

frontier

Vol. 7: No. 20

SEPTEMBER 7, 1974

PRICE: 50 PAISE

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PRINTED AT MODERN INDIA PRESS,
7, RAJA-SUBODH MULLICK SQUARE,
CALCUTTA-13 AND PUBLISHED WEEKLY
FOR GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS (P) LTD.
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INDIA IS WILLING

GOOD news for patriotic Indians. In a few days, Mrs Gandhi willing, their country will expand again. At the stubborn insistence of the Sikkim Assembly and the Gangtok Government, New Delhi has reluctantly decided to provide for Sikkimese representation in the Indian Parliament. It will be a tough job for constitutional pundits, because Sikkim is not part of Indian territory and so should not be in the Indian Parliament. But where there is a will there is a way.

The will is very strong, though rather suspect. One had heard a lot about the separate identity of Sikkim. It all goes now. As a New Delhi despatch makes it clear in a Calcutta daily, the Constitution (36th Amendment) Bill, when passed, will mean a virtual merger of Sikkim, as the 22nd State, with India.

Why this hurry? The same daily says that in 1973 the Chogyal was in touch with China and had decided to make Sikkim an independent, sovereign State. So the latest Indian move has forestalled the Chogyal and ensured our security. Another reason was the fear that the Nepalese majority in Sikkim might one day opt for merger with Nepal, endangering our security. If India's security consideration is the prime factor, then it can be said that some Sikkimese leaders have been won over by New Delhi to dupe their innocent people with the help of a constitution drafted by Indian experts.

The move on Sikkim is bound to be viewed with suspicion and alarm by Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh. The impact of India's summer moves in Sikkim when the new government was set up was one of widespread alarm in Bangladesh though Indians were not aware of it—we live in a world of our own. Bhutan was uneasy. China was sarcastic. But New Delhi is nurturing some designs is in a hurry and would not care much for outside opinion. In a period marked by great disorder, people tend not to look beyond their nose and one can get away with many things. But will it, this time?

The border pacification phase is going on. In Kashmir Sheikh Abdullah may be installed in power, within the framework of the Indian constitution, leaving Pakistan to fume about plebiscite. In Nagaland and Mizoram, the going for the rebels continues to be tough, as the draconian laws are being renewed. The Nagaland Peace Mission is unlikely to achieve anything and Mr Vizol, hailed now as a wiser man, will lose his credibility among the hostiles. In Mizoram the 'rebels' have now established a much wider base among the masses.

The Play's The Thing

Attacks by Congress supporters on theatre groups outside Calcutta have been frequent, though not publicised. The July 20 police raid on a group called Silhouette, which used to stage short and sharp open-air political plays in Curzon Park every Saturday, highlighted the threat to culture. One young man died in the lathi-charge and stampede. About 33 people were arrested.

Stage and film artistes formed a July 20 Committee and several well-known actors and directors staged protest plays and recited poems in Curzon Park on August 24. In between the Government brought a case against **Duswapner Nagar**, directed and produced by Mr Utpal Dutt. Mr Dutt was finding it difficult, it is said, to book posh theatre houses in central and south Calcutta. So he decided to move north, the home of Bengali theatre, and booked the famous, ancient Star Theatre for a show on August 26. All the 900 tickets were sold out in two hours. But the Chhatra Parishad and the Youth Congress went into loud action and did not allow Dutt and his troupe to perform. These two organisations of the Indian National Congress have now decided to fight it out in Calcutta, not because they have developed the courage of convictions but because they know that the administration, including the police, is behind them. Their patrons would not mind such diversions from the internal splits festering the two organisations.

What's to be done? Stage and film people met at the Academy of Fine Arts and passed a resolution or two. The one moved by Mr Utpal Dutt described the attack on the Star Theatre, associated with the name of Girish Ghosh, as an attack on Bengali culture. He made, however, a rather curious statement—that he was not prepared to believe that the raiders were conscious political workers—because any conscious political worker would know that such an attack was in violation of what they professed to believe and practise under the Constitution. Did Mr Dutt, in his accustomed subtle way, want not to

offend the Congress? The 'anti-social' elements who blocked the entrance to the theatre carried Chhatra Parishad and Youth Congress flags and manhandled the PLT group did not make the slightest attempt to hide their political affiliation.

It is time resolutions passed at such protest meetings stopped urging the Chief Minister or Governor or Prime Minister, or President to redress their grievances and 'punish the guilty'.

The Chief Minister and others are birds of the same feather and are themselves guilty of evil policeis. Why make people believe that they are above the party or government? It is with their encouragement, indirect or direct, that the system operates as it does today, and it is a hell of a system. The petition-mongering, the anguished surprise at 'police action' are naive, to put a charitable interpretation on them. The cynical might, however, think that some of the organisers of these meetings are keen to keep any confrontation with the rulers on a non-antagonistic plane. It is this desire to be friends with top men or women of the administration that takes the sting out of their opposition.

It is true, as Mr Utpal Dutt pointed out at the meeting, that resistance to the growing attacks on culture must be part of a general democratic movement. But, alas, when one thinks of 'democratic movement' in West Bengal, one feels like taking to opium grown in Turkey.

In Cooch Behar there was big trouble between the CRP and students. Many government buildings went up in flames. Troops were called out, a curfew was imposed. The situation was explosive. In separate clashes between the Youth Congress and the CP(M) at Mathabanga, one CP(M) leader was stabbed to death, and another, a former MLA, is in a critical condition. The West Bengal Government sent two Ministers, both of whom had been returned from Cooch Behar, and they were in the funeral procession of the killed teacher. Our young men, it seems, are taken in by these tricks of the stage, and they quietened down. Following the Cooch Behar incidents,

the left parties led by the CP(M) met in Calcutta and are said to have decided not to 'broaden' their democratic movement (where is the movement?) to save their cadres from attacks by 'semi-fascist' forces.

It is one step forward, of course, from the CP(M) obsession that any 'adventuristic' action would lead to the party being banned and the leaders would have to go underground perforce. Now they have developed a touching concern for their cadres. With such people around, Mr Utpal Dutt and Mr Mrinal Sen should not be too optimistic about any effective united front. It would be better, perhaps, to cultivate material success, as the CPI does, than go in for the materialist interpretation of history with all the adversities it spells.

A Red Herring

Reports of searches by tax authorities, of big hauls of gold and jewellery and unaccounted money have become during the past few days almost a feature of the daily news bag like the proverbial ministerial promises and stories of scandals and corruption. The sudden outburst of alertness shown by all these guardians of law is certainly most welcome. But it begs one obvious question. What were they doing all these years? Smuggling or mining—black money is no new phenomenon. But somehow all this was allowed to pass right under the nose of the authorities and, worse, even with the connivance of the policing staff. The shady operators of such deals have in the mean time developed all the expertise and the contacts that ensure smooth functioning of their business. The Minister of State for Finance, Mr K. R. Ganesh, himself has conceded that the smugglers have now set up most powerful political contacts and have even developed a system of tapping the telephones of customs officials to secure intelligence about raids, etc. It is rather difficult to believe that the authorities did not know what exactly was happening. But if there were any honest official—a fast disappearing breed, though—in these departments, he naturally pre-

ferred to keep his enthusiasm on leash and not walk on the some sensitive toes. Today a pretence of an effort is being made to undo all this. And Mr Ganesh himself is thinking of leading a band of satyagrahis before smugglers' residences on the auspicious birthday of Mahatma Gandhi on October 2. His sense of concern is certainly appreciable, if only it did not border on the ridiculous. What prompts an all-powerful Minister to head a team of peaceful volunteers rather than send officials into the residences of these people and arrest them will remain a classic enigma.

