, the Tsar. On the other hand, objectively, a "bourgeois revolution" was "in the highest degree advantageous to the proletariat" because then the proletariat would find it easier "to turn against the bourgeoisie the guns which the bourgeois revolution will place in their hands, the liberty which the revolution will bring, the democratic institutions which will spring up on the ground that is cleared of serfdom".⁸ Moreover, subjectively, the Russian proletariat, though numerically modest,

had shown, through strikes and other activities under extremely repressive conditions, that it was more militant than its German counterpart half a century earlier. This militancy was spectacularly demonstrated in 1905 when the proletariat spearheaded the unprecedented revolt of the Russian people against the tsarist autocracy. Hence Lenin concluded that though the contemporary Russian revolution was a bourgeois revolution and as such could not overstep the bounds of capitalist democracy it must be led not by the bourgeoisie but by the proletariat which alone could carry the revolution to its logical conclusion. "Marxism", wrote Lenin, "teaches the proletariat not to keep aloof from the bourgeois revolution, not to be indifferent to it, not to allow the leadership of the revolution to be assumed by the bourgeoisie but, on the contrary, to take a most energetic part in it, to fight most resolutely for consistent proletarian democracy, for carrying the revolution to its logical conclusion."⁹

But granted the incapacity of the bourgeoisie, for subjective and objective reasons, to lead the anti-feudal revolution why is the proletarian leadership the only alternative and not the leadership of the peasantry which, in fact, was directly exploited by feudalism and which also constituted the majority in a predominantly agrarian society like Russia? As a matter of fact the Narodniks denied the vanguard role of the working class, and considered the peasantry to be the most revolutionary section of the people and, as such, entitled to lead the revolution against tsarist absolutism. Engels had already ridiculed the so-called 'instinctive' revolutionariness of the Russian peasantry.¹⁰ Later Plekhanov in his various writings showed that the peasantry, even though terribly oppressed under the nobility and tsardom and constituting the majority in Russia, could not lead the

revolution because it was connected with the most backward mode of production, was itself undergoing disintegration into classes, and did not easily lend itself to organisation owing to the conditions of small-scale and scattered production. On the other hand, the proletariat, though numerically small for the moment, was the legitimate vanguard of the revolution because it was a growing force under developing capitalism, because it was connected with the most advanced mode of production, because it lent itself easily to organization owing to the conditions of large-scale production and because it alone, among all the classes, "had nothing to lose but its chains". Though Plekhanov held this position *theoretically and in general*, for all *practical purposes* he sided with the Mensheviks against Lenin in their opposition to the working class leadership in the bourgeois-democratic revolution. Lenin of course consistently followed the logic of the situation and concluded that "the proletariat being, by virtue of its very position, the most advanced and the only consistently revolutionary class is for that reason called upon to play the leading part in the general democratic revolutionary movement in Russia."¹¹

At the same time Lenin differed sharply with Plekhanov and most other Marxists of the time on the role of the peasantry in the bourgeois-democratic revolution. In fact he attached enormous importance to the alliance of the proletariat with the peasantry in the struggle against feudalism and tsarist autocracy. In the *Communist Manifesto* the references to the peasantry are scanty and its role insufficiently indicated—due, undoubtedly to the fact that its authors had mainly under consideration the impending socialist revolution in the countries where bourgeois-democratic revolutions had already been completed. They, however, soon modified their earlier stand perhaps because of the political events of 1848 in central Europe which

⁵ *Draft and Explanation of the Programme of the Social Democratic Party* (1895-96), Sec. B, Art. 2.

⁶ *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Revolution* (1905), ch. 6.

⁷ Preface to the second edition (1907) of the *Development of Capitalism in Russia*.

⁸ *Two Tactics*—ch. 6. Lenin's emphasis.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ See particularly his *Social Relations in Russia* (1875—*Werke*, Bd. 18, S. 556.

¹¹ *Two Tactics*, ch. 8.

showed that there could be no victory in a bourgeois revolution without the help of the peasantry. In the *Address to the Communist League*, written two years after the *Manifesto*, Marx and Engels spoke of the "democrats combining with the peasants" for the victory of the democratic revolution. Later, a year before his death, in a letter addressed to Turati (26.1.1894) on the bourgeois revolutionary movement in Italy Engels wrote that "along this path the peasantry will be strong and indispensable allies" of the working class.

