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ARMS TO PAKISTAN

THE U.S. decision to resume arms supply to Pakistan has caused great concern in India and, it is said, might affect the process of easing tension on the subcontinent. India believes that this process was set in motion by the 1971 demonstration of her incomparable superiority in military power over her intransigent neighbour. Any attempt, therefore, on Pakistan's part to restore her defence capability and redress the balance, if ever so slightly, must be interpreted by all patriots as a threat to the maintenance of this superiority which is the only prerequisite of peace in this area. Nothing should be done to impair her deterrent striking power, for remedying Pakistan's present weakness is likely to revive her old bellicosity. Peace, it seems, depends on India's capacity to hold her puny neighbour perpetually at bay.

If Islamabad fails to see India's grand manoeuvre in the secession of her eastern province as a contribution to this peace-making process, it may be accused of still clinging to older notions of national sovereignty. But is it sheer perversity to try to preserve what territorial integrity Pakistan still possesses? Pakistan's own ordnance capability is very limited and it seems natural that she should buy some armoured personnel carriers and military spare parts from abroad. Granted that India's power is a power for peace, Pakistan may still have a good deal else to defend herself against.

India's newly assumed role as a liberator of oppressed nationalities cannot but provoke Pakistan to reinforce her own capacity to deal with internal forces of subversion. India is, therefore, caught in a vicious muddle of her own making. Her own defence needs must perforce be enormous because of her size and belief in the constant threat of hostilities from the north and west. She has developed her domestic capability, made liberal military purchases from abroad and concluded what amounts to a mutual defence treaty with the Soviet Union. All these moves must engender corresponding misgivings in others and provoke counter-measures, also regarded as a deterrent. Thus, if Pakistan goes on arming herself and making mutual defence pacts, her motive cannot be exclusively the mischievous one of embarrassing India's development efforts by forcing her to divert her precious resources to military expenditure.

Nor would India's professed anxiety to keep the subcontinent free

from big power interference bear much scrutiny. The enhanced role that the Soviet Union has been allowed to play in her affairs since the conclusion of the Indo-Soviet treaty has only ensured increased U.S. involvement. Its resumption of arms deliveries to Pakistan may shock India but must be regarded as all in the day's work. So long as India projects herself as a big Asian power with her peculiar notion of non-interference in others' affairs, her weaker neighbours cannot help

feeling insecure and running into the arms of one or other of the world powers. In this, too, India has led the way. By insisting on building up her own strength and frowning on Pakistan's attempt to do likewise she may be leaving her no alternative at all. However, all the present noise will pass soon. Mr Nixon has also released some aid to India, and his spokesmen have stated that on this subcontinent the USA and the USSR have "a parallelism".

so socialistic, everybody will be requested to keep patience and give them a chance. As the West Bengal Approach paper ends with the line, "Power will be available in all villages before 1983-84". The Indira gang may go on promising for another decade before the bluff is called.

Gimmicks Not For Ever

What the Centre can do, the States apparently can do better. Thus while the Centre has been content with using the power of the printing press to meet its inevitable budgetary shortfalls leading to inevitable price rises, the State governments with a few conspicuous exceptions prefer to leave their deficits to be taken care of by New Delhi. This is a rather peculiar frame of federal finance. But it would be idle to expect anything more rational so long as the bosses of the provincial satrapies continue to wield enough power and influence to make or mar the career of a Central Minister. It is a kind of quid pro quo: against the political support from the States, the Centre must extend to them financial backing to the full even if it requires going against all the canons of public finance. This tendency to pass on the buck to New Delhi has by this time become a part of the rules of the game. But if this year the State budgets have shown markedly more enthusiasm for it, the reason has to be found in the fact that the sixth Finance Commission is scheduled to submit a report by the year-end. The States are thus vying with each other in trying to impress on the commission their relative degree of financial helplessness. State after State have accordingly refrained from making any serious effort to raise resources, for they know that however much the Centre may try to impose overdraft ceilings it cannot but come forward to help them when their finances really go awry. It is time that the Congress tried to set a

Approaching It Spiritually

The State Planning Board of the Government of West Bengal has published its Approach to the Fifth Five-Year Plan. For (the time being, we shall quote from it one single sentence which seems quite capable of conveying to the inquisitive reader's lit whole spirit (and nothing but spirit):

"This document is concerned with presenting the needs of the State along with its financial implications without any reference as to whether the necessary resources may be readily available or not."

After this, it will be out of place to discuss the feasibility of the Approach. We only wonder why the planners targeted a minimum per capita income of Rs 480 at 1970-71 prices for the lowest income bracket by 1988-89. Why not Rs 4800 or Rs 48,000, or Rs 480,000, since the availability of the resources is no factor?

Since the Approach is so spiritual, let us look back at what we have covered so far. In its foreword, the Board has admitted a few things. These are:

(i) Massive poverty—against the all-India average of 40 per cent people the poverty line (Rs 20 per month at 1960-61 prices) the West Bengal figure is 70.

(ii) The number of unemployed people: 2.8 million, excluding the under-employed (of them 2 lakhs are

educated and 80,000 are graduates).

(iii) A miserable rate of village electrification: 10 per cent of the total number of villages.

(iv) A tremendous industrial recession since 1965 and lack of industrial revival.

(v) Low productivity of food, averaging 1.2 crops a year.

This strikingly bland admission of the terrible state of affairs is not the peculiarity of the West Bengal planners or bureaucrats alone. The politicians of the State as well as Congressmen in the rest of the country speak in the same vein, as if they were not in the slightest way responsible for the situation. It seems that Mrs Indira Gandhi's Congress is an altogether different entity from the previous one and it speaks of the previous Congress as the previous Congress used to speak of the British Raj. This is a remarkable ploy, reaping benefits from the use of the name 'Congress' when it suits but disowning the consequences of its activities when it does not. It is to be expected therefore that the economists on the payroll of the present Congress Government would be as ruthless if not more in the use of language and figures in describing the horrible economic situation obtained in the pre-Indira era, for which the Indira entourage will not accept responsibility. Since the Indira endeavours are so young and

better example before the country by making its party governments in most of the States behave more responsibly.

To all this rather familiar pattern Tamil Nadu has now added a new dimension. Its decision to take over the management of Madras Aluminium Company without the concurrence of the Central Government has all the elements in it to embarrass New Delhi. The main tussle will be constitutional—can a State Government exercise such powers? If

no, Tamil Nadu can always recall that New Delhi not so long ago had opined that Uttar Pradesh had withdrawn its powers to nationalise its sugar mills. It is a piquant problem, the more so as a leading international company is a collaborator in Malco. But the Centre has only itself to blame for its predicament. The takeover game has fired back, and it is time we realised that gimmicks are not for ever. The Indian economy deserves something better.

The Press In Sri Lanka

Despite strong opposition by all sections of the public Sri Lanka's Press Council Bill has been passed by the National State Assembly (Parliament). By adopting this press gag Bill, described by various newspapers in Sri Lanka as "the most obnoxious piece of legislation ever to be adopted by a country that claims to be democratic", Mrs Bandaranaike's coalition Government has directly encroached upon the freedom of the press as well as the people's right to freedom of speech and expression. The main objective of the Bill is to stop publication of news about government misdeeds. It not only undermines the very bedrock of what is called democracy, namely, the freedom of the press, it also strikes at the very root of journalistic ethics. A clause in the Bill compels newspapermen to divulge their sources of information to the Press Council if the latter so desires.

The Bill was first introduced in Sri Lanka's Parliament last November. The entire press and organs of public opinion were opposed to it. They were helpless in the face of the vast majority of Mrs Bandaranaike's coalition—115 in a House of 157. However, eight petitions against the Bill were filed in Sri Lanka's Constitution Court. According to the Constitution, the second reading of any controversial legislation can only go through in Parliament after a

verdict from the Constitution Court which is said to have been constituted to safeguard democratic values enshrined in the Constitution. In case the Court gives its verdict against the proposed legislation, Parliament is still empowered to pass it but by a two-thirds majority. In the case of the Press Bill, the ruling coalition Government of Sri Lanka was against referring it to the Constitution Court as it was confident of mustering a two-thirds majority. The Speaker of Sri Lanka's Parliament, however, did not agree with the Treasury benches and made a reference to the Constitution Court. For this he was criticised by the men in the Government. The Constitution Court gave its verdict early this month. It said that there was nothing inconsistent in the provisions of the Press Bill with the Constitution. The Court promised to give its reasons for the judgment at a later date. Within hours of the judgment—and without waiting for the reasons for the judgment—the Government rushed the Bill through Parliament and passed it by a majority of 112 against nil. This was possible because the entire opposition had staged a walk-out.

