

frontier

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STANDSTILL

THIS season the thoughts of those in power—and in trouble—sometimes turn to war. Others try to go out for a change of air while the most enterprising among those who stay back make a hell of a noise—and a lot of money—in the name of Durga puja, in this State.

The revelry will be less this time, because of the culpable food situation amounting to famine, in many parts of the country. The influx of the starving into Calcutta, however, seems to have been checked by the authorities in a bid to insulate the city from the stark horror. Stories and photographs of the starving, the semi-naked and the dead, of toddlers with vacant faces sitting in the middle of the road, are still there in the press, but an impression is being created of a slight turn for the better; the price rise, it is said, has been checked by the so-called drive against smugglers, foreign exchange racketeers and hoarders. Whatever the reality, this is not felt by the commoners. Besides, the level to which prices have risen is so steep that even if they remain there or climb down a bit will not help.

Elder statesmen are worried. Mr Kamaraj fears that the economic situation will encourage trends towards autonomy and secession. The ex-President, Mr Giri, thinks that violence is inevitable and that the hungry will start entering the houses of the haves for food and shelter and the situation may lead to anything.

It would be good if they did so. But, barring stray sparks of protest and violence here and there, the starving are not stirring much. Starvation leads to physical fatigue and fatalism, unless the victims are organised by class-conscious people with a sense of mission and history. Otherwise one bare meal every second or third day keeps the revolution away, though not death. Mr Kamaraj and Mr Giri need not be so uneasy. Besides, Mrs Gandhi is there, with her bag of tricks. Her followers, too, flourish a wand or two.

Mr Bahuguna of Uttar Pradesh has, at one stroke, abolished the debts to moneylenders of millions of Harijans and scheduled tribes in his State. But both he and the indebted know that it is just a gimmick. Without any alternative sources of credit, the landless labourer—and his children and grandchildren—will continue to be in unending bondage; he cannot annoy the moneylender who, in many cases these days, is also the jotedar and the trader, i.e., the most important person in the village and therefore to the ruling party. It is because other sources of credit like co-operatives are dominated by the jotedars

that the land-grab movement during the second U.F. Government in West Bengal ended in the taken-over surplus land going back to the jotedars concerned or other members of their class. The poor, elated and then crestfallen peasants who could not till the land had to eat the humble pie and are more demoralised than ever. They would not even register their claims.

The Indian situation is most unlikely to improve. But it does not make the authorities lose their sleep every night. The people are docile, the left parties angry but helpless. Mr J. P. Narayan is of course creating trouble, but if he can be checkmated, it still serve as an example to the rest of the recalcitrant. Meanwhile, the population will continue to decline, through disease and starvation, to the delight of the Malthusians. If by chance hunger turns into anger, the police, CRP, army etc. are there; or the mind of the masses can be diverted to thoughts of war.

Kuow Why ?

APM writes: :

Indian businessmen continue to be agitated over what is being increasingly referred to as this country's least supportable scandal. Various rumours keep on floating stubbornly over what Mr B. has paid for a certain "know how". Mr B.'s "front" has purchased the automobile manufacturing know-how that Maruti Ltd. would be using, at a price estimated by the consensus to be Rs. 65-75 lakhs. Before the deal was gone through an amendment was made to the parliamentary act that sets down rules for purchase and sale of technical know-how. It appears that before the amendment, the law allowed only corporate sellers exemption from income

tax to the extent of 40% of the total sale price. After the amendment, the law reads as follows: corporation/person, thus enabling an individual, along with a corporation, to enjoy the tax benefit. Therefore, so the rumours go, Master S. has got away with a clean Rs. 26 lakhs, if not more.

If the deal were true, how much did the indestructible Mr B. stand to gain? Interestingly, none of the outraged businessmen believes that Mr B. has at all been interested in purchasing Maruti's know-how. According to them, this is quite unnecessary because, for one thing, that company does not possess any worthwhile know-how and for another, the Birijs are the least interested in automobiles. As a matter of fact, their effort in passing on the burden called HMI to General Motors stems from a strong desire to end their automobile connection, to the extent necessary. Thus, it would be quite illogical for them to take a renewed interest in an industry which is too cumbersome to be attractive profit-wise.