Worker-Peasant Alliance

However, it remains true that Lenin was the first Marxist to have the clearest understanding of the necessity of worker-peasant alliance for victory in the bourgeois revolution. In the contest for leadership with the bourgeoisie in the bourgeois revolution the indispensable condition of success was that the proletariat must not be isolated from the majority of the population—that is, the peasantry. Not only that. It was at the same time necessary—in order to deprive the bourgeoisie of the leadership of the revolution—to isolate it from the peasantry. Thus while holding that "only the proletariat can be a consistent fighter for democracy" Lenin added that "it (i.e. the proletariat) may become a victorious fighter for democracy only if the peasant masses join its revolutionary struggle."¹² This alliance to ensure the victory of the bourgeois revolution is also in the interest of the peasantry itself because "only a completely victorious revolution can give the peasantry everything in the sphere of agrarian reforms—everything that the peasants desire."¹³

Moreover, Lenin held that to ensure a decisive victory over the old society it is not enough to have a worker-peasant alliance under the leadership of the proletariat. In order to crush the resistance of the representatives of the old society, in

order to settle accounts with them "in the plebeian manner"—to use Marx's expression concerning the revolutionary terror in France in the 1790s¹⁴—and to implement the democratic programme there must have to be a 'revolutionary-democratic dictatorship' of the proletariat and the peasantry which, without yet overstepping the bounds of bourgeois relations—that is why it is a democratic and not a socialist dictatorship—will "bring about a radical redistribution of landed property in favour of the peasantry, establish consistent and full democracy, eradicate all the oppressive features of Asiatic bondage, lay the foundation of a thorough improvement in the position of the workers and for a rise in their standard of living and—last but not least—carry the revolutionary conflagration into Europe."¹⁵

Even at the stage of the bourgeois revolution Lenin did not confine all his attention to this revolution alone. He paid considerable attention to the coming socialist revolution as well. For Lenin, like his teachers before him, believed in uninterrupted revolution in the sense that there was no Chinese wall between the bourgeois and the proletarian revolution. Speaking of Germany the founders of scientific socialism had already written in 1848 about the bourgeois revolution being the "prelude to the immediately following proletarian revolution."¹⁶ They elaborated the point two years later while addressing the Communist League: "While the democratic petty bourgeois wish to bring the revolution to a conclusion as quickly as possible...it is our interest and our task to make the revolution permanent, until all the more or less possessing classes have been forced out of their position of dominance, until the proletariat has conquered state power."¹⁷ Similarly Lenin also showed the necessary link between the bourgeois-democratic

revolution and the socialist revolution and stressed the need of passing from the one to the other as quickly as possible, the subjective and objective conditions permitting. "From the democratic revolution", he wrote, "we shall at once, and just in accordance with our strength, the strength of the organised, class-conscious proletariat, begin to pass to the socialist revolution. We stand for uninterrupted revolution. We shall not stop half-way."¹⁸

At the same time Lenin insisted that one must not confuse the democratic tasks with the socialist tasks, the democratic stage of the revolution with the socialist stage of the revolution. The main enemy in the first stage is feudalism and the revolution is anti-feudal whereas the main enemy in the second stage is capitalism and the revolution is anti-capitalist. The theory of a single-stage revolution has nothing in common with Marxism. Indeed the great Paris Commune of 1871 was unable to and could not distinguish between the elements of a democratic revolution and those of a socialist revolution, and confused the tasks of fighting for a republic with the tasks of fighting for socialism.¹⁹ Lenin, however, added that "in actual historical circumstances the elements of the past become interwoven with those of the future, the two paths cross", and almost prophetically asked, "can it be denied that individual, particular elements of the two revolutions become interwoven in history? Will not the future socialist revolution in Europe still have to do a very great deal that has been left undone in the field of democracy?"²⁰ As is well known, history answered Lenin's question in the affirmative almost within a decade.

Alignments

Just as the stage and the tasks are different in the two revolutions similarly the alignment of forces in

¹⁴ *The Bourgeoisie and the Counter-revolution* (1848), Werke, Bd. 6. S. 107. Marx's emphasis.

¹⁶ *Communist Manifesto*, Sec. IV.

¹⁷ *Werke*, Bd. 7, S. 247-8.