Obviously the searches etc are meant to be a kind of ploy to dupe the public. The socialist government is so careful of the sensibilities of its "capitalist enemies" that it has virtually forfeited any capacity to do anything against them. But the public just cannot be let into this basic fact. A show has to be put up that the government, while penalising the salaried people and the working class is not allowing the bigger sharks to go free either. If the reports of such searches have any message, it is this that the capitalists too have not been spared. But who are those who have been netted in so far? Only the small ones. The bigger capitalists and the bigger thieves still roam about with all the confidence that the government just cannot do anything against them. And they could not be more correct. It is all a kind of a red herring.

Police And The Press

That the Press in India is gagged is nothing new, for the major dailies are controlled by big business houses. But what is new is the intense victimisation and harassment of journalists who refuse to toe the line of the ruling party. Last week, the Youth Congress leader and West Bengal Minister, Mr Subrata Mukherjee, made a forced entry with his aides

into the news department of a Calcutta daily to get information about a staff reporter who wrote a story of how a young girl was kidnapped from Ballygunje station and raped by some local goondas who had "links with the youth front of the Congress". They became furious when the newsmen present there refused to disclose the name of the reporter concerned. Mr Mukherjee and his followers were reported to have threatened them of the consequences if reports of a similar nature were published in the future.

The other day a correspondent of the **Times of India** was arrested in Uttar Pradesh. He had enraged the police and bureaucrats with his reports of atrocities against the Harijans in U.P. particularly in Banda district. The police action has been repeated. This time the editor and printer of a local fortnightly were hounded out of Banda because they had printed two special issues criticising police atrocities in the district. One of the two brothers of the editor was locked up in jail on a murder charge, while the other was charged with criminally assaulting a seven-year-old girl. The printer of the journal was summoned to the police station and asked to surrender the manuscript of the article. This has become a routine practice. In another case in the same district the owner of a local press was threatened arrest if he did not produce the original manuscript of another anti-administration pamphlet.

When the **Times of India** man was held, with the wide publicity in the Press and the large number of protests, the least the Government should have done, some people thought, was to punish the guilty officers involved. They did not understand that the police in the same district would not have dared to act in this manner unless they were assured of the strongest backing. With increasing resort to police aid to help it rule, the Congress has given the police licence to do as they like.

Nor is this restricted to Uttar Pradesh. From Ahmedabad, Gujarat, it is reported that 25 journalists who had gone to see the Governor were badly manhandled by the police. The journalists had gone to protest against the police investigation of one of their colleagues.

Talking About Population—I

ASOK MITRA

HOW did they come to have the families they have? L has only one child, a son, M a daughter and C two, both sons.

It's curious, said M, you who people the pages of your paper with at least one hilarious child a day, sometimes as many as four, should have imposed such rectitude upon yourself in real life. What on earth was the matter, L?

My mother, who died the other day at 90, bore eight children to my father. L tumbled out. She brought them up all, and after them their children. To the day of her death she was never alone, always cared for, looking after in her turn all her grandchildren, either visiting them in their homes or asking them over. She died happy, surrounded by all of us, never a cloud on her face, always wanted. We have only one, K and I, the son is growing up, now more in his own world than ours. And yet I must say we are blessed that he cares for us and we for him. I really don't know what made us want only one child and no more and I can't say that we don't feel lonely sometimes. Ever so often I have to take K out on long trips, like the marvellous one in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands I was telling you about. But I wish I knew whether we wanted another child.

We wanted two, said C, taking the words out of L's mouth. Two we thought were decidedly more fun, and although we didn't want to be over-fruitful and multiply, we thought a lone child would make problems, for himself and for us. He would want company which we might not be able to give always, and ays are not the best company to have all the time. We wanted to be happy and we thought we could bring up two, and yet M could do what she wanted to do outside of home. So there you are. We don't for a moment regret what we have had, but perhaps it's too late now to have.

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another and we are not sure we wanted a third. A third would probably tie us down more than we would wish.

You would laugh if I told you of my reasons, put in M. My parents had four children, exactly half of L's. My elder sister was seven years ahead of me, my younger four years in front, then I and then my brother came eight years later. That was good spacing. I always thought, and we were all fairly settled in life before my father was sixty-five (he lived up to 88). He was brought up in the Bengal positivist tradition and had a horror of looking for help. I married in 1940 and our daughter came on the eve of the Bengal famine of 1943. The famine and the Japanese war were a traumatic experience and when we thought of another child the Communal Riots of 1946 were upon us and then Independence in August 1947. Bliss was it in those days to be alive and working for one's own government (L & C beamed wistfully) and we thought a second child could wait. As we thought it was time around 1950 the Pakistan devaluation came, followed by the riots and a second surge of inflation that did not abate. By 1956 we thought it was too late, and in the meantime the daughter had grown up so well after our heart that we didn't want another.

We have all given our own private reasons, but what were our public reasons? L tumbled out again. Didn't we have any thought for the country, about India's teeming millions, of which Gyan Chand had already made a by-word, about her possible food problem and her limits of growth. Were we so wrapped up in our own debit and credit that India didn't enter at all in our reckoning? What would be the point then of our writing a book on the consequences of rapid population growth? Whom would we convert and how? And why would they be converted, unless they had turned philistines already like us?

One could see L was already figuring out sidesplitting cartoons in his mind.

I have often wondered whether one really cares a damn, or even gives half a thought, for the world, or his country in taking decisions on this thing, C in-

terjected. The number of children one should have is one's own problem and one bears one's own cross in this matter. It depends on so many things: the land, one's family business, one's 'work' thoughts of old age—whatever you may say old age pension or social security is no substitute at all for breathing one's last surrounded by one's relations and grandchildren—and even when one has no property to bequeath one still thinks of an heir who will look after one's widow. It's not so easy to leave entirely to providence the woman one has loved all his life. One's country figures last in this kind of reckoning.

L's eyes lighted up at this point. You know what they thought about sex in Victorian England, he said, dirty but necessary, although the Queen herself was a full blooded and ardent sort and found the Prince Consort wanting sometimes. Her private journals, as you must have read, were largely destroyed by the scandalised progeny. England in those days was steadily losing her brave sons, for the Queen and Empaiah in the deserts of Africa and the mangrove swamps of Malay. Although sex was dirty, it was to a person like Lady Hillingham necessary. Responsibility so weighed her down! And so in her own words, she would close her eyes, open her legs and think of England. But I do not think people would close their legs merely on the thought of India and the desperate year of 2001.

You are so irreverent and destructive, L, chimed in the other two. Let's have some coffee on the Foundation and then get on with the job to see whether 2001 will be jolly or, as you say, desperate.