Even then, if one must go by this century's least excusable scandal, the fact remains that a few millions have changed hands because Mr B. has found it necessary to placate Mrs G. Even to the act of purchase, as the critical businessmen would have it, a refined touch was added; the law was amended and Master S.'s own cut out of the deal was ensured.

In more than one way, the rumours concerning the Maruti deal reflect the cancerous mind that most Indians possess today. Corruption is so truly all-pervasive that individual Indians can no longer keep themselves untouched by it. Fellow-businessmen are no longer feeling comradely toward Mr B. because the latter has been cleverer than most of them in squaring up the deal in the manner he has. For one thing, the whole deal is above board. For another, the money involved is fully accounted for. And yet the ulterior motive behind it is palpable. Some people have proved to be much more subtly corrupt than their fellow-Indians. Hence the rumours persist, for they also reflect the unsatiated desire of others.

Report On A Jail

A correspondent writes:

The Berhampur Special Jail was opened in 1972 for Naxalite convicts and Naxalite detenus under the MISA. In November that year the warders made a brutal attack on the prisoners, quite a number of whom became invalid for life. Some of the prisoners, who are locked up in dark cells for 24 hours, have not seen the light of day since 1972 and have almost been driven into madness.

Water supply is sometimes suspended for two or three days running. The prisoners go without a bath and get a scanty amount of drinking water.

While most of the prisoners suffer inhuman treatment, a handful of traitors (chamchas as they are called) are at large. Some prisoners have to wash the clothes of the warders admitted to the jail hospital and their utensils and massage their bodies. Towards the end of 1972 the prisoners were compelled to stage **Laila Majnu**. The one who appeared as Laila was forced to spend the night with a convict overseer. During the last two years the prisoners have been compelled, by sheer physical violence, to sing Hari-Kirtan daily from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Go to the Central Tower, and you will find signs of what is done to those who protest against this or any other thing.

Food is bad and inadequate; the quota of meat and fish is often withheld on the ground that the contractor has failed, but the whole quantity is registered as having been received. One can imagine where the money goes.

There is no library. Daily papers which reach the jail are censored. Books, too. No political book is allowed. The prisoners cannot correspond with the outside world.

Medical arrangements: The doctors hardly listen to the patients. Examining them is considered superfluous. A few conventional mixtures and tablets do for every kind of disease.

One has to buy things like tooth-paste, soap, biris or cigarettes at three times the market price. Even these suffer reduction in quantity as they pass

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Inflation West And East

JOAN ROBINSON

As the press will be closed for about a fortnight from October 21, the next issue of FRONTIER will be that of November 9.

through the hands of the head warder and his chamchas.

Some 130 prisoners are lodged in this jail, 20 or 30 being MISA detenus and the rest Naxalite convicts. The jail is surrounded by two companies of CRP, while the strength of the jail staff is about 150. The Government spends Rs. 200,000 on this jail every month.

A UNI report from Chaibasa says: 59 undertrial prisoners died in Seraikela Sub-Jail in Singhbhum district of Bihar in recent months, according to informed sources. Following complaints, the State Jail Minister ordered a magisterial inquiry and according to the inquiry report, the deaths were due to malnutrition, overcrowding, insanitary condition, lack of proper medical facilities and non-segregation of the undertrials suffering from leprosy and tuberculosis. Most of them died of tuberculosis, the report added.

Over 450 persons were at present lodged in the jail against the permitted capacity of 82.

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BANKURA NEWSPAPER

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OCTOBER 19, 1974

IN the West, nowadays, inflation is treated as enemy Number One. It appears as something unexpected and disconcerting. The public turn to the economists for an explanation and, apart from some revival of monetarist superstition, the economists have nothing to say.

The old orthodoxy of laissez faire, against which the Keynesian Revolution was raised, taught that the free play of market forces could be relied upon to establish equilibrium with full employment and balanced trade. The new school, which came into a position of dominance in the USA after 1945 (spreading its influence in India and everywhere else) taught that full employment can be established by means of government policy, and balanced trade by means of manipulating exchange rates, while at the same time reiterating the doctrines of laissez faire, and the adulation of the free market economy. The general burden of their song was that all the old problems had been overcome and now we would have a perpetually growing economy, in harmony and content.

The Keynesian revolution in economic theory can be summed up in two main propositions: First, the level of employment, at any moment, in a capitalist economy, depends upon the level of investment and the share of wages in national income (because saving comes mainly from non-wage incomes). Second, the level of prices in an industrial economy depends primarily upon the level of money-wage in relation to output per man employed.