After careful analysis of the clauses in the Bill one cannot but support the view expressed by the *Mirror*, one of the largest circulating dailies of Sri Lanka. It says, "While the

Bill seeks to gag the press, it aims through such gagging to pillage the cherished liberties of the people. Once they stifle the voice of the press, they will embark on a rampage of dictatorship as never experienced by the people of Sri Lanka before." The press in Sri Lanka had fought a valiant battle against the Bill which seeks to manage the entire press through a government appointed five-member Press Council acting as the police to make the Press subservient to the government.

According to Section 16 of the Bill, (1) No person shall publish or cause to be published, in any newspaper, any matter which purports to be the proceedings or any part thereof, of meetings of the Cabinet or the Cabinet Ministers, (2) No person shall publish or cause to be published in any newspaper (a) any matter which purports to be the contents or any part of the contents of any document sent by or to all or any of the Ministers to or by the Secretary to the Cabinet of Ministers, (b) any matter which purports to be a decision of the Cabinet of Ministers unless it has been approved for publication by the Secretary to the Cabinet Ministers. The objective is clear. From now on the Bandaranaike Government will not tolerate even the weakest words of criticism against its failures and misdeeds.

Inside Jails

A correspondent writes:

Even these days when Naxalite activity has all but ceased, the internal administration of our democratic prisons continues to be alarming. Berhampur Jail has been notorious for its sadistic cruelty. Even in Presidency Jail, the most "civilised" of all the jails, a group of political prisoners were severely beaten up a few days ago. But the most consistently dark reports have been coming of late from Dum Dum Central Jail. In all the jails most of the

prisoners have been put in the lowest category and the food they are served is in most cases fit for only animals. The midday meal is served to many prisoners so late in the day that it often dispenses with the need of serving the evening meal altogether. What rule, what law, what principle permits this kind of cold devilry?

Then, there is a clear conspiracy afoot to deny proper treatment facilities to revolutionary-minded prisoners. Many of the doctors are sympathetic, but they are bound by rigid instructions not to prescribe anything more than casual tinkering drugs, though the more humane and brave of the doctors do occasionally cross these cruel limits. Prisoners suffering from serious or chronic ailments can be properly treated if they are put in hospital, and that is precisely why they are not put in hospital in spite of the doctors' repeated recommendations. Is there any fundamental difference between this policy and the policy of slow poisoning revolutionary prisoners adopted by the supposedly hated British Government whom the present national government has replaced?

On top of this there is the beautiful democratic custom of pouncing on the starved, ailing and helpless prisoners with lathis and clubs and iron rods. Not satisfied with keeping these prisoners half-starved and medically unattended, the authorities resort to the policy of keeping them in a state of constant tension, so that they may gradually lose their morale and their capacity for clear thought. Frequent excuses are found to set the alarm bell ringing—a signal for the warders and the outer guards to rush in and start thrashing the prisoners mercilessly and indiscriminately. Quite often the jail authorities use their spiritual kindred, the thieves, swindlers and ruffians serving their terms there, to beat up the political detenus.

How long will this jungle law go on operating? Will the political prisoners go on being

fed on animal diet? Will they be kept half-starved as they are now? Will this conspiracy to turn them into invalids by denying them proper medical facilities go on? Will this devilish plot to unhinge their minds by means of continual torture and unbroken nervous tension continue as before? Will all this continue or will it end—this we want to know from our great, national democratic, anti-imperialist government. We should also like to ask the young men and women of the Chhatra Parishad and the Youth Congress whether they approve of these atrocities and, if they don't, what their frank opinion on the matter is.

A number of freedom fighters of British days read out a statement at the third conference of Indian Revolutionaries held at Kanpur from February 25 to 27 in which they referred to the case of Ananta Singh, a leader of the Chittagong armoury raid of 1930. He is facing a trial before a Special Tribunal in Calcutta on charges of dacoities and criminal conspiracy. Some 54 persons were arrested in Ruam forest, in the hills of Jadugoda, in Bihar; 17 persons from among those arrested in Bihar were brought to be tried with Ananta Singh in the court of the Fourth Tribunal, Alipore (Calcutta), West Bengal, where 17 others were already being prosecuted. The prosecution case is that they belonged to a secret party—the Revolutionary Council of Communists, India; that a section of the RCCI planned to go to the villages to organise peasant masses; that they planned an armed upsurge in Calcutta with 25 armoured cars, 300 sten-guns by 5000 natural leaders along with 30,000 pickets; that they committed 4 dacoities in the banks in broad daylight in Calcutta to procure arms and ammunition; and that they had an elaborate plan to seize one crore of rupees from the State Bank of India, Durgapur Branch, West Bengal.

"At this stage, however," the statement says, "we want to make it

thoroughly clear that we have no concern about the political views, programme, or ideal of Ananta Singh, and those of the 54 others who have been arrested in Bihar. ... But the laws of the land consider one as innocent so long as one's guilt is not proved and one is not convicted. ... In spite of these laws, Ananta Singh though seriously ailing with affected heart, at the age of 70, has been repeatedly denied bail and is languishing in jail for more than three years. He was also refused bail to contest the 1972 general election in West Bengal."

The statement proposed that a central committee be formed with proper corresponding regional committees in various States to look after the comfort, medical relief and necessary jail facilities to be accorded to the political prisoners in jail, either living as convicts, under trial or without trial, irrespective of their political ideals and party affiliations.

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Vande Mataram, Violence And All That

M. J. A.

ONE surely isn't wrong in supposing that it was the BPCC president Rajni Patel's ambition to be to Bombay what Mrs Indira Gandhi is to India. But the city of Bombay thwarted Mr Patel. If Mr Patel's march to the tempting corridors of Central power has gone a little out of step, he does not have too many other people to blame.

The elections were a clear victory for the avowedly reactionary parties. But by far the most sensational results were returned by the Muslim League and the Jana Sangh. The League fielded 24 candidates out of which 16 were elected. In addition, one independent member won with the League's backing. The Sangh won 15 seats. The Shiv Sena 30.

The elections were fought on unabashedly communal issues. The "Vande Mataram" affair (that is, the order making it compulsory for children to sing this song every day) snowballed into an election avalanche which among other things swamped Congress aspirations. The Muslim position on the "Vande Mataram" question was that singing it was anti-Islamic since it included the idea of bowing to the motherland, and Islam prohibited the worship of any concept other than Allah. Patriotism shoved down the throat met, as it were, its Waterloo on the soggy grounds of communalism.

The Muslims of Bombay have proved, if it needed to be verified, that Indian Muslims are as obdurate and insensitive to social change as ever. The other factor which helped place all the Muslim votes in the League basket was the Personal Law issue. A few months ago Bombay had been the venue of a highly secretive session of the Jammāt-e-Islami which more or less drew up the strategy to exploit the Muslim vote on

sensitive communal issues. The "Vande Mataram" affair came as an unexpected bonus.

The best reason for the existence of one communal party is of course another communal party. The success of the Jana Sangh and the Shiv Sena is surely the most appropriate counterpoint to the League's victory. Obduracy generally reinforces obduracy. Whatever the manifesto might have said, the Jana Sangh increased its seats from six to 15 largely because of the "Vande Mataram" case. The anti-Muslim bias of the Shiv Sena helped it substantially. The two parties harped on their patriotism and displayed it in conspicuous proximity to the Muslim's refusal to sing "Vande Mataram". Perhaps the saddest aspect of this poll is the fact that the biggest majorities were won by candidates of the League, Sangh and the Sena. And the percentage of polling was generally higher in the constituencies in which the reactionary parties triumphed.

Caught somewhere in the middle, trying to obviate the communal problem by ignoring it, unsure of the line which would be both expedient and commensurate with its national position, the Congress party ended up neither here nor there. With 45 seats it can only function as the major opposition party to whichever front comes to power. A Congress alliance with the League, Sangh or Sena is inconceivable if only for the damage it might cause to its national image. In practice of course the Congress has at some time or the other taken the help of both the League and the Sena, but a political alliance can safely be ruled out, at the moment.

The Congress was also suffering from its unenviable position as the

party which had allowed prices to rocket and life to become increasingly unlivable. The old rivalry between the BPCC and the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee did it no good either. In some constituencies, partymen with their loyalties to the MPCC quite openly canvassed to defeat Congress candidates—and Rajni Patel.

And Mr Patel too is no longer the draw he once was when he addressed meetings beside Dange on the communist platform. His past (he was a major trade union leader) did not help him as much as he expected. But then this was because he had perhaps rejected his past by joining the Congress led by Mrs Gandhi. Indira Gandhi is hardly the last word in leftism; indeed, one is beginning to wonder if she is the first word.

The Leftists

It seems incredible, in the light of the poor showing of the leftists, that Bombay was the birthplace of the Indian communist movement. Once in undisputed control of the unions, and confident of a good section of the working class vote, the leftist parties seem unable to make any headway now. Logically the anti-Congress vote should be going to the flag-bearers of the poor, and yet it is the rightists who are increasing their mandates.