The Prospect as of Present

I don't believe in jingoism, said C, after the coffee things had been cleared, but it fills me with some pride that almost every sixth person in the world today is an Indian. Pundits say that the world's population in mid-1973 was roughly 3,860 million and India's was about 600. China has about 800 million, which makes every fifth person in the world a Chinese, but it's possible that the proportion would be slightly higher.

I thought every first person in the world was a Chinese quipped L.

Do stop fooling L, snapped C, anxious to develop his point. You remember Hemingway saying 'in the joking begins a rottenness'. The commonsense way of reckoning, leaving migration out of the argument in this spaceship, Earth, of ours, is to compute the Growth Rate as the difference between the Birth Rate and the Death Rate per year. At geometric rates of growth, here is a simple chart which illustrates how many years it takes a population to double at given rates of growth per year:

Growth rate per year	Number of years to double population
0	Infinity
0.5	139
1.0	70
1.5	47
2.0	35
2.5	28
3.0	23
3.5	20

Before you talk about the future, why don't you, M, tell us some of what happened in the past? put in L.

Like most countries in the world, M began, India's population was almost stationary, or grew at a snail's pace, if at all, for close on four centuries. W. H. Moreland attempted an estimate of India's population at the time of Akbar. The celebrated Fifth Report on the Permanent Settlement and the estimate of Francis Buchanan Hamilton around the first decade of the nineteenth century hinted at populations that were not much larger than in Akbar's time. In short, for about four centuries, and certainly many more even previously, the number of births in India, taking the rough decades with the smooth, more or less equalled the number of deaths. In other words, the crude birth rate was about the same as the crude death rate until about 1921 over large spans of time. There was practically little growth and the age structure, too, was about constant over time. India had, as a demographer would say, a stationary population. It had also what might be called a precariously stable population, with a combination of what one would

call constant levels of fertility and constant levels of mortality. This led to a population growing at a very low constant rate of growth. And because of the constancy of the factors of growth, the age structure did not undergo any changes.

What do you mean by the age structure? asked L.

It is the ratio that persons in a certain age group, say 5-9, 10-14, 15-24, 35-49 or any other grouping that one could think of, bear to the total population at a given time, continued M. In a stable or stationary population these ratios remain practically constant in relation to each other, also in respect of each sex. But should either the fertility rate or mortality rate begin to change over time, then the age structure would also begin to change with a time-lapse, what demographers call a cohort, which would strike at the stable or stationary character of the population.

Is that what you meant by a 'precariously stable population' a little while ago, asked L.

Thank you for noticing the adverb, L. M went on to say. I used it with a different and rather primitive situation in mind. A stable population can be precariously stable and stably stable. It stays precarious so long as both the fertility rate and mortality rate are high. Should one of them suffer from assault, and usually it is mortality that should suffer from assault first, the stability gives way. Then perhaps things begin to happen and fertility begins to decline. Then over a span of time both fertility and mortality play hide and seek with each other with different rates of decline, and so the difference between them keeps fluctuating, sometimes quite violently, over decades in consequence of which the age structure goes through a variety of pinches and bulges, like the peristalsis of food in the intestines. When public health and medical care at last manage to peg mortality at a steady low level and fertility, too, declines, due to a complex of social, economic and cultural factors, to a steady figure, then a second stage of stability emerges which is no longer

precarious but what one would call stably stable.

Up to 1921, therefore, India had a precariously stable and stationary population with little absolute growth or change in its age structure. The year 1921 was the watershed or as a Census Commissioner said, the Great Divide. India's population began to accelerate after 1921 and the gap between births and deaths began to widen. What is more, the gap between births and deaths began to accelerate after 1951 with each decade until 1971. This is what demographers call the demographic gap in the period of demographic transition between a precariously stable population and, hopefully for us, a stably stable population. Let us have a look at the figures:

Year	Population of India	Percentage decade variation
1901	238,396,000	—
1911	252,093,000	+ 5.75
1921	251,321,000	— 0.31
1931	278,977,000	+11.00
1941	318,661,000	+14.22
1951	361,088,000	+13.31
1961	439,235,000	+21.51
1971	547,950,000	+24.74

I believe I could now come back to my argument about possible rates of growth and the time it would take India to double her present population, said C. As you can see it took India about 63 years to double her population from 1901. And now in 1974 with a population of over 600 million it will take, unless the growth rate declines, that is, something happens dramatically to her birth rate, reducing the gap between it and the death rate, which is already low and still declining, India will have about 1200 million of population just at the turn of the century, that is, around 2001.

This seems to make sense in terms of, say, my city, Bombay, said L. I have been living in Bombay since 1947 and the city used to be so spacious and full of elbowroom then. And now with each year that passes you have a physical sense of being overwhelmed by masses of people and getting suffocated in their steam. And yet I can't think of getting away from the city, although latterly

I have been thinking of falling back to the Aundh Road in Poona, but maybe, in another ten or fifteen years' time, that is, long before I suppose I die, Bombay will be upon us there, too.

Had India's growth rate of the decade 1921-31 obtained in 1973, C resumed, it would have taken 63 years again to double the population of 600 million. Had it been that of the decade 1941-51 it would still have taken about 55 years to double. But now we seem to be in a tearing hurry to get there by 2001.

I don't see, interposed M, why you should sound so funeral. C. Humankind has not exhausted all its ingenuity or resilience just yet. Would you really like to get back to 1921 after all? In which way did India profit by four centuries of stationary population? I suggest you reflect on it for a moment. With practically zero population growth over such a long time, Indians were far poorer, famished, less prosperous and in every way far worse off than they are today, in spite of your prospect of doubling in 28 years. Don't you think, if India tries hard enough, she can keep much ahead all the time of the problems that her population growth can create? Why should you then choose to be such a dismal prophet? I don't really think that the situation calls for tearing of hair and gnashing of teeth, as you seem to suggest.

I do really think you are begging the question, M, came C's unruffled voice. And I would not like you to feel frightened either by the prospect we are just discussing, as the testiness in your voice suggests. We shall presently discuss our social and economic choices, and they must be quite a few, not all of them equally frightening or desperate. You must remember that in 1921 or at any earlier point of time we were never masters of our destiny as we are today. But now after 1947 and in the year 1973 we have a different situation where we have tasted the fruits of economic and social growth and yet they might elude us if we are not careful. We have just heard L wail about Bombay. I certainly agree with you that we need to exert far more on achieving economic and social growth than on reducing population growth. But let me briefly go over the prospects of

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population growth and its implications first, if you will put up with it for a little while.

Go ahead, C, I really talked out of turn, M looked apologetic.

(To be continued)

the radio and clippings of English-Hindi newspapers).

The future of Urdu journalism is tied up with the Urdu language and literature, which unfortunately, is identified with the minority community today. That is why they suffer.

The Press

Problems Of Urdu Journalism

PATRAKAR

THE Maharashtra Government recently arrested five prominent Urdu journalists under the DIR and instituted cases against them for publication of a report—18 months ago!

The story for which the prosecutions were launched referred to a Red Cross report on the ill-treatment and torture of Pakistani POWs in India. The report was first published in an English daily on December 24, 1972. No action has been taken against that paper, nor is any contemplated.

All through the last 18 months, there was not even a hint to any of the journalists concerned that the Government intended to prosecute them or even that it considered the report offensive.