¹⁸ *Attitude of Social-Democracy towards Peasant Movement* (1905).

¹⁹ *Two Tactics*, ch. 10.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.* ch.6.

¹³ *Ibid.* ch. 12.

the one is different from that in the other. In our discussion of the bourgeois-democratic revolution if we confine our attention only to what we have called its second type—as it is more realistic, considering the near-impossibility of the first or ‘classical’ type recurring anywhere—we already know what a key role the proletariat is called upon to play here. In a country like Germany in the mid-nineteenth century it fights with the bourgeoisie “whenever it acts in a revolutionary way” against the representatives of the old society.²¹ and in a country like Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century where the bourgeoisie is rarely revolutionary and most of the time vacillating and unstable, the proletariat’s task is to “paralyze the inevitable inconsistency of the bourgeoisie.”²² We have also seen above that the surest ally of the proletariat in this revolution is the peasantry. On the other hand, in the case of a socialist revolution where the proletariat, almost by definition, does not share leadership with any other class, where the bourgeoisie becomes the main enemy and where the peasantry has undergone sufficient disintegration as to be split between the ‘bourgeois’ elements and the ‘proletarian’ elements—the rural proletariat—it is no longer a question of worker-peasant alliance in general for the victory of the revolution. In the address to the Communist League, already referred to above, the founders of scientific socialism asked the workers “to combine with the rural proletariat” for the victory of the second stage of the revolution. Though there are sufficient hints to this effect in Marx’s later writings²³ it was Engels who elaborated the theme in 1870. Referring to Germany of his day he pointed out that the working class was far from forming the majority of the total population. “This class is there-

fore compelled to seek allies”, who could be found, most importantly, among the petty bourgeoisie in the town and the small peasants and the agricultural labourers in the countryside. Particularly wherever medium and large estates prevailed, agricultural labourers constituted the majority in the countryside. “It is here”, Engels asserted, “that the industrial workers of the town find their most numerous and most natural allies (*zahlreichsten and naturlichsten Bundesgenossen*). In the same way as the capitalist confronts the industrial worker, the landowner or large tenant confronts the agricultural labourer... The agricultural proletariat is the class nearest to the industrial workers of the towns, which shares their living conditions, which is steeped even still deeper in misery than they. To galvanize into life and to draw into movement this class... this is the immediate, most urgent task of the German workers’ movement.”²⁴

Lenin further dwelt on the subject by pointing out the inevitability of the splitting up and disintegration of the peasantry before the socialist revolution. Whereas at the democratic stage of the revolution there is some sort of a ‘single will’ of the proletariat and the peasantry—in so far as the revolution satisfies their common needs and requirements—“beyond the bounds of democracy there can be no question of the proletariat and the peasant bourgeoisie having a single will. Class struggle between them is inevitable.”²⁵ This is how Lenin summed up the nature of two kinds of class-alignment corresponding to the two stages of revolution: “*The proletariat must carry to completion the democratic revolution, by allying to itself the mass of peasantry in order to crush by force the resistance of the autocracy and to paralyze the instability of the bourgeoisie. The proletariat must accomplish the socialist revolution, by ally-*

ing to itself the mass of semi-proletarian elements of the population in order to crush by force the resistance of the bourgeoisie and to paralyze the instability of the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie.”²⁶

Marx’s Warning

A revolution, we noted above, is a process through which one ‘social formation’ replaces another. But Marx already warned in the celebrated preface to his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859) that no social formation ever disappears without its productive forces having exhausted all the possibilities of expansion; and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself. The same universal truth Lenin reiterated later when he wrote that “it is impossible to hasten something for which the historical conditions have not ripened.”²⁷ Thus the period between 1789 and 1871 was the period of progressive capitalism when, on the order of the day of history, were the tasks of overthrowing feudalism and absolutism. But when monopoly replaced competition and imperialism appeared on the scene capitalism lost its progressive character. There was, on the one hand, the increasingly crying contradiction between the social mode of production and the capitalist mode of appropriation, signifying that the capitalist relations of production were increasingly becoming an obstacle to the fullest possible development of the forces of production and, on the other hand, the very fact of the displacement of capitalist free competition by capitalist monopoly showed that the “features of the epoch of transition from capitalism to a higher social and economic system had taken shape and revealed themselves all along the line.”²⁸ It is in this sense

²¹*Communist Manifesto*, ch. IV.