The Socialist Party, still inspired by the charismatic George Fernandes, managed to collect only eight seats after fielding 54 candidates. Five of the eight won from the Assembly constituency which voted Mrs Mrinal Gore in 1972 when everyone else was voting for Mrs Gandhi's party. Which means that the Socialists have been unable to expand their base. Three CPI members will sit in the new Corporation from the 20 who contested. The CPM, never a very powerful force in the city, has one representative. No other party with any leftist ideals won anything. As indecision has followed betrayal, the leftists have inevitably lost the goodwill which they had built up in the

fifties. The electorate has given its verdict once again: it will not accept an impotent leadership.

Conversely, the rightists have propounded their causes with energy, vigour and conviction. True, their manifestos are documents of prejudice, and their approach is a mixture of lies and exaggeration; true, they appeal to the baser instincts, exploit the prejudices which we all occasionally succumb to. But the rewards are the rewards of diligence. If the leftists could not educate the people against communalism and chauvinism, surely they have no one else to reproach.

The victory of the Jana Sangh, Muslim League and the Shiv Sena seems to have put Bombay on a dangerous collision course. The main thing of course is the communal tension it could generate. With Mr Banatwala, leader of the Muslim League, proclaiming that only his party has the right to speak for Muslims, and Mr Bal Thackeray naturally concerned about just Marathi Hindus (with help obviously from the Jana Sangh) are we going to witness a period of unbridled chauvinism in the city?

Clashes

The first signs of catastrophe were visible in the post-poll celebrations. At Kamathipura, Jana Sangh and Muslim League supporters clashed. At Parel the Shiv Sena was involved with Muslims. Looting and arson followed. Five chawls were set on fire in Kamathipura—a predominantly Muslim area—on Sunday night, two days after the elections. The police opened fire at various places. Officially, two people have

been killed and 60 injured in the communal riots; doubtless, the toll is much higher.

One fears that this is the unhappy shape of things to come. As Bombay has voted for communal politics, Bombay must bear the consequences. Destructive violence seems to be the immediate destiny of the city.

Another significant straw in the wind was the recent Shiv Sainik demonstration in front of Ravindra Natya Mandir, where Tendulkar's controversial play *Sakharam Binder* was being shown. The demonstrators, led by Mr Manohar Joshi, a Shiv Sainik MLC, succeeded in disrupting and ending the performance. This was unabashed chauvinism; more so after the High Court had explicitly decreed that the play was correct enough to be shown publicly. The Shiv Sainiks, however, bursting with their middle-class morality, stopped the play because they felt the play contained obscene parts. Not surprisingly, the first target of fascists is art. Can Bombay afford to talk of cultural and artistic freedom any more? These are the gentlemen who proclaim their "nationalism" from the doorstep.

With the Congress having decided to act as a "responsible opposition", a Shiv Sena-Jana Sangh-Socialist Party front to govern the city seems likely. The anti-Congress umbrella in our country is not particular about ideology. With this coalition likely to have only a small majority, the support of the four Congress (O) corporators will be important. According to one plan announced by Mr Bal Thackeray, the Shiv Sena will keep the mayoralty for two of the five years before the next elections, the Jana Sangh and the Socialists would get the post for a year each, and one year would be reserved for an independent.

It would be marvellously apposite, however, if somehow the Shiv Sena, the Jana Sangh and the Muslim League joined hands. Together they would have a stable majority too.

The Bombay Debacle

BY A CONGRESSMAN

THE 9th March defeat in the civil elections of Bombay, which saw the Congress strength reduced from 61 to 45 in the Corporation, and which saw the loss of more than two-fifths of the votes garnered by the party in the 1972 Assembly poll, cannot be interpreted as a swing from the Congress for the simple reason that the 'Congress' under Rajni Patel is hardly the party one finds in (say) the villages of Maharashtra or Bihar or even in the airconditioned ministerial cocoons of Delhi. After Rajni Patel took over the BPC Presidentship a year back, he practically turned his back on the Congress organisation and built up an entirely fresh apparatus in his own image (and under his firm control!). The manner of functioning of this apparatus, the men it attracted, the atmosphere it created, were all radically different from that amorphous mass of principles that is Congress tradition.

First the men. When Rajni Patel took over, he inherited a sprawling party machine well-staffed with people who had put in long stints of political work. During the course of this work (in true Congress tradition!) they had each wheeled, dealed and dined thousands of voters. A Congressman's home was open house. You could go there in the early hours of the day or in the evenings, taking a chance that the *adhyaksha* was home. If you were early, you could find a seat. Otherwise you just joined the throng that milled around in the anteroom. Soon, the Congressman would pat the physically closes, familiarly on the back, and unself-consciously ask what he, the servant of the people, could do for his masters.

For those that took him at his word, he had ready solutions. He was ever willing to dictate letters to all and sundry, ranging from Ministers to clerks, to provide employment to my dear friend Ganpat Shivram

For Frontier contact

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More, who is known personally to me' (since two minutes ago). Ganpat Shivram More would pocket the treasured note, which would often be accompanied by a request to see 'my good friend X' working in the concern More wanted to join. X may be the Head Clerk, he may be the Chairman. But our Congress *adhya-ksha* would have vaguely remembered seeing him at some function, and being introduced to him as being from Firm A; so off went the invitation to 'contact my dear friend X of Firm A'.

The number of Ganpat Shivram Mores our hero entertained daily would have to be counted in the tens and hundreds. After all, our hero had but to waste a few minutes and a sheet of paper (on which sometimes the standard request was cyclo-styled, complete with signature.). The Mores went and were happy, that scrap of paper showed that the powers-that-be *cared*, that More was considered good enough to be called a friend. If he got the job (and often even when he didn't), More would be a Congress sympathiser for a very long stretch. It did not matter what long-haired intellectuals wrote in the *Times of India* about the rampant corruption indulged in by the hero. It did not matter of the *Economic and Political Weekly* routinely pointed out how mismanaged our hero's government was. He was More's friend. And a friend needed to be defended. And, were the million-to-ten probability that More would meet his 'friend' again to be realised, More could be sure that our hero, after an initial blink at this effusive chap rushing up to him, would clasp his shoulder delightedly, in a manner that suggested in a subtle way how lonely our hero was that More had not met him for so long.

After disposing of the Mores, our hero would be driven to his party office, to preside over a meeting on election strategy. His entrance (three hours late) would be the trigger for sheer pandemonium. There would be shouts, accusations, insults.

On the infrequent occasions when our hero would daintily intervene, he too would be shouted at. Realising discretion to be much the better part of valour, he would put on his sunglasses and go to sleep, the irregular buzz of sound soothing his nerves.

Suddenly, with a start, he would regain full consciousness. It was 12-o'clock, and he had to meet the General Secretary at 11-30! He would clear his throat. No response. Thump his desk. Ah, the two hours of *hulla-gella* have had impact! The tigers quieten down, exhausted.

'My very good friends', he would begin, and then (for good measure!) 'my loving comrades, I am happy to have heard you here expressing your frank views about our policy. I am happy to say that all your suggestions are being accepted. And here they are'. And thus saying, he would read out the instructions he had received from AICC headquarters! Unless there was a strenuous outcry against a particular one, the list used to pass through intact, as the 'voice' of the district workers, who went away from the orgy refreshed. They had their say; their views (which were only very incidentally shared by a few million others) were being accepted by the DCC chief. Now back to work!

It was this anarchy, this elan, that gave the Congress so many lakhs of dedicated workers. They worked not for such esoteric things as the 'advancement of socialism' or 'prevention of red domination' so fiercely debated in the pages of thinly-read journals. They worked because Congress was an organisation in which they felt a whiff of home, its leaders were in some miraculous way close in spirit to its meanest followers. And, through the unceasing wooing of the Ganpat Shivram Mores by the *adhyakshas*, the party had a gigantic mass base.

Ethos

This was the Congress ethos, the tradition. It was not an ethos in which the emotional cripples who struggle under the label of 'intel-

tual honesty' (i.e. Naxalism on paper and State Express cigarettes and Dunlopillo thereafter) would have fitted in well. For there were no grand conceptions, no lofty principles that needed to be learnt by rote. This was anathema to the 'scientific mind'. As for mass contact, to these "intellectuals" the proletariat looked fine in cold print, one could cry reading about how they were exploited. But *physically* going near them was another matter. We leaders, we intellectuals, cannot do this, let the party *worker* do it.

Rajni Patel with his 'scientific' mind, his clear theoretical concepts, his love for the white-collar as the root of civilisation, could not take in this atmosphere. So he simply dispelled it and replaced it with another. Let us give him credit for this. In brief months, he changed the face of the organization by a wholesale induction of new faces, a purge of old elements, and the adoption of new ways of organisation.

Ganpat's hero was replaced by a prosperous lawyer in pince-nez. A lawyer who knew his exalted place as the living spirit of the Ruling Party, and who knew other people's place in it, particularly people such as Ganpat Shivram More, who was given short shrift ('Am I an employment exchange? Get out!'). As for the hapless party workers, no more the *hulla-gullas* of yesterday. Workers, like kindergarten pupils, were to be seen and not heard. As for the orders, no nonsense about 'democracy' here. That would be fatal in a party organisation. We must have discipline, otherwise how will we be able to operate the vote-machine properly?