The bastard Keynesian doctrine, developed in the USA, included a version of the first proposition but totally ignored the second.

It was an obvious corollary from the Keynesian theory of prices that a successful policy of maintaining near-full employment, without any other change in the industrial system, entails money-wage rates rising faster than out-

put per head and therefore a chronic tendency to rising prices.

It is a sad kind of satisfaction to say I told you so, but for the honour of the true Keynesian tradition it is necessary to point out that we were well aware of this problem from the first.

In 1936, when recovery from the great slump was by no means complete, I published a contribution to the Keynesian theory of employment:

The general upshot of our argument is that the point of full employment, so far from being an equilibrium resting place, appears to be a precipice over which, once it has reached the edge, the value of money must plunge into a bottomless abyss.¹

In 1943, looking forward to the promise of full employment after war, I argued:

Unemployment in a private-enterprise economy has not only the functions of preserving discipline in industry, but also indirectly the function of preserving the value of money. If free wage-bargaining, as we have known it hitherto, is continued in conditions of full employment, there would be a constant upward pressure upon money wage-rates.²

During the 1950s, the era in England of "you never had it so good", when unemployment rarely reached a statistical level of 2 per cent, I emphasised the hidden menace.

In formulating the theory of employment, Keynes uncovered another problem. His argument showed that unemployment is not just an accidental blemish in a private-enterprise system—it has a function. The function of unemployment in the 'laissez-faire' system is to preserve the value of money.

The main determinant of the purchasing power of money over goods and services of all kinds is its purchasing power over the labour that produces them—in other words, the general price level depends upon the level of money-wage rates relatively

to the productivity of labour. But the price level itself influences the level of money wages. Starting from any given position, a rise in prices raises the cost of living and reduces real wages, which strengthens the demand of workers for higher money wages and weakens the resistance of employers against granting them. This is the famous vicious spiral which gives an inherent instability to the value of money in a private-enterprise system.³

The problem of inflation came into official consciousness in Great Britain through the balance of payments. With a slower rate of growth of productivity than in other industrial countries, and falling behind in design and quality of new sophisticated products, rising money-rates were raising relatively costs and destroying the competitive position of British industry. For a time, a belief in exchange-depreciation as a remedy was still dominant; but for a country which imports food, depreciation raises the cost of living and throws oil on the fire of rising money-wage rates, so that the competitive advantage is soon wiped out.

Then the notion of 'just a little' unemployment as a remedy against inflation came into fashion.

It was a fairly obvious generalisation of historical experience that wage rates rise faster when unemployment is falling than when it is rising—falling unemployment means booming conditions when prices are rising and profits are high. At such a time, trade unions consider it their duty to ask for an upward revision of rates and employers are in a weak position to refuse. From this historical association, Professor Phillips distilled a 'law' by means of some very slap-dash econometric analysis, that the level (not the rate of rise) of unemployment determines the movement of money wage rates.⁴ The conception of a "pay-off" between unemployment and inflation was influential both in USA and in Great Britain.

I commented upon this view:

Some observers draw the conclusion that full employment with a stable value of money is unattainable, and that the only possible policy is to

keep a sufficient margin of unemployment to discipline the unions, and a sufficiently slack market to make employers anxious to avoid raising costs. They would be content with a mild rate of progress in real production in order to enjoy the benefit of a stable or rising value of money. Those who support this kind of view are generally of the most respectable and conservative kind, but they seem to me to be making propaganda for Communism. They seem to agree with the Marxists that capitalism cannot preserve employment and that it has reached the stage of being a fetter upon progress.⁵

However, the policy of controlling the level of wages by unemployment turned out to be unsuccessful. Kalecki foresaw the regime of the political trade cycle under which we lived for 25 years after the war. Before each election, the government in power courts popularity by a boost to the economy, reducing unemployment, and whichever party wins introduces a stern policy of restraint to try to undo the damage.

In the last three years, both in Great Britain and USA, the political trade cycle has been revolving faster and wider than before, but during the period of restraint, prices have continued to rise and powerful trade unions have still succeeded in defending their members from suffering a fall in real wages, so that the vicious spiral still revolves, though with a more and more unequal effect between various groups in society. Meanwhile, the boom in commodity prices (now beginning to subside) and the discovery by OPEC of their monopoly power has thrown a fresh lot of oil onto the inflationary fire.