On June 14 last the Government discovered, all of a sudden, that the news was likely to "bring the government established by law in India into hatred, contempt or disaffection in the sense of loyalty against the government". Using the all-powerful DIR it arrested Mr Ghulam Ahmed, editor of *Hindustan*, Mr Shakeel Ahmed editor of *Aaj*, Mr Rashid, editor of *Urdu Reporter*, Mr Shehriar Abidi, editor of *Urdu Times* and its publisher, Mr Hijazi.

How came the publication of the same report in an English paper did not threaten "the sense of loyalty"? Only the intelligent people in the intelligence department would be able to unravel this mystery. (More mysterious is the case in which complaint for a similar 'offence' against another Urdu daily, *Hayat-e-Millat*, was withdrawn on July 31 last).

This was not the first—and perhaps not the last—time that double-standard had been adopted while dealing with Urdu papers.

Sometime back the *Hindi Pratap* and *Urdu Pratap* carried the translation of an interview with the late Guru Golwalkar published in *The Statesman*. The authorities picked up the Urdu newspaper and a case was launched against its editor for spreading communal hatred. In a similar anomaly *Quami Awaz* was prosecuted while its sister publication, *National Herald* was not.

Nida-e-Millat has been prosecuted for reproducing an old speech of the late Maulana Azad!

No wonder, Urdu newspapers are sore with the Government for its step-motherly treatment. Among the newspapers prosecuted under Section 153A IPC (promoting enmity between sections of society) 85 per cent are Urdu papers. That most of the prosecutions are malicious is proved by the fact that in 90 per cent of the cases Urdu papers have been acquitted.

Urdu newspapers and periodicals, which enjoy wider circulation than any other language newspaper group except Hindi, face economic and financial problems besides political discrimination.

The economic problem arises, again, from the alleged discrimination in the allotment of newsprint quota and government advertisements.

Technically the Urdu press is still in the pre-20th century era. There are simply no Urdu types and they cannot use the letter-press. Lithoprinting, the main mode of Urdu printing, is hopelessly out of date. Then, calligraphy is a decaying art—with few educated people ready to take it up. The only way out, in the prevailing circumstances, is offset—but the Urdu press cannot afford it. (In fact most of them cannot afford even agency-service and depend upon

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Back numbers of *Frontier*, more than two months' old, cost Re 1 each if they are available.

Frontier will no longer be sent by VPP

Long-term Subscriptions will be p the weekly.

SEPTEMBER 7, 1974

To Be Chewed And Digested

M. S. PRABHAKAR

BEING recently down with severe fever, caught, as always, as a result of my own folly in attempting to force myself to do something which I was not physically equipped to do—in this case, a day's outing on the southern slopes of the Khasi Hills, between two villages called Rangthong and Kyniong—I could not return to the work in hand for three days. I had with me nothing to read, except Bleak House, which I had already read twice. It was then that I discovered a whole new world represented by the editorial and advertising matter of "Reader's Digest", (the definite article present in the title of the first issue of the magazine has been dropped, I don't know since when), through the courtesy of an acquaintance. Nothing is more true than the observation that one half of the world does not know how the other half lives. Almost equally true would be the fact that the readers of "Frontier" and "Reader's Digest" are total strangers to each other. Since building bridges across is a valuable social function, I propose in this brief article to acquaint the readers of this paper of a world with which they might not be familiar. It would have been even more 'rewarding', certainly so in a literal sense, to acquaint the readers of the "Digest" with "Frontier". But we being very poorer than the "Digest" do not interest them as much as they do us. In fact, 'interest' is too mild a word to describe the emotions evoked in me as I dipped into, and later, feverishly read the twenty-three issues of the magazine that were loaned to me; 'fascination', though of a rather morbid kind, would be closer to the *mot juste* (I have taken to dropping this tag, which I picked up by assiduously studying the ways of increasing one's WORD POWER in the pages of the magazine).

"The Reader's Digest", more than any other mass circulation magazine, has constantly exposed the evils of communism [small 'c'], and has as consistently

portrayed the blessings of the free-economy system". Thus, DeWitt Wallace, Founder of the Reader's Digest, quoted in the 50th Anniversary Album of the magazine issued in March 1972. Pretty straightforward one should say. It is but appropriate that the magazine should be patronised not merely by unabashed capitalistic advertisers, but even by the Government of India and the various State governments, who not merely advertise regularly—the issue with the 'ideological commitment' has six government establishments touting their wares—but even take sixty-page advertising supplements, of course in collaboration with many capitalistic firms. In fact, the stirring declaration of ideological commitment notwithstanding, there can only be two cheers for the Free Economy System; the full complement of three cheers is for our Mixed Economy System, triumphantly vindicated, if nowhere else, at least in the advertising pages of the "Reader's Digest".

Some years ago, I caught a friend of mine leafing through the pages of another capsulated magazine—"Imprint"—and in the intellectual arrogance of foolish youth, scoffed at her. It is only recently that I have realised what a useful function these capsulated repositories of wisdom perform. A barrowful of wisdom, in fact; the whole world of human and superhuman knowledge, 'without tears' in the easy way, available for three and a half rupees. The spiritual comforts too, come to think of it, offered by Dr B. Graham and Dr N. V. Peale. Coy revelations about sex; human anatomy; word power; armchair travelogue; adventure and romance; you ask it, the "Digest" has it. All this, and ideological commitment too, which is never forgotten in any issue.

But it is so easy to sneer at the 'without tears' approach of the magazine. The magazine undoubtedly reflects the general trend of our culture, the desperate anxiety to hurry and gobble things up and the search for the digestive pills. The central metaphor is fully appropriate. The magazine is a digestive lozenge, soothing the rumbles of outrage in one's moral belly.

Even more interesting than the editorial matter is the advertisement matter

in the magazine. Every conceivable dream and fantasy is sold, again in a very convenient, encapsulated, with-no-tears form. Even happiness is available for only six rupees. (From Here to Happiness! by Dr Champion K. Teutsh and Joel Marie Teutsh, 'proving beyond doubt the success of the "Human Dynamics" method'). In fact, happiness is sold under a variety of forms and shapes, apart from being marketed in its pure form. Even when a couple is copulating—as absolute a portrait of happiness as you can have,—they sell nail polish. After all, there has to be a link between nail polish and happiness, and it required the genius of the advertising executives to discover the link and in fact spread it out in bedroom shades on the pages of a mass circulation magazine. At some moments, or rather always, the demand for a shit undoubtedly takes precedence over the demands for a copulation, and a variety of commodoes, in technicolour, promise further delights and "happiness". 'Are you happy?' Indeed, it is Joy Everlasting that is sold in the editorial and the advertising matter, every month. To be happy without tears might seem pretty easy on the surface. But the magazine demonstrates how it can be done in a most sophisticated manner, month after month. Surely, a most progressive step was taken when we launched the Indian edition of the magazine. But it is time the Government nationalised the paper and made it an entirely Indian enterprise. It might be sooner than we think.

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Clippings

Behind China's Beethoven Discord

Both the bourgeois and the revisionist press have had a field day recently poking fun at the current ideological struggle taking place in China. A special source of merriment has been the debate on the question of "pure" music with particular reference to the work of the great German composer, Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827).