²²*Two Tactics*, ch. 12.

²³E.g. in *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), ch. VII and his letter to Engels (16-4-1856) in *Werke*, Bd. 7, S. 252.

²⁴Prefatory note to *Peasant War in Germany* (1870)—*Werke*, Bd. 16, S. 398-99. Emphasis by Engels.

²⁵*Two Tactics*, ch. 10.

²⁶*Ibid.* ch. 12. Lenin’s emphasis.

²⁷*Opportunism and the Collapse of the Second International* (1916).

²⁸*Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), ch. VII.

that the "epoch of capitalist imperialism is the epoch of ripe and overripe capitalism, which is on the eve of collapse, which is sufficiently ripe to make way for socialism."²⁹

Though this remains true, over a whole historical period, for capitalism, as a world system it does not mean that capitalism will be replaced by socialism in all capitalist countries at the same time. He pointed out that within the general framework of capitalism all countries and regions do not develop evenly and uniformly. "Uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism. Hence, the victory of socialism is possible first in several or even in one capitalist country, taken singly."³⁰ Does it mean that the proletariat can seize power and begin socialist revolution only in an industrially advanced capitalist country? That was the view held by the 'theoreticians' of the Second International—Plekhanov included—on the basis of a mechanical interpretation of Marx's text. Lenin came to the conclusion that the possibility of the seizure of power by the proletariat is far higher in a backward capitalist country compared to an advanced capitalist country. The imperialist bourgeoisie in the latter temporarily staves off the immediate crisis by the export of capital and the plunder of colonies, and successfully bribes, out of super-profits, a sizeable section of the working class and, first of all, its leadership, "the real agents of the bourgeoisie in the working class movement."³¹ The backward capitalist country, cannot enjoy these 'advantages' and, in fact, serves as the weakest link in the chain of world capitalism—that is, where imperialism is least protected and the proletarian revolution finds it easiest to begin and expand.

(To be continued)

²⁹*Opportunism and the Collapse of the Second International.*

³⁰*The United States of Europe Slogan* (1915).

³¹Preface to the French and German editions (1920) of *Imperialism*. Lenin's emphasis.

Book Review

On Communalism

ARJUN BANDYOPADHYAYA

Communalism and the Writing of Indian History

By Romila Thapar, Harbans Mukhia and Bipan Chandra.
People's Publishing House, Delhi. Rs 2

COMMUNALISM is generally linked only with religion and many believe that with greater secularism communal feeling decreases. It is often forgotten that without a change of the feudal-capitalist structure of society communalism never vanishes but remains in one form or other. Ramkrishna and Vivekananda who were intensely religious were not communal but the movement of Hindu revivalism with which they were organically connected gave a strong impetus to communalism. Communalism is the affirmation of the religious community as a political group. It is also an outlet of unbalanced economic complexities and a psychological phenomenon. The question of identity is a significant aspect of its problems. Communalism stands in between individual consciousness and nationalism or national consciousness; practically it is the result of a dwarfed national movement, a perverse nationalism. Where the need for identity is great but for several reasons nationalism or the national movement is unable to supply it the perversion grows strong.

Communal feeling has become a part of the psychological atmosphere of modern India. Even those who are not communal in their conscious thinking have some sub-conscious leanings towards it—the progressive leftists, despite their anti-communal slogans and activities, choose Muslim candidates in Muslim areas and Hindu candidates in Hindu areas. In practice they still believe unofficially in the theory of separate electorates. The intellectuals and the elite never question the basic tenets and foun-

ation of communalism in spite of occasional anti-communal meetings and emotional speeches. They seldom understand that without changing the present set-up an economic-political-religious attitude like communalism cannot be wiped out.

Naturally our historians, as a social creature, have been consciously or sub-consciously affected by the communal bias. In spite of honest efforts, no historian is able to free himself from present values. So those who wrote histories during the national movement in the 1920s and 30s were very much influenced by the feelings and thinking of the period when the flow of communalism was very strong. How far communalism has affected our writing of history is pointed out in the collection of the essays under review by Romila Thapar, Harbans Mukhia and Bipan Chandra.