The present writer has had the depressing experience of witnessing many of these Rajni-BPCC meetings, particularly during election time. In almost all, a Congressman of hardly a few years standing, would lecture to a group of cowed workers, and slap down the occasional one who dared to raise his voice. This process removed much of the elan from the 'Congress'. Far better to join the

older dissidents, whose ways were familiar and less damaging to 'face'. This is what many veteran workers did, and the fresh, mod youths who were the replacement simply did not perform. If you were to look at the youth cadres, the prevalence of mod dresses, giggles and plenty of fun (i.e. romance) among the 'dedicated young political workers building socialism' would be striking. There was a plethora of issues on which the youth could have raised their voices. But they were too busy wooing the big guns to bother about such unrespectable and unglamorous tasks as mass agitation. Besides, most had cushy jobs or comfortable homes. What would their employers think, or their parents, if they dared to do so declass a deed as fight for the poor? The result: a somnolent apology for a 'youth wing' that would please even Richard Nixon! Not for these gay romeos the streets, not for these juliets the gulleys. It was enough, they felt (and much easier besides) to just fawn on these leaders when they stopped by in Bombay. That way lay Promotion. And Promotion was the key factor in the minds of the *netas* of the Go-Go Youth, as it should be in the mind of any self-respecting executive of a foreign drug firm (which quite a few of them were).

'Closeness to the Leaders'. It was closeness to Rajni Patel or Mengde or the innumerable Toddywallas and Shahs that frequented the PCC that counted among the youth and the junior level chiefs. And in all his forensic wisdom, Rajni Patel decided that THE factor that would make or mar him was closeness to the leaders at Delhi. 'As Indiraji told me...' 'My friend Dhar...' 'I asked Pai...' these were the refrains heard at the party meetings. 'As Indiraji told me', 'as Rajnibhai told me', 'as Mengde told me', 'as Amin told me'. And so this refrain went on down the line, each 'leader' basing his claim to political ascendancy on his closeness to the powers immediately above.

This faith in the 'Push From The Top' as the factor determining success naturally led to the logical corollary

of discounting the importance of those below. It led to the arrogant attitude towards the lesser mortals, the party workers and ordinary citizens of the city. These little problems, price rise, poisoned milk, bad milk. Absurd to bother about such piffles. What we should flash are the glittering pieces of legislation we have designed, the even more glittering buildings and centres we are going to construct, the crores of 'relief' (of politicians?) funds collected and whisked away to heaven-knows-which Swiss accounts.

This fondness for show led Rajni Patel to make such tactical errors as inviting a horde of unpopular Maharashtra Ministers to address rallies. If you daily see press reports exposing one facet or the other of official bungling, your heart will turn cold towards the perpetrators of this bungling. And it will be further cooled if the bunglers ask you to vote for a particular candidate, thus turning you away from that candidate for good!

Kiss of Death

The Naik ministry could have been Rajni Patel's greatest campaign asset; if he launched an attack on it, Naik's unpopularity would have been enough to ensure his victory. But the citizens saw Rajni Patel arm-in-arm with Naik and his *daddas*, they saw Patel silent about their travails, they saw his men swaggering about as though Bombay were the property of a private limited company of which they were the shareholders. And they saw the opposition groups—the Shiv Sena and the Jana Sangh and the Socialists—take up their cause, attack Naik and his incompetent, corrupt regime. Naturally, in a fight between what they regarded as the pro-Naik Congress and the anti-Naik opposition, they chose the opposition. It is ironic that Rajni Patel should have been so lacking in foresight as to accept Naik's kiss of death, considering that in the first few months of his reign he gained enormous popularity as an 'anti-Naik' man.

As for the rank communal issues on which the Muslim League cam-

paign (issues that clearly violate our electoral laws, as will be proved if the State Home Minister, Sharad Pawar, has had the good sense to get them taped), on these Rajni Patel's answer was, as usual, silence. Not for him debates on the value of *Vande Mataram*. The thing to do with inconvenient issues was to ignore them. They could be tackled after the elections. But by then, as he has now found out, it would be too late.

The final insult to the Bombay citizenry was the import of a horde of Central and State Ministers to woo the voters. On being asked by one of these worthies, 'do you think our coming here will have any impact?' the present writer's comment was 'No; but you have not come here to win voters. You have come here to show Rajni's neglected cadres how much pull he has in Delhi, to be able to drag all of you here. (At a fee of Rs 700 per head). This will silence any resentment, he hopes, against him and his ways'.

Well, all this is history now, and the Congress is a forgiving party. It may well decide to give Rajni Patel another chance. If so, I have but just one word of warning to give him: let him try to *adjust* to the Congress ethos, not seek to destroy it, for the Congress Party traditions have a nasty way of destroying those who would seek to trample on them.

March 13, 1973

সন্নিধান

বিশেষ কমিউন সংখ্যা

প্রকাশিত হয়েছে

এই সংখ্যায় থাকছে—

- * প্যারী কমিউনের ইতিহাস
- * প্যারী কমিউন ও সর্বহারার আন্তর্জাতিকতা
- * প্রলেতারীয় মূল্যবোধ ও কমিউন
- * প্যারী কমিউনের শিক্ষা ও ভারতবর্ষের

শ্রমিকশ্রেণী

স্টলে খোঁজ করুন।

MARCH 24, 1973

Mrs Gandhi And The USA

M.S.P.

"There is no conflict of interest between India and the United States." Mrs Gandhi in an interview with the Editor of *Forbes* magazine (AIR report, March 4, 1973).

IF ever proof was needed that Mrs Gandhi's speech at the 'One Asia' Assembly was just one of those 'unfortunate' utterances which anyway were never meant to be taken seriously, we have it in the interview to the editor of *Forbes*. What is even more significant than the substance of the interview is the choice of the magazine which was to be the recipient of Mrs Gandhi's World View. The gestures of friendship with the USA have been coming, in embarrassing frequency; not to speak of her progressive friends in the CPI, even the American Government must be feeling slightly embarrassed at these voluble expressions of friendship and loyalty, fawning promises of good behaviour. The message to Nixon, expressing 'shock' at the assassination of the American diplomats in Khartoum, is yet another olive branch (or should one say 'burnt offering'?); Belgium, evidently, has had to do without any such expressions of 'shock'. Mrs Gandhi's sorrow is so nicely selective.

Whatever has happened to the CIA? It was not many months ago that the highest in the land were uttering dire warnings about the machinations of this truly sinister organization, its ramifications in this country, its evil designs. Nowadays, the evil forces are much less specifically identified, and are only vaguely referred to as traitors and anti-national forces; the CIA seems to be nowhere in the picture. But this is not really surprising, for apart from the fact that it is difficult to attribute to the CIA the trouble in Andhra and Assam, for instance (the Ruling Congress is leading the

'movements' in both these regions), the rather tenuous dividing line between the CIA which is undoubtedly a tool of American imperialism in India, and the Congress party would disappear when the truth about the participation of the Congress party in most of the linguistic and regional movements that are taking place in the country is revealed. Many members of the Opposition in Parliament have pointed out (more in envy than in anger, perhaps) that many 'front' organizations of the Congress have been the recipients of CIA funds during all these years. But the links that bind the Congress to the CIA—a tool of American imperialism—are not merely those that tie a recipient to a donor in a mechanical sense; these links are more profound, more fundamental.

Which brings us to *Forbes*, the magazine Mrs Gandhi gave an interview to, in which she made those memorable remarks cited at the beginning of this article. How true those remarks are, from the point of view of Mrs Gandhi! And how properly abject are the promises of good behaviour! The abjectness might not be evident in the language; but there is no mistaking it in the choice of the medium through which the message is sent. *Forbes* is not any American magazine; it is the magazine of American business, of American Big Business. There used to be a series of advertisements for *Forbes* in leading American newspapers (for aught I know, these advertisements are still continuing) in which *Forbes* used to describe itself charmingly (and accurately) as 'a capitalist tool', 'a capitalist pig' etc. I have with me a copy of one such advertisement, which appeared in *The New York Times* of May 5, 1966. This shows (almost) a full-page photograph of a starving male Indian, his ribs showing, eyes aglow

with hunger and near-madness, lying down, half-naked. The photograph is very vivid; even the most avid American tourist slumming in the East would not want anything more picturesque than this picture. The text of the advertisement consists of a caption, evidently addressed to the dying man; and an elaboration of the caption, addressed (presumably) to the American readers, which is mainly about what *Forbes* is. But why go on? Here is the Caption and Text, under the picture of the starving Indian:

HEY MISTER: WANT TO BUY
A SHINY NEW CAR WITH
WHITE WALLS, AIR-CONDITIONING,
FULL POWER AND

STEREO?