As might be expected, few quotations from the Chinese critiques have appeared in print anywhere. The usual practice is exemplified by Harold Schonberg, the music critic of the *New York Times*, who wrote that Peking had proclaimed "Beethoven and Schubert were decadent, capitalistic, running-dog composers". The descriptive terms are all Schonberg's, not China's. The *Christian Science Monitor* headlined its account of the debate: "Ugly Peking rumours say Beethoven was a capitalist". Tom Foley in the March 6 *Daily World* writes that "the Maoists have begun attacking Ludwig van Beethoven... in more or less the same way they have been hysterically denouncing Confucius, the ancient Chinese philosopher".

Bourgeois music critics, like Schonberg, making no pretence to a Marxist view don't have the vaguest idea of the real substance of the current debate in China. For instance, the article in question, which appeared in the *People's Daily* is entitled: "Does a musical piece without a title have no class character?" The article criticizes those who say that "music is music, and nothing else". It says that these people "are simply closing their eyes to the social content and class nature of music".

What is involved here, as should be

readily apparent, is one of the classical debates between historical materialism and bourgeois idealism.

There is considerable confusion on the question posed by the *People's Daily*. Many people say, "How can there be a political content to a piece of instrumental music which is simply called 'Sonata in A Minor'?" It is evident by the very fact of this debate, that there are some in China, who have advanced precisely such a classless view.

The *People's Daily* article confronts the question quite directly. "Musical works without titles composed in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries were fruits of European bourgeois society. They are saturated with ideas and feelings characteristic of the bourgeoisie. They stand for the interests of the bourgeoisie and serve the capitalist system."

The article goes on to give examples of what it means, citing Beethoven's Sonata No. 17 and Schubert's Symphony in B minor. Beethoven himself, it is pointed out, when asked about the meaning of his work, told listeners to read Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. "That play," says the *People's Daily* quite correctly, "is a hymn of the bourgeois theory of the universality of human nature." Schubert's work, on the other hand, reflects feelings of "deep depression, vacillation, pessimism and despair" which was characteristic of many "bourgeois democratic intellectuals" who were then being persecuted by a reactionary feudal Austrian regime.

Another *People's Daily* article, picking up the debate, says, "Whether one maintains the Marxist theory of classes or the bourgeois theory of human nature—this has always been the focus of the struggle between the two classes, the two times and the two world outlooks and approaches to art and literature."

Both bourgeois and revisionist commentators have concluded that this discussion is so patently absurd that it can only be treated with derision. "It

is all so stupid," writes Foley in the *Daily World*, "you really don't know whether to laugh or cry about it but so far I've leaned toward laughter." Then, to demonstrate how iniquitous the Chinese communists are and to prove "the abysmal ignorance of the very highest circles of the Communist Party of China of the life and work of Lenin," Foley delivers the clinching rejoinder to the debate. "Our Maoist friends don't seem to realise," he writes, "that Beethoven was one of the favourite composers of none other than V. I. Lenin."

Does Foley mean to suggest that this endorsement by "none other than V.I. Lenin" has made Beethoven something else than a bourgeois composer? Or that Karl Marx's admiration for Balzac changed the class character of the great French writer's work?

Beethoven was a towering musical artist whose work, in the main, reflected class ideology that was progressive in its time. His music helped to orchestrate the coming to power of the bourgeoisie when that class was playing a progressive role historically. Another Chinese article, this one in the *Guangming Daily* (March 13) says of Beethoven's 5th Symphony, for instance, that it is "a reflection of the spirit of resistance of the newly emerging bourgeoisie seeking liberation from feudalism."

But it is this same bourgeoisie, now become the custodians of a dying and reactionary social system, which continues to wrap itself in the mantle of past cultural glories in order to create the illusion that it continues to play a progressive role. And artists like Beethoven, for all that they played a progressive role in their time, are likewise

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Fallacy Of Parallels

BY A DRAMA CRITIC

bound by the historical limitations of their own epoch. The concept of the "universality of human nature," for example, was progressive in that day because it was advanced as a theoretical blow against the rigid class privileges and stratification of feudalism. When Beethoven proclaimed, to Schiller's text in the 9th Symphony, that "all men are brothers," he expressed the democratic sentiments of all classes opposed to feudalism.

"The universality of human nature" in our own time, however, has become a reactionary concept. It denies the class struggle and would make of capitalist and proletarian alike, "brothers," or to put it more bluntly, it is the philosophy of class collaborationism.

It is for these reasons that Marxist-Leninists have always understood that while the proletariat inherits the great cultural legacies of the past, it accepts this legacy in a critical fashion, ever mindful of its class character.

One expects that the revisionists would assail China on this matter, if for no other reason than the obviously opportunist one that they believe they can demonstrate their own respectability to their bourgeois associates while denouncing these ludicrous Chinese "madmen." But there is a deeper reason, too. The abandonment of class struggle by revisionism must manifest itself in the cultural sphere as well.

And this is what the great Beethoven controversy is really all about.

(Irwin Silber in *Guardian*, New York).

For Frontier contact

BANI PRAKASH,

Panhazari

Gauhati-I,

Assam.

IF Nandikar considers *Shahi Sambahad* as a propaganda play and nothing more, it can congratulate itself on a satisfying result. It has attacked the atrocious political and economic situation of the country today in no roundabout way. Imprisonment without trial, killing within jails, loss of freedom of opinion, hoarding and profiteering encouraged or condoned by the Administration, staggeringly high prices, food scarcity — all these becoming more and more rampant and we, the middle class people who, incidentally, go and enjoy the theatre, are all helplessly observing the deterioration like so many eunuchs. That is the message of *Shahi Sambahad* and at a time when theatre-people are being killed and harassed in so many ways by the police and their chamchas, the message needs to be conveyed. It is all the more commendable because Nandikar seems to be coming out of its infatuation with foreign plays and psychological claptrap. The only pity is that the people responsible for the construction of the play do not show capabilities of producing sharp language as they have done before. Without a bite in the language, the satire loses much of its impact. The songs are flat, the tunes are cliché-ridden, the lights are gimmicky. And because of the faulty construction, there is not much scope of acting. The women in the play are particularly irritating, not because they lack acting talents but because they have been thrown into roles which are no roles at all. The only redeeming actor in the whole play is the fellow who with an endearing smirk was all along a pleasure to watch and his choric comments were not as totally flat as the rest of the play.