All of them think that a communal identity did not exist in the ancient and medieval periods of Indian history. According to Bipan Chandra, both nationalism and communalism are the products of similar modern processes—the growing economic, political and administrative unity of the country. It is incorrect to treat communalism as a remnant of the past or the revival of the traditional ideology. Communalism was and is the false consciousness of the historical process of the last hundred years. (But the question may arise: could a general social fusion between the Muslims and the Hindus take place during the medieval period? If it could, how could communalism be so strong in the modern period?)

In the first essay Romila Thapar has shown how historical interpretation can be the product of a communal ideology. The choice of events reflects the historian's predilection and the nature of the choice shows his subjectivity. She is correct when she says that in trying to understand the question of communalism in the writing of ancient Indian history it is best to examine the influence of contemporary ideas on the writing of Indian history in recent centuries. In this respect the views of the Orien-

talists, the Utilitarians and the Nationalists are important. The Orientalists' emphasis on the Aryans as a racial entity, their exaltation of the Vedic Age and delineation of an idyllic ancient society fitted in with the views of the orthodox Hindus and with those of Hindu revivalists and it was the utilitarian James Mill who developed the thesis of dividing Indian history into three periods which he called Hindu civilization, Muslim civilisation and British civilisation (curiously enough non-Christian civilisation). Romila Thapar aptly proves that this division is unhistorical, it is also communal. But what she does not say is that an imperialistic subconscious was active behind this division. James Mill pointed out that there was a Hindu India and a Muslim India: a division based on religion. But they would be united under the government of, not the Christians, but the British: a shrewd advocacy for the British. On the other hand, in contrast to the Orientalists' defence of Hindu civilisation he was sympathetic to the Muslim civilisation. Here the Hindu-Muslim dichotomy is clearly perceptible. The subsequent historians followed it faithfully. The influence of the national movement was no better. The nationalists heavily relied on the works of the Orientalists because in our national movement religion and politics are strangely combined. So our nationalist historian naturally followed the Orientalists who praised everything which was Indian and ancient. Romila Thapar comments that where nationalism is coupled with colonialism and an anti-imperialist situation then the glorification of the past serves as a kind of consolation for the humiliation of the present. But these uncritical and distorted views must have been the result of our upper-caste national movement—a movement heavily tinged with a religious and communal bias. Otherwise why were our historians engaged in glorifying only the ancient and not the medieval past? Tilak's Ganesh or Gandhi's Ramrajya or Sanatan Dharma could not be the symbol and aspiration of

the national movement in a country like India. Even Gandhi could not present any secular symbol or aspiration. The absence of clear-cut anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism confused the issue. So it is not anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism, as Romila Thapar says, but the lack of them that drove our historians to the blind alley of communal bias. The impact of Gandhi's non-violence on our historians is that they saw no conflict and tension in ancient Hindu society (They easily forgot the emergence and impact of Buddhism). On the other hand those who talk loudly of non-violence in Indian history are full of praise for Samudragupta's conquests. Here Hindu chauvinism works blatantly.

Courtiers

In the second essay Harbans Mukhia deals at length with the contemporary terminology—of the medieval period. The character of the contemporary works of the medieval period must be analysed before making use of them. The contemporary historians who are one of the major sources of medieval Indian history were all courtiers or aspired to that position. They were interested in preserving the status quo. The main threat to the status quo came from the Hindu rajas, raos, zamindars etc. According to Mukhia, "when the contemporary historians advocate the annihilation only of the Hindus they desire an annihilation only of a section of the Hindu community rather than the entire community including the peasantry, the taxes paid by whom sustained the historians themselves along with the Hindu rajas and Muslim iqtadars in their luxurious life." So the effort of the communal historians to show a Hindu-Muslim conflict is not convincing—practically it was a tension of court-life, a tension in the upper echelons of society. Moreover, the contemporary historians wrote not of what happened. The lack of understanding of facts or intention not to understand them made the modern historians wrong as well as harmful in their interpretation. Conflicts

within the ruling class are taken by them as conflicts at the social level. The nationalist historians (according to Mukhia, those who believe in communal harmony) also never tried to study the whole society and its dynamics. So they could not effectively challenge the communalists. Harbans Mukhia is right when he advocates the study of society rather than of an individual ruler or the ruling class. But the study should be from a definite approach. The Marxian method may help here. Only to stress on communal harmony is not sufficient—despite innumerable instances of communal harmony it is a fact that communalism exists and there was no social fusion among the Hindu and Muslim communities. Community feelings still overpower class consciousness. So it must be fought out politically and intellectually. Marxism may be applied as a theoretical framework. Already one or two such attempts have been made regarding medieval Indian history, for instance Irfan Habib's brilliant *Agrarian System in Mughal India*. Otherwise, social study alone may do harm—like many economic monographs, it may confuse the facts and then only a minor twist will help the communalists.