Are you one of those people who thinks foreign countries should get off the dole and pay for what we send them?

India did that. You are now holding the equivalent of two-thirds of the entire currency of India. They have paid it to us for food.

And they are still starving.

As a matter of fact, 2 billions of the world's people are near starvation. They are a very poor market for the things American business would like to sell them. Cars, for instance.

Our government is up nights dealing with the world hunger problem. As *Forbes* says, "In so doing, it will also create tremendous opportunities for business that have the knowhow, the foresight and the capital to end hunger."

How? Don't we end hunger by sending food?

Yes. When necessary. But remember India.

We want these countries to grow their own. Besides, sending them a million dollars in food aid will feed only 70,000 people for a year. But sending a million dollars worth of fertilizers from American industry would help feed 200,000

people for a year. That's the big idea.

Making good markets out of starving nations is such a huge opportunity for American businessmen. Forbes recently did a special report called "Feeding the world's hungry millions: How it will mean billions for U.S. Business." And a few of those 425,000 Forbes subscribers have probably already figured out how they can do well by doing good.

That's what Forbes is for.

FORBES: CAPITALIST TOOL

Very charming; very clever; and very honest too. The whole capitalist ethic is most vividly presented in that little advertisement. How To Do Well By Doing Good. 'Enlightened Self-interest' was the more 'English' way of putting it. It is but appropriate that assurances of good behaviour had to be transmitted to President Nixon through *Forbes* magazine.

once. These fellows have made life so difficult for the whites in the cities that they have all gone to the suburbs. Every crime in this country is committed by blacks. Don't go to Harlem Bronx and these areas. In every city, fortunately the blacks live in separate areas and you can easily avoid them. You must be careful about mugging. I think, we have been making too much of a noise about the whites ill-treating the blacks. You have to live here to see what the whites have done for the blacks. They have given them education and a culture and now even a lot of good jobs go to them. Our boys are finding it difficult to get jobs. It is something like the way the British trained us before they gave us Freedom. Well, we at least had an ancient culture and civilization. These chaps came here with nothing as slaves. Now they want a separate State like Pakistan. Some want to go back to Africa. It would be good riddance if they all go back to Africa. They have no place here, their culture is so much different from ours (sic). Before me, no Indian here likes the blacks. It is all good back home to hold protest rallies and meetings to support the cause of blacks. Here we keep away from them. We have to work with the whites—earn their goodwill. It would't do us any good fraternising with the blacks".

A week later I was dining with an Indian friend in Washington. His wife was complaining they could afford only one car.

"We are definitely better off than we were in India. But sometimes you get upset when you see even niggers having two cars. You must see the Negro women, the way they drive in their Cadillacs wearing mink coats. Can you believe it? We think they are poor. They are not. Most blacks have TVs, cars, refrigerators—they live better than the rich in our country. You must see the clothes they wear."

"Mrs Prakash, you should't say that. We can't generalise all blacks are rich because we see a few driving

Letter From America

The Black Indians And The Blacks

INDERMACHI

"YOU have just arrived in this country, I presume."

"Yah, we arrived last night. How did you know?"

"I can see from the way you chapies are moving around in a group. It is good that you have been advised correctly. New York is a bad city. There are a lot of bad elements around. You should never go alone. Then there are certain areas you should avoid. Don't go by subway after it is dark."

"Where do you come from?"

"I come from Sankaranayanar Koil. It is in down South, you know, Tirunelveli District."

"Thank you for the advice, Sir. I too come from South. I come from Manargudi in Tanjore."

"You are welcome. I came here five years ago to study business administration. Now I have got a good job here and I don't think I'll go home. Once you are here for a few years you really can't think of going back to India. Father wants me to come home and get married. I don't know if I should. You see, in India you are never an adult. Here you suddenly discover you are an adult and that makes a big difference. I really can't believe in superstitions, silly customs, arranged mar-

riages and all that stuff. Here I eat hamburgers. My father would die of apoplexy if he gets to know I eat ground beef."

"Meet my friends. We are all from different parts of the country. We have come here under the Exchange Visitors programme for six months' training in country."

"Lucky guys you all are. Hopefully, you fellows will see a lot of this country. You know, it is a beautiful country. Here people work. Not like our country, where they only talk. Tell me why do we talk so much?"

"You must be liking living here."

"Oh it is a swell country. It is what you call fun country. The Americans are the friendliest people you'll ever meet. They are not stuffy like the British. You know. Of course when I say people, I mean the whites. The whites are very good, friendly and helpful. But keep away from the blacks—that's what the Negroes call themselves now. They say BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL. I don't know when black was ever beautiful. They are a curse on this country. They have spoiled the great American cities. Look at New York now. You can't walk after dark. I believe it was a lovely city

in Cadillacs. What about the nitty-gritty in the ghetto, people who do not get proper education or medical care? They are the majority."

"You are talking about education for the blacks. They are having the best. Now with all this bussing of schools, my daughter can't even go to an all-white school. Here in Washington they are in a majority. We chose to live in Arlington because we thought this would be a white suburb. The bussing has brought black children into our (sic) schools. I am really worried about my daughter."

"In India your daughter would have gone to school with blacks."

"It is not all that simple. I want to love the blacks, understand them and live with them as friends. I am not able to. It is like living with the poor and the untouchables in India. In India I wouldnt like my daughter to go to a school where everyday they dump busloads of children from the slums. We do feel different from them, don't we? I think the whites and we feel the same way with the blacks here. It all boils down to culture, I think. We do belong to a superior culture."

During the last three months most Indians I have met in the USA have told me the same thing about the blacks. Even the young Indian students have not been influenced by the radical blacks or whites. We keep aloof and avoid them. Are we satisfying an atavistic urge to treat untouchables as untouchables now that we can do it with impunity in a "white man's country"? Well this is as much a black man's country as a white man's. The black man made it what it is today. What do the blacks think about us?

For Frontier contact

C. P. CHOWDHERY,
The English Book Shop,
33, Sector 22,
Chandigarh,

MARCH 24, 1973

The blacks think we are more colour conscious than even the whites. "I am told in your country you like fair children. You are not black. You are brown or dark. You don't like us because we are jet black, have thick lips and funny hair. We are ugly, O.K. You haven't cared to understand us. What do you know about our history, our sufferings and our culture? The white man has made you think he gave us our culture. The books you read on American history tell you nothing more about us than that we were slaves and Lincoln emancipated us. This is one of the greatest myths about Lincoln, like Gandhi fighting for the blacks in South Africa. Gandhi never fought for the blacks. He fought to protect the interests of Indian traders. You haven't known of our misery which had little hope of deliverance. Who made us dope peddlars and street-corner muggers? You think we are rich because we have TVs and refrigerators. Damn it, why shouldnt we? Don't compare us with your people back home. You don't belong here. You come here because you can get TV, swanky cars, stereos and live well. You have come here to escape poverty in your country. We have not come here from anywhere. We belong to this goddammed country. This is ours and we will share its wealth as the f... white b... do. We have sweated for him to live well. You exploit the minorities in your own country, don't you? Has any of your leaders ever spoken for us? Yes, Yes 'we shall not interfere in the internal problems of other countries'. Even your loud-mouthed Nehru avoided us when he came here. Oh yes he liked Marian Anderson and Paul Robeson. He was cultured, wasn't he? Yes, you honoured Martin Luther King. He preached non-violence and to you he was a follower of Gandhi. 'You inspired our movement', I like it. You like 'We shall overcome'. The same way Gandhi liked 'Lead kindly light'. You are still British, aren't you? You don't like our accent and can't

understand when we speak. You folks can't understand us. Your masses may, not you educated fellows. You have no identity of your own. You are British, white, brown, cultured, cowardly."

This brief conversation I had with a black cab driver in Washington. As we drove by the Potomac river he asked me, "Do you know Washington was supposed to have thrown a coin across this river? Do you believe it?"

"I don't. It must be a legend."

"No Son, it is not a legend. They say he even cut a cherry tree all by himself."

He paused for a while and said, "Lies. Damned lies. These whites have always been telling us lies."

"Do you have legends in your country about Gandhi?"

"Yes, plenty."

"But your Gandhi always spoke the truth. He didn't tell lies like these whites."

I saw him wearing a button with the slogan 'I am proud I am black'. As I got down I asked him where I could get a button like that. With fire in his eyes and benign contempt, he said,

"Don't worry about this, my son. The place where you are going, they have a shop where they sell lots of nice things—things you can show your children when you go home. I know you have your problems like we have ours."

For Frontier contact

VISALANDHRA
BOOK DEPOT,
Srikakulam,
A. P.