But all this, if one tends to treat the play as an ephemeral propaganda play. If, however, Nandikar means it as something more, it has to be said that the play suffers from gross intellectual limitations. (Primarily because of a fallacy of parallels. The scene is cast around 1712-1719 A.D., when one of the later and lesser Moghuls, Emperor

Farrukhsiyar, was deposed by his scheming assistants, the Sayyid brothers. The emperor was an idiot, women-bound and a puppet whom the nobility, their principal being the Sayyid brothers, used for their own greedy advancement. But the decadent feudal period of Farrukhsiyar has little semblance with today's Indian scene which is a crucible of feudalism, capitalism and imperialism. The situation today is far more complex, with reactionary forces passing as progressive. The Moghul period, referred to in the play, was a comparatively simple time—a time of feud between the king and the aristocrats, a result of which was the misery of the masses. By this fallacy of parallels, the contemporaneity of the play loses wholly its political tension. And because of this parallel we are forced into a claustrophobic situation. In the play we see a man, who has sympathy for the masses and who has been empowered to do something for the masses by an eccentric ruler, going into the same conspiratorial work and getting defeated. Defeated of course he will be, not only because he belongs to a period of history when he was defeated, but more because he is no better than his scheming rivals in his method of work. There is little to choose between this leader and the scheming nobles and therefore the play generates no tension. His yellings when he pronounced the death sentence on five hoarders, appear more hysterical than revolutionary because the audience was told earlier that these five had just been picked up by the nobles as scapegoats and do not at all represent the hoarders and therefore the death sentence would not mean the collapse of the hoarding system. If Nandikar intends to represent the mass leader in the play as symbolic of the working class leadership today, the message of the play may acquire a more serious significance: there is reason however to believe that Nandikar has no such intention and gives no indication either. On the whole Nandikar has succeeded in evoking the gruesome and nauseating Moghul decadence; but the point of the play is its contemporaneity, which is unfortunately not there.

Alauddin Music Circle

BY OUR MUSIC CRITIC

A private concert under the auspices of the recently organised Alauddin Music Circle was held on August 25, at the residence of Dr M. Chakraborty. Mr Robin Ghosh, a disciple of the late Alauddin Khan, presented Sajhagiri, an obsolete raga of the Marwa scale which is obtained combining Purvi and Purya having for its dominant and subdominant the major third and seventh respectively. It takes both varieties of the fourth and sixth.

Mr Ghosh initiated his elaboration with alap in the first tetrachord and the major seventh of the lower octave. On the descent from the upper tetrachord when he was sustained on the major fourth it

produced an aesthetic pleasure. The alap gradually unfolded itself in the grand dhrupadi style. The tan compositions were deftly executed producing various shades and colour: Sajhagiri is a scholastic raga and it was very capably explored by Mr Ghosh.

He chose for his second number the romantic nocturnal raga Malgunja. The combination was in trital but the elaboration was rather overdone. Capable accompaniment on the tabala was provided by Mr Swapan Choudhury.

Earlier Mr Vishnupada Das, a folk singer of Bangladesh, sang some songs of North Bengal.

that it would alone mobilise the people, arm the people, organise the people, build the army, establish the base area, spread politics, fight revisionism, build the party and to cap all, create the New Man. Preposterously enough, a communist came to be defined it. (It was said, he was not a communist who had not dipped his hands in the blood of the class enemy).

So much is indisputable. Much is left unsaid, as the right to criticise is the sole right of the Party as a whole. No individual, however, 'big', nor any group of individuals, nor any group of the CPI (ML) can arrogate to himself or itself, the right to review the past. Such arrogance would amount to self-righteousness and self-boasting, of claiming himself or itself as the 'only one', the 'only successors to the CPI(ML)', the only upholders of the correct line etc. It may lead to saying that C.M. was the villain of the piece or that C.M. was all correct.

By turning out tons of documents, by producing a plethora of programmes, the concerned have done great disservice to the cause of unity of the Party. The heaps of documents mushrooming every day have done enough mischief by confusing the mind of the common man and the understanding of the cadre. The cause of the unity of the party would be best served if the concerned desist from dumping in the public their necessarily subjective stuff and coolly and collectedly await or act for the unity of the party. This is said without prejudice to the principled struggle between lines going on all through. The absence of a united party, in its present existence only in groups and individuals, tends to anarchy and indiscipline ruling the roost. Even responsible comrades in jail forget their limitations, ignore revolutionary norms and practice and hardly resist the temptation of rolling out their tons of documents, only to add to the prevailing confusion outside. The free-for-all attitude must immediately be put an end to for unity's sake.

The tall claims of different CPI(ML) groups, each claiming itself as the only true successor to the CPI(ML), stand in the way of unity. Liquidationists of all hues are active all around. Just now

A Step In The Right Direction

KRANTI KUMAR AND OTHER COMRADES

THE 17th June 1974 meeting of "the organising comrades of two different CPI(ML) factions working in different districts of West Bengal", which discussed "the problems of unification of the Party and of other revolutionary forces in the present situation", was a step in the right direction. We broadly agree with its formulations and we call upon all genuine Marxist-Leninists, especially the different CPI(ML) groups, to heed to the call for unity and act.

The positive contributions in the context of the Indian revolution rendered by the CPI(ML) are inexorable facts of history.

To deny this is to deny reality, rewrite and twist history. But it is also a fact that from the very inception of the CPI(ML) and even before, the leadership had turned its back against many revolutionary groups, slammed the door on some and squeezed yet

some others out. Indeed, the leadership tried all along to keep the CPI(ML) insulated from all other revolutionary groups. This erroneous trend has to be rectified.

The Eighth or the First Congress of the Party was as much a victory over right opportunism as it was a surrender to left-sectarianism. The erroneous line of annihilation as the "highest form of class struggle and the beginning of guerilla warfare", came to be politically theorised as "the only way to mobilise the people", out of the non-political, non-organisational but purely military principle, "Guerilla action alone can mobilise the people...etc...", advocated by Lin Piao at a time when the Chinese revolution went adventurist by resorting to positional and mobile warfare, abandoning Mao Tse-tung's strategy and tactics of guerilla warfare. Later on, the 'annihilation line' was so much blown out of proportion and so much dogmatised as to be blindly believed in as the cure for all ills—the panacea. It was believed that it would solve all the problems of the Indian revolution;

*Kranti Kumar, long under detention, was a member of the Politbureau of the Central Committee of the CPI(ML)—May 1970 Party Congress.

they pose the main danger. A species of them throws up its hands, tears and fists the air in a show of frustration to demonstrate that there is no more any CPI(ML), that the party is in a shambles, and prescribes a fresh beginning right from scratch. Another variety of liquidationists makes conspiratorial soundings for recalling the armed revolution and disbanding the party. This betrayer-brand quotes the one-time declaration of Ho Chi Minh for dissolving the party. It underplays, rather suppresses, the fact that in the best interests of his country's revolution, Ho Chi Minh only changed the name of the party to 'the Workers' Party' and sent the whole organisation underground, thus saving the whole party.

Then, you have Lin Piaoists. This funny group has the betrayer, the careerist and the double-dealer as its inspirer. There can be no common ground with this group for any purpose, let alone for unity.

Modern revisionism remains the main danger. We should never lose sight of this nor minimise its danger at any time in view of its being headed by the Soviet social-imperialism. While salvaging the Party from left-sectarianism there is always the danger of receding again into the trap of right opportunism. We should at all costs be vigilant about this danger.

Friendly Criticism

We endorse generally the decisions of the June 17 meeting; and urge on the participants comrades to take concrete follow-up action on what they had decided in the meeting. But before thinking aloud about the concrete steps to be taken, we should like to put in some friendly criticism.

The meeting held, "At the same time, it should be clearly stated, that if the CPI(ML) leaders do not do anything about this, the cadres are not bound to wait...the CPI(ML) cadres will have to take the entire responsibility of reviving the Party". Is it not a threat? Is it necessary to say this just now? Does this help unity efforts? Let first things be attended to first; and last things last. Why press that the CPI(ML) leaders will not do anything about this? In fact, their not doing anything will be known only after some time. So, first comes your concrete action in bringing

about unification. Should you not wait for the outcome of your call followed by action? Are you not giving rise to a misgiving that yet another centre is about to sprout, from your combined group, at some point of time whenever you would feel it right to say that the leaders did not do anything about unification?