At last it begins to be recognised that "incomes policy" is the only real remedy, but now the political setting for which it might have been introduced has long since dissolved.

There was a successful control of money incomes in the Netherlands for a decade after the war. The yearly percentage growth of national income in real terms was worked out, and that percentage addition was made to all money-wage rates for next year. Prices remained almost constant and the Dutch

economy enjoyed a great advantage in trade, since money costs were rising everywhere else.

The success of this system required two essential conditions. First, that everyone accepted without question his status in society and his relative share in national income; second, that total national income was rising fast enough to give everyone an appreciable improvement in his family's standard of life. Both these conditions are very far from being fulfilled in the Western world today. In an industrial country, the pattern of relative wage rates and the general level of prices govern the distribution of income. In a time of inflation everyone has to fight to maintain his share. Inflation is an expression of the class war. It can be avoided in a case of social harmony, as in the Netherlands for a time, or it can be overcome by brutal means as in Brazil.

In the Indian economy, the industrial sector is a small part of the whole. Within that sector, the vicious spiral operates as in the West, the initiating cause of rising prices coming from the rise in the price of grain. Mrs Gandhi's new deal appears to be to break the power of the trade unions, offering as a compensation a promise to make the urban middle class pay their taxes. But this is a very small corner of the problem. In India the price that determines the distribution of income is the price of grain and the class war is between those who own land and the rest.

In India, there is "Keynesian" inflation in the industrial sector and "Keynesian" unemployment due to the industrial slump, but Keynesian analysis has a narrowly limited relevance in India. The main problem is the growth of the potential labour force relatively to the stock of means of production.

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Saving-Investment Process Stagnation And Inflation

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Even if all the bright hopes of successive plans had been fulfilled, the growth of industry could have made only a small dent in this problem. The main means of production is cultivable land.

The function of unemployment of this kind is not to keep money wages from rising but to keep real wages down to a starvation level. This problem is so formidable that the mind boggles at it. The economists in India, for the most part, avert their eyes and spend their time making beautiful mathematical models of a pie in the sky or developing the logic of the pure theory of choice.

But if they did not, what would they be able to say?

1. "Full Employment", *Essays in the Theory of Employment* (1937) reprinted in *Collected Economic Papers*, Vol. IV. (Basil Blackell Oxford 1973).
2. "Planning for Full Employment", *Collected Economic Papers*, Vol. I.
3. "Full Employment and Inflation", *Collected Economic Papers*, Vol. II.
4. Cf. "What has become of the Keynesian Revolution?" *Selected Economic Writings*, O.U.P. Bombay, 1974.
5. "Full Employment and Inflation".

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Introduction

WE are now in a position where prices rise, whether output of industry or of agriculture rises or falls. Any deductions one can make on the basis of relative rates of growth of industry and agriculture are not very helpful in this situation. In India because of the very slowness of the rate of growth of agriculture and industry long-term differences between the actual rates and the rates required for keeping a balance between the two have not been very significant. When the slowness of the rate of growth could no longer be overlooked, ruling politicians conveniently discovered that for welfare of ordinary people, it is the distribution of income rather than of the aggregate output which is important. But in fact, in India the performance in respect of distribution of whatever output has been achieved has been as dismal as that in respect of growth. The slowness of the growth of output has imposed hardships on the people by making the scramble for the little that is there all that harder. Unemployment has grown and real wages of workers in agriculture and industry have fallen or remained constant.

All this was happening even before inflation set in earnest. Inflation has now begun to hurt even the privileged sections of the working class and salary earners. For the unemployed and for the ordinary workers, it has spelled disaster because of the very long lag between rises in prices and rises in wages. For the small peasants also who either buy or borrow a large part of their consumption needs of foodgrains, the rise in foodgrains prices has imposed starvation conditions. Thus inflation has enormously widened the area of suffering in this malfunctioning economy.

The causes of stagnation of output are deeper than the causes of inflation. One can think of several schemes for controlling inflation which will leave the

stagnation of output untouched. One can even think of some schemes in this direction which will further slow down economic growth, however measured.

Hence it is necessary to enquire into the basic mechanism for determining the growth of industrial and agricultural output and for finding out how government policy has altered that mechanism.