Uganda And The Asians

NARENDRA SINGH

WHEN early in August 1972, President Amin of Uganda gave a call for repatriation of all British Asians within three months, the British led the diatribe against Amin. "Insane" and "megalomaniac" etc. were among the numerous epithets used. The real and imagined plight of the Uganda Asians, as victims of racial persecution, remained for months to come a major theme in the press, on radio and television in Europe. This fitted in the drone of subtle propaganda, constantly pointing to the backwardness of the non-European peoples, in general, and to the Africans in particular—they are crude, primitive and inferior people, in contrasting relief with the superior civilised whites. This is in glaring contrast with the mere expressions of compassionate sorrow or anger shown on the situation in Vietnam, South Africa and Rhodesia, probably in subconscious reaction to the overtly gross non-Christian behaviour of their white compatriots in the USA and Africa. The subtle propaganda and publicity against the blacks and browns, and about their backwardness, through various mass media serves useful purpose: among the local populace within the developed countries, beliefs in the superiority of the Western social system are maintained and gratitude to it for their current better living nurtured; and among the alienated elite and middle-privileged groups in Africa and Asia servility to the West is promoted.

With the heat somewhat mitigated, it seems relevant now to look at the fate of the stateless Asians and their context in Uganda. According to the UN High Commission for Refugees, there are over 2650 stateless Uganda Asians in Europe, some still in transit camps. Talks with a group in Holland and information from the press form the basis of this report.

In Holland at present there are 57 families of Uganda Asians. Holland has offered to take 300 such Asians to be allowed to seek jobs, in the first instance, under temporary residence as Dutch citizens. The present 57 families consist of about 250 people. The mass media had, in the usual sensational manner, covered the visit of the Dutch delegation to Austrian camps, the offer made to the refugees, their coming to Holland, the early stages of their settling down in the camps, and their expressions of relief and gratefulness in finding a haven. Snippets on them continue to find publicity off and on.

Over a thousand in the Austrian camps, where they had been given transit accommodation, had expressed their eagerness to come to Holland. All of them, family-wise and individual members of each family, were interviewed by the Dutch delegation before selection of the first batch. Only five or six families in the present group appear to have no working adult, with the family head either too old or otherwise incapable of working in Holland, but they do have children who will reach working age within a year or so. In all, about 70 of the Uganda Asians in Holland belong to the category of working people. By profession, about one-third of them are technicians (motor mechanics, electricians, TV and radio repairers, watch and sewing machine repairers, turners, plumbers, masons, shoe makers, etc.), seven lorry or truck drivers, a few tailors and the rest with a business background (dealers and agents for various equipment and goods, transport agents, shopkeepers or assistants, insurance agents, etc.).

They are temporarily housed in two camps. The smaller one (Zonnebloem, literally meaning sunflower, in Bennekom) visited by this corres-

pondent, has 16 families. The tenements here were raised more than two decades back to accommodate the natives of former Dutch East Indies, seeking refuge in the early days of the Indonesian struggle for independence. With only a few under occupation of the Spanish "guest workers" for some years, the rest of the tenements have been lying vacant. The remark of a Dutch carpenter in the team engaged to renovate the tenements that they were unfit for living, was noticed with concern by many. Each house has one or two rooms with sleeping bunkers and a living room with a traditional old-type gas heater. One would be chary of passing the North European winter in such tenements, and that too one from the tropical Uganda in one's very first winter in Holland. So far the winter has been unusually mild and thus kind to the visitors. In due course, the families in groups of twos or threes are expected to shift to accommodation close to their places of work.

In their first reactions, the Asian settlers have indeed heaved sighs of relief in finding sanctuary in a country of Europe. For them the Dutch are very good and kind people. Many common Dutch people, in their benevolent concern and pity for the poor miserable refugees, have shown great hospitality and showered them with lavish presents of assorted items. Local authorities and the Red Cross have arranged weekly cash grants to the families, according to size and age, to meet the bare minimum for food provisions and other common requirements, and some incidental personal expenses. With no grouse on this account, the main concern of the Asians has been finding suitable jobs for themselves and education facilities for children. In preparation, almost all are attending regular classes specially arranged for them to learn the Dutch language. In general, the Asians appear to be full of

confidence that they would be able to settle down in Holland.

Job opportunities are uncertain. The Dutch Government's policy is far from clear, with only vague promises. A British firm, a rare phenomenon in Holland, has taken one person who was associated with its business in Uganda. The drivers have, now, got their licences to enable employment with the transport agencies, but of practical value only after gaining knowledge of routes and areas and expertise to deal with the Dutch/European traffic. Technicians of Ugandan background have to strive hard for jobs suited to their trades and skills in modern industrial Holland, totally different in respect of technological base, mode of employment and work performance. Similar problems face the scores of non-technicians, aspiring for jobs in stores and godowns, shops and custom offices, etc. There are of course many back-aching and line jobs, left by the Dutch in their current affluence and snobbishness as lowly, menial and unfit. Several thousands swarm for such jobs from the poorer Greece, Italy, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Turkey and Yugoslavia. These foreigners, in sophistication called "guest workers", are an asset to the national economy according to the Dutch Central Planning Bureau. Uganda Asians are aware of such jobs, but consider them too heavy, particularly for the middle-aged and those with business background.

Racial tension in Holland, in contrast with Britain, has been remarkably absent. Migrants from Indonesia, Surinam and the Dutch Antilles form a small fraction of the population, and the foreign "guest workers" take jobs rejected by the Dutch. But there are portents for the future in some recent developments. Persistent acute housing shortage in this densely populated country, containing the seeds of tension, has in the recent past led to incidents and feelings against the Turkish "guest workers", who happened to benefit in some house allot-

ment programmes. Then, recently early legal steps were urged by the Dutch Minister of Justice to curb the increasing inflow of coloured immigrants to check the growing dangers of "apartheid", racial explosion and tension, and erosion of the non-discriminatory policies in vogue. He made a particular reference to the people flocking from Surinam to share the local social benefits of Holland, where decent houses and jobs are being denied to them. The tiny group of Uganda Asians is of no significance in the vast horde of other immigrants and foreign "guest workers" but, it must be prepared to face and share the problems, particularly of the non-white populations in the Holland of future.

Why Stateless?

Most of these Asians, entitled to Ugandan citizenship, were unwilling to stay. Some were entitled to Indian or Pakistani citizenship, and others could have made justified claims because of their origin. But all of them decided to float as stateless UN refugees with no promise of home and job at the time of option. Why so?

For unwillingness to stay, not so much the loss of privileges as the threat of being moved out to the villages became the determinant factor. Almost all Asians in Uganda lived in towns. Their attitude to the native Africans was even worse than that of orthodox South Indian Brahmins towards untouchables. Socio-psychologically, they just could not think of, and reconcile to the idea of, a life of mingling with the rural black Africans.

The idea of going back to the original homelands in India or Pakistan either did not occur. The legacies of experiences which made them or their ancestors migrate were there. They well knew of the wide poverty and lack of opportunity in those lands. Their correspondents and compatriots, having gone back in the past, also discouraged them by telling them of possible welcome only for the rich. Promise of one-

way passport, with no other assurance but freedom only to join the vast, poor and unemployed urban milieu in India or Pakistan, was no incentive even for those directly entitled to the citizenship. Also, the Indian and Pakistani diplomats, dictated by their alienated and servile traditions and attitudes, advised the harrowed Asians to opt for the UN refugee status, as holding some promise for the future. For several, the decision was also directed by the choice of the youngsters in the family. The latter, with their acquired mode and style and living customs of the British in Uganda, were eager rather for a country of Western traditions. Thus, the Madhwanis, Mehtas and the ilk, with their privileges, easily manipulated sanctuaries in the U.K. and in India or Pakistan in safe footholds of business, but the unfortunate, like the ones in Holland, turned into stateless UN refugees, looking for promising havens in Europe, etc.

Migrants from the Indian sub-continent, beginning with the nineteenth century, were later particularly encouraged by the British in their colonial expansion, because of the Asians' capabilities to penetrate deep into the African countryside. Finally, in the colonial set-up in East Africa, the Asians soon formed the middle socio-economic stratum below the British but well above the Africans. During the post-World War II changes in physical presence and direct hold of imperialists over the colonies, the Asians in East Africa began acquiring an increasing hold over the local economies, independently or as local agents of the foreign interests, including the British. In Uganda, by the time of independence, all business and professions had come to be concentrated in the hands of Asians. They had their own usual socio-economic hierarchy, with the Madhwanis and Mehtas topping the list. The latter and their clan, with wealth and other manipulations, had also acquired concurrent business interests outside Uganda in the U.K., India

and elsewhere. Activities of this group of affluent Asians against the Ugandan interests, combined with other factors, caused an eruption of anger among the African leaders.