We on our part, of course, understand your zeal, earnestness and genuineness.

It is high time the party was united. It is only a unified CPI(ML) with a proper stance of uniting with other revolutionary groups and forces that can lead the Indian revolution. We would like to recall that there was the 'Open Letter' signed by the Six Comrades in jail, which for the first time called for the unity of the different groups.

You have rightly recalled Comrade Ashim Chatterjee's statement regarding the evaluation of Comrade Charu Mazumdar and the need for unity. But you did not, for whatever reason, mention the 'Open Letter' even as referred to by him in his statement, exhorting comrades to heed its call for unity. (It is reliably learnt that only a synopsis of the 'open letter' as just a news item was contemplated by the signatories. But by a lapse, either intentional or unintentional, the text originally meant for cadres only was made public. It was any way a serious lapse and a grave error).

For principled unity, at least a minimum basis is necessary for the different groups of the CPI(ML) to rally round. Will the fact of their once belonging to the CPI(ML) which led the armed struggle provide enough basis for bringing about the unity of the Party? Is it not a reality that the different CPI(ML) groups have taken strong and separate postures, supported by their respective documents of programme, tactical line, and self-critical report? Is it not also a reality that each of them claims to be the 'only one' and at that 'the only correct one' and its document to be the 'only basis around which others should rally for any unity? Well, in this context, will a mere call for unity or a call for giving up such claims suffice for achieving unity? There are groups,

once belonging to the CPI(ML), but now showing themselves off as Lin Piaoists. It is a pious hope that all groups including those with antagonistic stances will positively respond to the unity call.

A call for unity should not merely be a call in the air. Concrete action should follow it. A call should not be allowed to go abstract or idealistic.

Some Suggestions

To begin with, there must be a minimum basis; i.e., an area of maximum agreement, a common plane to which different groups can be made to converge. By whatever name you call it—this meeting of the different groups for the purpose of achieving a new unity of the CPI(ML)—it is not a co-ordination committee to organise a new party from scratch.

What basis can there be other than the "Spring Thunder Over India" article? Add to this the fraternal suggestions by the CPC. The 'Open Letter' carried a pruned version of the fraternal suggestions. The fraternal suggestions are none other than the rich experiences of the great Chinese revolution. A complete version of the fraternal suggestions along with the 'Spring Thunder Over India' article should be the main props of the unity efforts.

With the inviolable, incontrovertible basis for dialogue ready at hand, meet the different groups and individuals once belonging to the CPI(ML) and prepare them for a dialogue across the table on that basis. Take your own time to draw as large a number of the Central Committee members of the CPI(ML) as possible to the common table, for the purpose. Let them search for further areas of agreement and develop them into carrying out step by step what you decided at the June 17 meeting.

Let all comrades involved in and responsible for this unity effort remember Comrade Mao's teaching:

"Practise Marxism, not revisionism; unite, and don't split; be open and above board, and don't intrigue and conspire".

It should also be remembered:

"Everything in the world is divided into two, and the same is true of the Party. The struggle within the Party

between unity and split will continue as long as there is class struggle in society and the struggle between the two lines within the Party. Outside the party there are other parties. Inside it there are groupings. This has always been so." (IX Issue of Red Flag, 1973).

Letter

On Unification

Being a cadre of the CPI(ML) I cannot remain silent when some crucial questions are being raised and debated.

The question of unity is not so simple as Sri Santosh Rana and others make it appear. The unity of revolutionaries and the unity of counter or sham revolutionaries is not identical. A real communist party has to pass through the bitter struggle between two lines and it is quite in keeping with the laws of development that Plekhanovs rise and die everywhere, and Lenins emerge, fight and triumph.

It is unfortunate that the Naxalbari uprising could not be sustained. It is tragic that Comrade Charu Mazumdar died when he was on the point of correcting his mistakes and making a self-critical analysis. The agents of the Lin Piao clique then succeeded in usurping the party and in creating deep frustration, distrust and inertia, upholding the left adventurist line in the name of following "The Respected Leader." Comrade Charu Mazumdar. They went to the extent of saying that even the CPC could be defied in the name of Comrade Charu Mazumdar. No one can advise revolutionaries to unite with these elements.

Again the question is not how many of the CC members met in 1971 and revived the CC excluding CM and Saumya. The question remains whether these majority members headed by SN etc. were politically correct or not. How does Santosh Rana think that we the cadres had accepted their thesis that CM followed a vacillating and national chauvinistic line at the time of the Indian aggression in 1971? It was the Bengal-Bihar-Orissa Border Region-

al Committee led and controlled by Ashim Chatterjee and Santosh Rana which was rejected by the rank and file on this question. So, how do they expect Comrade Saumya and other revolutionary leaders to treat their CC as the revolutionary centre and come under their banner? Unity cannot be forged with people who touched the blood-stained hands of Sohan Pal and company in the jail while breaking their fast. Fundamental unity is the unity of revolutionaries at the grass-roots, not at the tower of intellectual 'heroes'. And it is cadres who are the decisive force.

A Cadre of Howrah District

Hunger-Strike

We have decided to go on an indefinite hunger-strike from August 26 in protest against jail repression on us as political prisoners. We are launching this struggle on the basis of a united programme with all those prisoners of different political persuasions who do not have any reservation in joining us in this struggle. We demand that (1) bar fetters be removed from our legs; (2) political news in newspapers and magazines be not blacked out with ink or cut out; (3) political books be allowed without restrictions; (4) adequate medical treatment.

Jail Unit
Hazariabagh Central Jail, Bihar

Attack On PLT

On the evening of August 26, the artistes, director and technicians of PLT's "Duswapner Nagari" were manhandled when they went to the Star Theatre to stage the play by the hoodlums of the ruling party carrying Congress flags. The Secretary of the PLT and the dramatist-director of the play Utpal Dutt said in a statement that not only were they (director, artistes and technicians) not allowed to enter the hall but they were also manhandled by the goondas. Even an actress was manhandled. The attackers justified their

act by saying that the play preached the ideology of the CPI(M) and CPI(ML). In other words, the attackers themselves said—the attack was, against the democratic right of free expression.

This incident shows that this anti-people government, while not discouraging the propagation of obscene and depraved plays and films, goes against any sort of publicity which is anti-government. We request the people to protest against such attacks on democratic rights.