The growth in privately produced industrial output in India after independence is best seen as a series of efforts at catching up certain predetermined target levels. On the one side were the traditional consumer goods such as cotton textiles or sugar, the domestic demands for which were determined, given the accepted fixity of prices of practically all industrial goods, by the level of income and its distribution in the country. Although some of these goods were exported, because of the heavy doses of protection at home, and the very slow rate of weeding out of inefficient firms in all these industries, an aggressive export policy was not on the cards.

A second element was the increasing level of public expenditure which provided, temporarily at least, a moving target for private industry. (The increase in demand for capital goods by private consumer goods industries cannot be put in the same category, for there virtual stagnation of output meant that demand for capital formation would follow the usual humped pattern over time). However, the sustainability of increasing public expenditure with strong linkage effects of various kinds on private industry depended on (a) the sustainability of the drive to raise larger fiscal resources from the economy, (b) the maintenance of a high level of public developmental expenditure and (c) the growth in productivity of resources used by the public sector. (It might be objected that under (b) we are assuming that only developmental expenditure has strong

linkage effects. We shall try to justify this assumption later on). There is no study of (c) yet, and we do not have anything like a definite answer to the question of whether the public sector has used resources more inefficiently than the private sector would have done.

From the middle of the Second Five Year Plan period up to around 1965/66, the public sector was able to raise increasing percentages of national resources, and particularly during the years of the Third Year Plan the rate of public saving was high.¹ During these years most of the increase was accounted for by increases in indirect taxes; but at least some part of that increase went towards capital formation and thus indirectly towards the betterment of the standard of living of ordinary people. For a few years in the late sixties the percentage of national income raised by the State and Central governments declined; this percentage was going up again in the years since 1969-70. However, most of the increase went into maintaining a larger volume of unproductive expenditure and was achieved by further resort to indirect taxes, cutting into the standards of living of ordinary people. The recent exercises in budget balancing through rises in the rates of excise duty on cotton cloth and drastic increases in railway fares are only the most recent instalments in the policy package of a government which acts like a short-run profit maximising monopolist.

Third Element

A third element in the growth of private industrial production was provided by the demands of the upper income groups for newer varieties of goods. In the advanced capitalist countries a large part of the measured productivity growth comes from product innovations rather than pure economies in input use;² but such innovations create new employment and the new products ultimately form part of the consumption basket of the majority of people. In India, such product innovations have been introduced from abroad and have meant (a) the diversion of domestic scarce resources to luxury use and (b) the continuous drain of foreign exchange in the forms of payments for patents, licences, inputs,

managerial salaries and hidden incomes;³ they have also generally remained confined to the richer sections of the population. They have, however, shared the characteristic with traditional industries that in this case too the outputs have followed a logistic curve, and because of monopolistic control, economies of scale and unplanned investment, under-utilisation of capacity has quickly emerged (this has been aggravated by problems of supply of imported inputs).

The story of agricultural production is apparently different, if only because the major part of agricultural output is produced either by risk-averse small and medium farmers or by big landlords to whom ownership of land is primarily a means of controlling people. In the fifties at least, it was mainly extension of irrigation and opening up of new land which provided the impetus for agricultural growth. In the sixties, direct importation of foreign techniques and inputs played a major part in agricultural growth. Here exactly the same story of an initial spurt in production followed by tapering off in output is to be observed. The story is, of course, complicated by much larger amplitude of fluctuations in agricultural, than in industrial output. But there is both a greater similarity in the incentive mechanism of private producers and a greater continuity of government policy in getting the worst out of that incentive mechanism than is commonly believed.

The connection between private investment and private saving: As far as small investors are concerned, investment induces saving since the debt-equity ratio is likely to be low in their case. Their investment is, however, hindered by (a) lack of information, (b) diseconomies of small scale (c) absolute indivisibilities and (d) monopolistic control in production, marketing and finance. This is true not only of traders and industrialists but also of large farmers. Hence some of the potential investment goes waste in the form of hoarding of gold and silver, and conspicuous consumption (which may take the form of purchase of apparently productive equipment and its underutilisation).