In the last essay Bipan Chandra aptly remarks, "the communalist writers of course ignored all other principles of organisation but religion. But it was inherent in the approach that others would follow them but replace religion by caste etc. In fact many Western writers today are reviving the emphasis on caste and language." To see the rise of nationalism merely as pressures of caste and linguistic loyalty and cohesion is an example. To Bipan Chandra the lack of deeper penetration of nationalistic ideology has in itself been a factor in the prevalence of communal ideology. He also points out that the religious imagery of the leaders could not make the Muslims enthusiastic and it is notable that lower-caste Hindus also were not at all very sympathetic towards the national movement led by the upper-caste Hindus. Ranjit

Singh or Shivaji were far from being national heroes—to the poor, to the peasants they were as aggressive, as autocratic as the Muslim rulers were. The entire myth of a Golden Age in ancient India is the result of the communal bias. The myth is being broken only very recently by historians like Romila Thapar. Indeed Bipan Chandra touches the heart of the problem when he says that communalism enables the historians to feel nationalism without opposing imperialism. It enabled them to combine personal safety with nationalist sentiments. During the period of intense national struggle most of the historians, employed in government-controlled institutions, were unable to side actively with it. Yet most of them could not side with the rulers. The chief way out was vicarious or backdoor or false nationalism which took the form of communalism. Hence they could not criticise British rule but praised the Indian (Hindu) rulers of the 18th and 19th centuries. But what Bipan Chandra fails to point out is that all these attitudes were the result of the economic-political atmosphere of the period. Was Gandhi really an anti-imperialist in the sense Lenin or Mao or Ho Chi Minh was? Though anti-communal Gandhi was silent about the caste-system and never said that a radical transformation of the social system was necessary to weed out communalism.

After independence communalism did not decrease; on the contrary it has become blatant in its original form and also in other forms like provincialism. At present there is a trend towards regional studies in the writing of Indian history. If they are not written in true perspective, they may help the trend of communalism, i.e. provincialism. Regional studies may throw important light on the unevenness of India, special features of a region—but this must be done under the backdrop of an India-consciousness. The same thing is true of studies of particular communities and particular castes.

Tarun Opera's Lenin

G. DASGUPTA

JOURNALISTIC protocol does not permit this critic to give vent to his feelings while sitting through the production of Tarun Opera's *Lenin* at Mahajati Sadan the other day—three and a half hours without provision for a single intermission. Presumably this was so because the production was termed a 'Jatra'. Here one is on dangerous grounds and the basic, underlying roots of this age-old form are brought into question. The entire effect was ridiculous—the usual stilted and stylised speech, spasmodic convulsions, absence of props and mis-en-scenes typical of a jatra being presented on a conventional theatrical stage.

Doing away with the commentator (the unifying element) as in the traditional jatra, it was formally necessary to introduce compactness in the production but unfortunately this was singularly lacking. One got the impression throughout that the incidents taking place were not born out of dramatic necessity but were used to illustrate maxims from the works of Lenin. Not sure as to whether the play should deal more with Lenin, or with Kerensky, or with the revolutionary masses of Russia, the organisers were at a loss to deal with each. At this stage, a comparison with LTG's *Call of Lenin* should help, though neither of the two plays are 'pure' biographical sketches of Lenin. In the LTG production, Lenin was absorbed in the revolutionary upsurge of the times, and we were presented not with Lenin, the demi-god, but with a Russian and a genuine revolutionary. In his relation to the masses, we saw a man willing to hear and learn from them and at once a leader too but definitely not a public-school teacher as he appeared to me at Mahajati Sadan. Shanti Gopal did at times try to redeem the good that was left in his role of Lenin, but it was all lost in the totality of the presentation, the fault lying more with the playwright than with

the director. Moments such as Lenin's reminiscences of the days spent by the Volga, and his oratorical brilliance, were well executed, at times attaining brilliant proportions.