Promode Sengupta
General Secretary, APDR
Calcutta

Does Not Click

A call for dharna, gherao and morchas on August 21 in Maharashtra was given by the Sangharsh Samiti composed of the CPM, CPI, SP, Lal Nishan, Jana Sangh and trade union organisations like the AITUC, CITU, HMS, HMP and Bharatiya Mazdoor Sabha. Some months back a similar call preceded by beating of thalis as the 'death knell' of the Congress Government was given and it was, generally, followed enthusiastically by the working class and all sections of the people. The railway strike intervened and brought to surface the lack of vision, coherent action and dynamic leadership of the opposition parties. The left parties failed to take the railmen's strike and the public support for it to the political plane. The public treated the strike on the political plane and wanted it to be fought tooth and nail. Even the Central Government was very much afraid of the situation on May 8, the day the strike began, registering a complete breakdown of transport activity in the entire country. Taking this clue, the opposition parties in Maharashtra who claim that they were serious about the strike but weep that the dictatorial Congress smashed it, should have brought key industries and municipal services in Maharashtra to a standstill. The working class should have been brought out in the street to meet the hoodlums of the Congress who were plying trucks and other transport ser-

vices which had been affected by the strike. Repression was let loose and yet the opposition leadership did not think of resisting it all out. A speaker at a public meeting was picked up by the police from the platform itself and put behind bars under DIR and yet the leaders exhorted the workers to be calm and not get provoked. At the various meetings arranged by these left parties to draw up a programme to intensify the strike, the controversy was about who would bring out in the street through a strike the sections of industry they controlled. In other words, the controversy was whether the CPI, CPM and Lal Nishan would bring cotton workers out or the followers of Fernandes would bring BEST and the municipal services to a standstill first. Even if this controversy had ended in a common understanding, were they interested in a general strike until the deadlock was solved by the Central Government? The leaders feared that once these key industries went on strike they would lose their hold over the workers of the industries they control, because the authorities would declare the strike illegal. They were therefore prepared to undertake one day's token strike in sympathy with the railway workers. They still have illusions that some haphazard demonstrations and token bandhs and gheraos can solve political problems. This is because the opposition leaders ignore the revolutionary aspect of working class struggles that the people at large have no confidence in them, though men want to resist the hardships under the capitalist system.

Again we saw the bankruptcy of the line which the left parties undertake to clear up the political mess and the consequent demoralisation of the people. As soon as the 18 MLAs who heroically prevented the Maharashtra Government from conducting the Assembly proceedings on August 5 were suspended, there should have been a bandh with gheraos and dharnas on August 6, but the public was in a mood then, as it was from a critical scarcity of kerosene and food. But the 18 MLAs chose to fight singly with a few Mahagai Pratikar Mahilas who no doubt showed courage in resisting the

police. Had the left parties given a call for a bandh until the dissolution of the Naik Ministry the situation in Maharashtra would have been different; the entire Indian people were watching the events in Bombay with interest. Battles are fought to win. In the serious attempt to win you may lose, but it does not matter, the point is whether you tried to fight well, seriously and fearlessly. But the programme announced by the Sangharsh Samiti is a tame affair and if it flops one should not wonder.

P. T. Bhagwat
Sion, Bombay

Harassment

We are surprised to learn that the police raided on June 24 the house of Mr Abdul Matin, an active member of the Legal Aid Committee and also acting as the Secretary of the Dr D. N. Kotnis Memorial Committee, West Bengal, which promotes the cause of India-China friendship. The police took away the youngest brother of Mr Matin, a twelve-year-old student of Class VIII, to the local police station, without assigning any reason whatsoever. They also took away some valuable books and two watches and some ornaments.

The Committee records its strong protest against such illegal and undemocratic actions of the police.

Amar Prasad Chakraborty
President, Legal Aid Committee
Calcutta

Garm Hava

The letter about Garm Hava (August 24) by a certain Film-goer presents a rich mixture of nonsense, ignorance and ill-concealed communal feeling, not to speak of jargon-mongering. The logic, or rather the lack of it, of his argument against the film is truly astounding. To start with, he suggests that it is quite unnecessary to talk about the sufferings of the Muslims in India; indeed, to do so indicates partisan feelings. Why? Because the Hindus in Pakistan had to suffer more. What objectivity?

Then he proceeds with great aplomb to demonstrate his grasp of sociology. But he cannot distinguish between structure and content and goes on to say that Salim Mirza's family is totally feudal, for remnants of feudalism still adhere to his structure (has he ever heard of a Hindu joint family?). That Salim Mirza has no landed property and that he is a businessman appear to be completely irrelevant issues to the Film-goer.

He has no idea about the meanings of the numerous terms which he uses so glibly in his letter. His concern for the lack of political consciousness among the different classes of the Muslim 'society' is really touching. The knitting of his pontifical brows as he rebukes "Frontier" for being too indulgent towards the Muslims is hilariously funny. Of course, he assures the Muslims of his critical sympathy. We feel very relieved by his assurance.

It is not very hard to understand the motivations of our Film-goer. His attitude unequivocally places him in that category of bigots who consider all minority communities, particularly the Muslims, to be inferior and who are prepared to be condescending and big-brotherly towards these people provided they do not try to assert themselves and are properly grateful. These are the people who shout so much about secularism and democracy.

Sincerity, honesty, objectivity and such other human qualities are becoming extinct very fast. The authorities and their henchmen frown upon these and woe to him who dares to oppose them. But some men are foolish indeed. They continue to show honesty in their artistic creations. So, they are immediately besieged by the vultures praying upon our struggling and oppressed national culture. Hence, the attacks on "Garm Hava". Hence, the letter from our Film-goer.

Balai Dutta
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FRONTIER

Sonar Bangla

From the building up of a Sonar Bangla when Mr Siddhartha Ray took the oath as Chief Minister in March 1972 to the setting up of the Wanchoo Commission in July 1974 is the long, weary way along which Mr Ray has ploded on. We are now reminded of what was promised to the people. End the rule of the barbarians—was the battle cry of the present ministers. The charges they had levelled against the second UF Ministry (1969-70) have boomeranged. Law and order? Newspapers, in spite of the newsprint cut, are crowded with stories of bloodshed, murder, rape and arson. The number of unemployed youths is increasing by leaps and bounds. Frustration and discontent are growing. Essential commodities, including foodstuff, are rarest in the market or available at black-market prices. The rich are getting richer and the people are starving. Cor-

ruption, nepotism and bribery are rampant in every sphere of life.

Pramatha Sengupta
Calcutta

City With Many Faces

Calcutta today is a city with many faces. Utpal Dutt in his latest play **Dushswapner Nagari** explored the contours of one such face—a sad and anguished record of police terrorism and shoddy power politics. Calcutta also offers a strange contrast between extreme affluence on the one hand and abysmal poverty on the other; in the last few years the city has been inundated by boutiques, beauty parlours, fashionable textile shops, sleazy bars and restaurants. Skyscrapers rise hideously, from street corners, obliterating the skyline. Air-conditioned imported cars lend the city a false meretricious charm. High priced women's magazines flood the book stalls offering a rich fare of

enticing advertisements to lure the rich into a wasteful spending spree. All these excrescences are a step from a dying and decadent society which has to invent fresh gimmicks to refurbish its tarnished image. The poor have absolutely no place in all this.

Two worlds exist side by side in Calcutta—a glittering one built on the blood, sweat and tears of the poor and a hand-to-mouth, lack-lustre enfeebled one which gives much more than it can ever hope to receive. Strangely enough, Leftist movements here have begun and ended, campaigns for the underdog started and then abandoned and all the while the staunchless wound of poverty bleeds inexorably. Nothing seems to be able to make a dent in the complacency of the rich and the fatalistic despair of the downtrodden. Calcutta is destined to be a city of nightmares for a long time to come.

Samir Mukherjee
Calcutta

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