Most Asians were living in towns, with only some unfortunate ones running rare shops in the villages. Benefiting from education and other privileges, lacking for the common Africans, the overwhelming majority of Asians, as traders, professionals, civil servants, teachers, etc., commanded standards of living far above the Africans. Even an ordinary Asian household had three African houseboys, i.e. personal servants. Most Africans in towns were in the employ of the Asians on back-aching and drab jobs. Some of the older Asians knew one or the other African dialect, but none of the youngsters. Therefore, English was the only medium of communication between the Africans and Asians. The younger Asians did claim friends among Africans, but only among the educated urban elite. The Asians, as did the Europeans, thought of the black Africans, in general, as beings of a lower order. The legacies of stratified social, caste and class traditions of the Indian homeland only made easier for the Asians to take on, with greater exaggeration, the socio-psychological attitudes of superiority of the white masters in relation to the black Africans.

In essence, the Asians were totally alienated from the African masses by sustained and promoted social, cultural and linguistic barriers, and in socio-economic relations they had become antagonistic to the African society and masses.

African Context

The two facets of the neo-colonial trends in black Africa, as elsewhere in the Third World countries, are on one side the benevolent aid and assistance programmes and, on the other, a continuing "stick and carrot" policy, particularly on the part of imperialist and neo-fascist regimes.

In the recent past, substantial fraternisation has begun between the

Europeans and Africans. Since independence, the number of Europeans in teams or individually has progressively increased in the new African countries. They are engaged in socio-economic studies and investigations for solutions of the "problems" faced by the new countries. Or they are working in "development assistance" programmes. Support and sponsorship for such studies and assistance programmes comes from the national bodies or multinational groupings directly or through various other channels, including the UN and other international agencies. In all these new education, training and development ventures, a special emphasis is laid on Africans. For example in Uganda, special training centres for business administration have been opened for the Africans, excluding the local Asians who do not need business training, according to the European advisers. State trading corporations manned by Africans have been floated in Uganda with the assistance of Europeans. These efforts form essential ingredients of the neo-colonial policy in the developed countries with the aim of, among other things, building up an educated African elite, alienated from the local African masses and servile to the socio-economic and political systems of the West and the dictates and demands therefrom. The local Asians, having had served their role in the earlier colonial expansion, have no place now in the modern neo-colonial programmes in East Africa.

The "stick and carrot" policy of the modern neo-colonialists is most evident in Vietnam, whose "reconstruction" all Europe is now clamouring to assist, with the cessation of direct U.S. aggression. Pressures and promises form part of this policy in Africa as well. Tanzania and Ghana have been facing this policy. And this time Uganda is experiencing it. As usual, the press and other media have played a significant role in the psychological preparations in this direction. The British press

was in the forefront for the obvious reasons and, in the experience of this correspondent, it was aptly represented in the daily *Guardian* and the weekly *Economist*. During the period of sensation harrowing reports and allegations of carnal rampage by the African soldiers, based on claims of angry and frustrated repatriates and of other eyewitness accounts, were published. The same press, with no apologies, reports now: "But the most remarkable about the Asian expulsion was that it was accomplished with so little loss of life. Cruel, quick and ruthless it certainly was, but given that the regime was fighting for its life in September and given the unpopularity of Asians, there was surprisingly little ill treatment during the enormous human exodus. The Biharis of Bangladesh and the Sudetan Germans of 1945 did not get away so easily". (Martin Walker in *Guardian*, January 18, 1973). Why this objective report now, and the hysteric venom earlier? Having failed to obstruct the process of developments in Uganda earlier by threats, the neo-colonial pattern demands shifts in approaches and preparations for other forms of infiltration.

The story of the expulsion of Asians from Uganda would be incomplete without a reference to the broader context of resurgence in Africa. The expulsion of Israelis, Asians and British in sequence from Uganda has been a matter of economic independence, in efforts of nation-building on the part of African leaders. Of course, there are weaknesses in the movement. It has to become more politicised, more militant. It is necessary also to identify the local forces of vested interests, reaction and servility to the imperialists and neo-colonialists.

Our sole agent in Bangladesh
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Frontline Tragedy

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

FRANCESCO Rosi was an important figure in the new Italian cinema emerging in the sixties. He has combined tremendous technical expertise and a rare social insight and the critics have called him the "Neapolitan Eisenstein". He has mostly dealt with topical issues and in *Many Wars Ago*, he makes a bantering attack on the fanfare of mock heroics that goes on on the battlefield, where millions die like sheep in a futile pursuit of purposeless mission for the king and the country. The period is 1916. The Italians are pitted against the Austrians in an unequal combat for the capture of a strategic mountain peak held by the Austrians. A hopeless task, because although the Italian manpower is considerable, the Austrian guns are far superior. While the junior officers and the common soldiers are convinced of the total failure of this suicidal confrontation, the generals are adamant in their decision for a direct encounter, and they do not hesitate to sacrifice their subordinates to sure death. Protests against this brutal authority often find expression in abortive revolts, in fruitless desertions and in simmering discontent among the lower ranks. Rosi's film is a bitter commentary on such injustice and his style is one of detached survey, a clinical analysis of the rights and wrongs. Remarque's influence is visible at places depicting the horrors of war, but Rosi's account is stark documentation, free from Remarque's romanticised trappings.

Promise Unfulfilled

If the fog-machine alone can create mystery, then there is no dearth of it in B. R. Chopra's *Dhund*, where in almost every shot, mist creeps in from all sides of the frame. Perhaps the director labours under the delusion that as both "mystery"

and "mist" spell with m, they must be synonymous. The title of the film means "mist" and such a literal use of the imagery is indeed to be scoffed at. But, despite all these, the film does begin with a promise. On a misty night, Navin Nischol's car crashes against a tree, and he stumbles into a nearby mansion only to tread on a corpse and to find a dishevelled Zeenat Aman trembling with an automatic in her hand and she confesses to the murder of her husband. Together they arrange to make the murder a burglar's job. The police take over and the suspicion is cast around Zeenat and a young advocate who is rumoured to be her boy-friend. So far so good. The treatment is quite taut, and the story is full of excitement and pace. But as we go further, the film seems to lose direction. A web of flashbacks recall Zeenat's life with her boorish husband and her salvation through the friendship of Sanjay, the young advocate, and the director wastes precious screen-time on meaningless song-dance sequences. The courtroom episode at the end fails to heighten the thrill and the final twist comes as a shocking insult to our intelligence, for there are so many loose ends in this narrative. The patch-up climax makes this film another sad case of promise unfulfilled.

The same is true of Rajendra Bhatia's *Jangal Mein Mangal* which, with its exotic locale, the funny ingredients of the basic story-material and the enthralling presence of Pran, could have become a fairly clear entertainment, had the director mainly concentrated on the comic incidents concerning the two groups of boys and girls on an excursion and Cupid's pranks on the misogynist Pran and the man-hater Sonia Sahani, the leaders of the res-

pective groups. But the director opts for routine stuff and there are all kinds of stencilled situations, including a black-robed ghost prowling in the dark forest. Pran towers above his co-artistes in his double role, a confirmed bachelor gradually surrendering to feminine charms, and a hippy-type young Romeo. The photography is effective in portraying the beauties of the landscape and there is an air of authenticity in Bansi Chandragupta's decor which is, unfortunately, not put to any creative use.

Bibhu's Tiger

HITEN GHOSH

BIBHU, the young hero, keeps a tiger, and Runu, the young heroine, loves Bibhu; and she loves his tiger, their tiger. Their love is the love of the tiger which lurks in the primeval forest of every human soul. This tiger can be maimed or caged but never killed. Caged, it becomes rebellious or sick; maimed, it wanders about to the alarmed dismay of the Administration and causes a wave of petty crimes sweeping through the town. Bibhu's tiger has been shot and wounded and skulks somewhere, and Bibhu must resist its being captured and trained to perform tricks for the local circus.

Nobody sees or admits the tiger, for it is symbolic of their sneaking instincts for wild, uninhibited joy. Runu takes Bibhu to her parents who deny the tiger with the consequence that Runu's mother makes love furtively to another man while her father looks away in unconcern. They think both Bibhu and Runu mad, for they believe in the tiger and insist on sporting it in public. Bibhu is sent to a psychiatrist who sees Bibhu's point of view and pronounces him sane. Another doctor is called in and finds Bibhu mad. Runu meets Bibhu in his cell and they come out together and stroll

about flaunting their symbolic tiger. The Administration gets into an alert, but unable to spot the tiger, can't do anything about it. The lovers win and stride away in their triumph.

A poetic metaphor, however worn and debased, might yet be turned into a powerful dramatic idiom given the proper content and formal mould. The play is filled instead with talk, talk and talk by shadows going through gestures without motion. The pitiful simulacrum of a dramatic action is used as an illustration of words flowing in torrents. The extended metaphor of a tiger finds no objective correlative. In a short article printed in the souvenir, Mr Mohit Chatterjee insists on the new drama where words must give way to true theatrical language. The attempt must seem depressing, if we are to judge by the achievement of the present play, written and directed by Mr Nilkantha Sengupta. What Mr Bibhas Chakraborty says in his observation is more to the point in that it deplores the dearth of good plays in Bengali.