During the performance, one had grave doubts as to whether Tarun Opera was committed to progressive art. The ending with the customary "Internationale" served to arouse suspicions in this respect. Assuming their commitment to the Russian Revolution it was strange and suspicious to find Lenin portrayed as a liberal together with the entire Bolshevik party. The audience witnessed ruthless torture and the killing of revolutionaries by the Kerensky government, but owing to some divine intervention, pity reigned supreme when members of the Cadets and the Mensheviks were thrust into a tight corner by the Bolsheviks. This is historical falsification and serves the purpose of the bourgeois-liberals more than it does the cause of the proletariat and the communist.

The introductory music was the first attempt I had come across to compose pieces that go to create a revolutionary situation or mood with the help of Indian instruments. Though the attempt was not much of a success, it was a bold step and one that should further be developed. Irrelevant pieces of music were there in plenty, neither serving nor establishing any point. Costumes befitting regions surrounding the Equator somehow found their way into Russia in the month of October! And talking of acting and the rest, the roles were mis-cast, or how else could one account for the tender, unimpressive Stalin and that "iron-man"—Kerensky, forgetting entirely that Kerensky was also a politician and not merely a man in charge of the Army. Shanti Gopal was the only one who could somehow go deep into the role of Lenin in face of uncooperative dialogue, cast and presentation problems. Thotsky looked the man, and Stepan Leonizov gave a creditable performance. The revolutionary peasants looked ridiculous with guns and armour; what none of them pos-

sessed was revolutionary zeal. The girls, as a member of the audience said, missed their train to the Bombay studios!

In all a crude performance with hardly any scope of improvement in its present form.

Letters

Jadavpur

Though Mr B. Bose, in his "In and Around Jadavpur" (May 16), wants us to believe that Chavan's police and para-military forces have been deployed in the Jadavpur-Santoshpur-Haltu areas solely to protect the CP(M) offices, activists and sympathisers, the picture is really different. On the morning of May 10, the joint Secretary of the Jadavpur University Employees Union, a CP(M) sympathiser, was beaten up by CP(ML) activists in Santoshpur and was ordered to leave the locality within a fortnight. No police came to protect him. Some other leaders of that union and CP(M) supporters who live in the Santoshpur area are playing hide and seek with the young revolutionaries only to avoid being annihilated by them. Neither the CRP and EFR are on the scene, nor has their help been sought so far. On the other hand, two local CP(ML) leaders and other activists, none of whom are desirable elements, are moving around freely.

One would have been happier if the CP(ML) ranks had come close to those of the CP(M). But this will not happen so long as the CP(ML) cadres go on beheading their potential allies. Revolution in the city is being undone. Only some Mao-quoting Inu Mitras are cropping up.

BUDDHADEV SENGUPTA
Calcutta

India And China

In your editorial comment (May 2) you have rightly hailed the spectacular Chinese achievement of launching a satellite, much larger in size and heavier in weight than the two first satellites of the super powers,

within a space of 20 years after independence. Now take a look at our industrial research laboratories with their imposing buildings, air-conditioned offices, costly apparatus bought with foreign money, borrowed technical know-how, highly paid directors and scientists, cosy bungalows tucked away in neat colonies far away from the madding crowd. No research worth the name has yet been done in fundamental science, no technical problem of industrial value has been analysed. Each money and sometimes of politics and intrigue of the meanest kind. Each research centre is a private domain of the individual director. If that is the picture of the research centres, the picture of our State owned industries or for that matter of the private sector are no less gloomy. Our utter and abject dependance in the field of conventional industries on foreign know-how, apart from the finer things like nuclear and space research programmes, is at the root of our continued backwardness. That the over-eagerness of the super powers to provide us with technical know-how and help is motivated by the desire to keep us dependent on them and to dump their age-old machinery and formulae on us, thereby restricting our development, with their consequent monopoly on the world market cannot be denied.

SUDHIR KUMAR CHATTERJEE
Durgapur

In 1960, when Russia sent Yuri Gagarin into outer space, the Chinese described the feat as an instance of space-race mongering to impress world public opinion. Were not there many problems on earth which should have claimed our energy and resources? But as the Chinese launched their first satellite into orbit, they described the feat as a symbol of advancement in space science and rocketry. One wonders whether the Chinese have no more problems on earth to solve, though only recently they made the biggest wheat purchase contract with Canadian firms.