The acting is dull and undistinguished. Subroto Bhattacharya as Bibhu horribly overacts, and Mamata Chatterjee as Ranu fails to impress. The beatific expression her face takes on each time she speaks of the tiger hovers perilously on the verge of the inane. Certain effects of composition, light and sound, particularly light, somewhat diminished the almost uniform dullness of the play.

Frontier acknowledges with thanks the receipt of Rs 200 from friends and well-wishers in Gauhati.

Business Manager

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Sukumar Dutta's Paintings

SANDIP SARKAR

SUKUMAR Dutta's first solo exhibition in Calcutta was held in the Chemould Gallery from February 26 to March 5. An employee of the Regional Design Centre Western Zone, he has to stay in Bombay. But he was trained in Calcutta and Santiniketan and evidently belongs to the cultural climate of this city. He has worked with artisans all over India to discover his traditional roots. He will soon be touring Europe, America and the Far East on a UN scholarship.

Sukumar is not swayed by trends and is not interested in being a part of some movement. He wants to work out his own salvation.

All the paintings shown in this exhibition were done in water-colour and ink—what artists nowadays call the mixed medium. His figures are from the world of puppet-play—the Indian folksy quality is evident. Also, one does not have to go very far for Sukumar's relationship with Indian miniatures and Abanindranath's 'Arabian Nights'. He is aware of his heritage but not a blind imitator nor a revivalist.

Sukumar is trying to utilise space, to harmonise colours and figures in such a way that the impact breaks the viewer's resistance. His deliberate use of figures from the puppet-world quickens communication. However, like dreams his works have a logic which defies rationality. His drawings are very bold at times and very simple at others. He is child-like but never childish. Like Klee he has moved around in the world of imagination and tried to discover deeper levels of truth (concerning the visible world in the realm of fantasy. He has sought the fourth dimension of experience. He has contemplated on his own experience of love and hate, and faced anxiety, fear, mystery and passion. Like the

solid church in the background of Gentilini's paintings, Sukumar might have sometimes a castle as a backdrop. What does it signify? The ancient world we have within us? The heavy burden of tradition? Or life's treasures which we do not inherit? Or does it have some romantic overtones? He uses an archaic form of language to make it sound strange, mysterious and intense. He generally does his drawings in pen and ink and then applies colour. Or it may be the other way around—he begins playing with colours to call up a mood and brings in the drawing afterwards. He uses pink, red, vermilion, green, blue, purple, brown, dark blue, black and brilliant gold profusely. By using colours side by side he has sometimes been able to give a three-dimensional effect. He has tried to express the subconscious with restraint—notice the lack of grotesque figures. Yet his works are gay as they are grim.

In No. 15 a harmony of space, colours, figures and birds has been worked out. The similarity with miniature paintings is clear, yet Sukumar has avoided narrative—the mysterious missing link. It gives you a feeling of being in trance. In No. 11 you saw several parts—on the top a dark purple sky and a kite, beneath the sky a roof where there is a man with a child dangling from almost his pocket and a woman standing beside him holding his hand. On the other side you have a stylized owl done in gold. The man is flying a kite. There is suspense and mystery and somehow this is frightening. In No. 9 you saw a primitive three-eyed woman in absolute emptiness with a background of purple and red triangles and squares with blotches of gold. No. 7 reaches up to the outer space like the tower of Babel, coming out from beneath the earth. It gives you a sense of going into depth and at the same time soaring upward. No. 1 was an uncanny dream sequence where there were contradictions and chaos when lines began to emerge and explore, move and give the total

situation a dynamic harmony and shape. Lemon yellow, purple and darkness move in like water and fishes begin to swim. It had the quality of ancient Western Asian creation myths.

At places Dutta overdoes the thing and crowds out the drawing with too many colours.

We hope to see Sukumar's oil paintings some day.

Letters

Sex And Society

It would be rather lopsided to develop a whole argument about sexual freedom and Marxism, considering that I wrote (February 10) no discourse on the subject but made some brief comments on a particular piece of drama criticism. But Sudhansu Roy having written a longish criticism (February 24) of what he considers to be my "demand for sexual freedom", I cannot but hasten to clarify that I have expressed no such "demands" through the columns of *Frontier*. Also, I have to seek the indulgence of the editor to allow me some space so that I can explain that I was not "dragging" Marx and Engels into some matter totally foreign to them.

Freedom is indivisible. In so far as the communist movement has for its ultimate objective the progressive expansion of human freedom, it has to work for freedom not only in the spheres of politics and economics, but all aspects of human experience, including that of love and sex.

Enemies of freedom have always opposed freedom in the name of possible abuses of freedom; or equated freedom with irresponsibility. That is what Sudhansu Roy does in talking of sexual freedom. Freedom, not only in the matter of sex, but in any matter, can be used in an "individualist, selfish" manner. That is hardly any reason for opposing freedom. Also, "sexual freedom" does not mean "purely physiological desire". Love

MARCH 24, 1973

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and sex are not matters of physiology alone; they also involve psychology and inter-personal relations and social institutions and class war and what not. Freedom in the matter of love and sex certainly does not mean picking out of all this only its physiological aspect, nor does it preclude voluntary self-restraint. Sexual freedom does not imply a 'glass of water' attitude towards sex. Lenin's famous "glass of water" talk with Clara Zetkin has been deliberately or otherwise misunderstood and misrepresented, and it has been used by conservatives in the ranks of communists to uphold various moral customs and sex taboos of class-divided societies; it has been used by the revisionist leaders of Soviet society to reimpose bourgeois norms of marriage on its citizens. A glass of water is an object; the glass-of-water attitude towards sex means that attitude towards sex which regards the sex partner as not a person but an object. It has nothing to do with marital love or extra-marital love. Plenty of married people regard their wives as glasses of water, automatic cooking ranges, side pillows and various other convenient objects.

Sudhansu Roy says that in a classless society "marriage will certainly remain". Marx and Engels were never so certain about any aspect of the future classless society. I dislike to argue by quoting from scriptures; but as Mr Roy has begun by accusing me of dragging in Marx and Engels, I seek the indulgence of the editor to reproduce the following quotations from Engels.

"Thus, what we can conjecture at present about the regulation of sex relationships after the impending effacement of capitalist production is, in the main, of a negative character, limited mostly to what will vanish. But what will be added? That will be settled after a new generation has grown up: ... Once such people appear, they will not care a rap about what we today think they should do. They will establish their own practice and their own public opinion, conformable therewith, on the practice of

each individual—and that is the end of it".

Engels also quotes Morgan approvingly as follows:

"When the fact is accepted that the family has passed through four successive forms and is now in a fifth, the question at once arises whether this form can be permanent in the future. The only answer that can be given is that it must advance as society advances, and change as society changes, even as it has done in the past... Should the monogamian family in the distant future fail to answer the requirements of society, it is impossible to predict the nature of its successor".

While both Engels and Morgan thus reject the possibility of knowing for certain the future of marriage as it exists now, Engels does allow himself some speculations. Thus, "Society takes care of all children equally, irrespective of whether they are born in wedlock or not. Thus, the anxiety about the 'consequences' which is today the most important social factor—both moral and economic—that hinders a girl from giving herself freely to the man she loves, disappears. Will this not be cause enough for a gradual rise of more unrestrained sexual intercourse, and along with it, a more lenient public opinion regarding virginal honour and feminine (shame)?"

"The equality of woman thus achieved will, judging from all previous experience, result far more effectively in the men becoming really monogamous than in the women becoming polyandrous". Talking of the dissolubility of marriage, he writes "People will only be spared the experience of wading through the useless mire of divorce proceedings".

Attention may be paid to the implications of the references to children born outside wedlock and divorce proceedings becoming unnecessary. Let us now turn to the question if all this discussion is putting the cart before the horse. It would indeed be if one were to put forward a programme of struggle for sexual freedom in place of a programme of class struggle and seizure of power. That however does not mean that

communists can afford, in the name of the primacy of class struggle, to think and act according to such traditional social and personal values and attitudes that are opposed to the values and attitudes that are associated with communist society. While it is true that a socialist cultural revolution cannot be conceived of before the socialist political and economic revolution, it is equally true that seizure of power by the proletariat does not by itself ensure that traditional values would be replaced by socialist values overnight. If that were so, there would not have been the necessity of a cultural revolution 20 years after the political revolution in China, not to speak of the cultural condition of the Soviet Union. This attitude of dismissing all questions regarding values and attitudes summarily in the name of the primacy of the political programme has permitted plenty of Indians to preach Marxism in the street while living the life of perfect Hindu men and women at home.

ASHOK RUDRA
Santiniketan

Whose English?

Mr Singh obviously meant to raise a rumpus on my article *English, Whose English?* His anger however was poodled into frantic yelps. Nevertheless he has made his point: my article should have been dumped into the waste-paper-basket. I am grateful to Mr Singh for bearing me out, since the point I have sought to make in my article is that almost everything written in English in India should be drained down the pipe.

R.B.
Calcutta

(This correspondence is closed).

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