PRABIR K. MUKHERJEE
Calcutta

Cowdung And Slogans

In the Calcutta Diary of *The Statesman*, the story was told of an old woman who made her living by making cowdung cakes on a wall. Being illiterate she used to wipe out the slogans but one day the revolutionary slogan-writers asked her not to spoil their writings. They told her that they used the wall for a greater cause so that the poor like her would not starve. When the old woman asked them where she could find another wall the revolutionaries told her that finding another wall was her business, lighted expensive cigarettes and left the place.

While fabricating the story the writer forgot that a wall spotted with the stain of drying cowdung cannot be used for slogan writing.

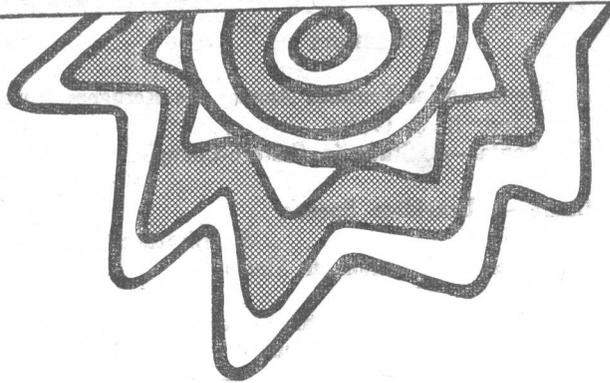
GAUTAM KUMAR MITRA
Uttarpara, Hooghly

What Next ?

The CPI(M), notwithstanding its loss of "power", still commands a "very large following" both in Kerala and West Bengal. I ask myself if this "very large following" should allow itself to be dragged to police stations and beaten to pulp, hauled up before courts and condemned for crimes it has no knowledge of? Should the followers suffer silently the savage repression in the hope that their champions would seize "power" again in their next parliamentary bout and then bring them permanent peace and prosperity?

I, for one, should think that, after being kicked around for years, I have earned the right to say "to hell with the leadership" (to heaven if it be their choice) and blast the whole damned set-up with its rotten foundations as the peasant masses of Telengana did during 1946-51. The promised new form of revolution applicable to the Indian situation which the leadership is endeavouring to cook up in the test tube of 'parliamentary - cum - extra - parliamentary path' would come a little too late to suit me or the "very large following".

A. D.
Calcutta

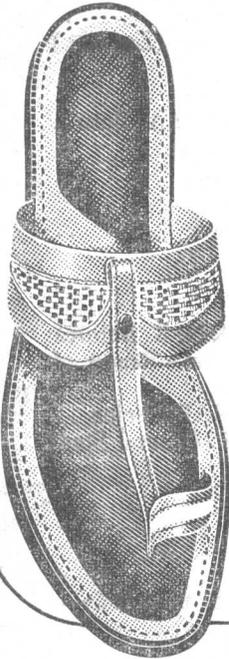


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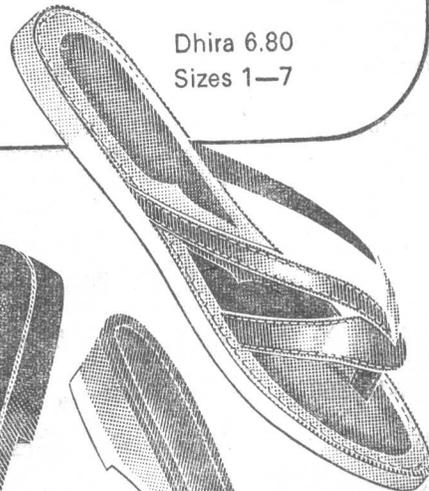
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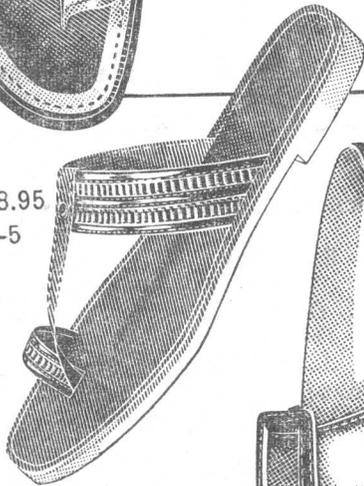
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