For large industrialists, inability to

innovate and the slow process of diffusion of advanced techniques frustrate investment and make it more costly. Their resources are likely to be devoted to extension of control over larger areas of the economy and to export of capital—since in some respects their private rate of transformation of domestic into foreign resources will be much lower than the social rate. But on the whole, given the available technologies, their investment has consistently exceeded saving—not only in the form of mobilisation of household saving but also in the form of acquiring the lion's share of public subsidy of private business.

Governmental policy has played its part in confirming the pathology of the dependent and increasingly constrained saving-investment process in India. Throughout the fifties (and later on) the industrial sector was heavily subsidised by supplying cheap credit through a multitude of agencies. Most of the financial and licensing policies helped the consolidation of power by monopoly business houses in the country.

The resort to the financial mechanism for subsidising private business was due not simply to a mistaken theory of the causes of a low rate of private investment. The weakness of the government as fiscal authority and the fact that subsidisation through the financial institutions and through the underpricing of inputs sold by the public sector can be much better hidden from people's gaze also played their part in inducing the government to adopt this apparently thoroughly inefficient method of subsidising private business.

In the sixties the policy was extended to the subsidisation of large farmers. Although the fifties had witnessed the beginnings of a credit network for large farmers and traders connected with agriculture, the power of the latter was contained because of a lack of effective price-support policy by the government. In the sixties the government eventually encouraged concentration of economic power in the hands of a few farmers and landowners by pushing through the IADP programme, and by raising procurement prices to unheard-of levels. The senselessness of this policy can be illustrated by correlating, say, the loans

to agriculture through various agencies and the increases in output in Maharashtra.⁴

Lobbies

The government through its policies has encouraged the creation of formidable traders' and landowners' lobbies in various pockets of the country. The rate of neither industrial nor agricultural growth has been fast enough to result in the kind of cumulative differences between different regions that are observed in the early phases of a capitalist breakthrough. What has happened, however, is that in one or two regions traders, landowners and defence contractors have been able to acquire dominance over the policies of the government. The recent inflation is very largely the result of allowing this element to dictate both the spending and credit policies of the government.

One of the interesting indications of the mechanism of extracting surpluses out of a basically stagnant economy is to be found in the divergence in the rates of growth of employment of the organised sector (including manufacturing, mining, plantations, banking etc.) and of the factory sector (See Table 1). With 1961 as base, the index number of employment in the factory sector in 1969 in India as a whole comes out as 122.5; the index number of employment in the organised sector in 1969 (again with 1961 as base) comes out as 136.0. A scrutiny of the statewise figures of employment fails to reveal any consistent relationship between employment in the organised sector and employment in the factory sector, and in fact Spearman's rank Correlation co-efficient between statewise rates of growth of employment in the organised sector and in the factory sector (excluding Union Territories, Jammu & Kashmir, Manipur, Tripura and Himachal Pradesh in both cases) turned out not to be statistically significant at the 95% level of confidence (the actual value was 41 with 14 observations): A more detailed scrutiny reveals certain startling anomalies; Kerala, with only a 19 per cent growth in factory employment accounted for an 82 per cent growth in organised sector employment. Maharashtra with an 18

per cent growth in factory employment accounted for a 54 per cent growth in employment in the organised sector. Gujarat with a 15 per cent increase in employment in the factory sector accounts for 26 per cent increase in employment in the organised sector. Mysore with a 46 per cent increase in factory employment accounts for 77 per cent increase in organised sector employment. West Bengal with only an 11 per cent increase in factory employment accounts for a 33.5 per cent increase in employment in the organised sector. The small size of the base and growth in plantation employment or capitalist farming might explain some of these divergences in some cases (such as Kerala or Mysore); but such easy explanations will not take us far in the case of Maharashtra and Gujarat. The divergence in West Bengal also requires a more complicated explanation: a drastic 'reduction' in factory employment since 1966 and the political drive to mitigate the problem of urban open employment could go some way towards explaining the divergence. On the other side, Bihar with a 36 per cent increase in factory employment accounts for only an 11 per cent increase in employment in the organised sector and Orissa with an 86 per cent increase in factory employment accounts for a 12 per cent increase in employment in the organised sector. Here again, special factors such as a very small base of factory employment in the case of Orissa should be taken into account. But one cannot help avoiding the suspicion that the moneyed people in certain regions have succeeded in removing the surpluses out of the production of certain other regions and in the essentially parasitic capitalist regime that has grown up in India where increased profit on alienation is more important than say increased profit on lowering the value of labour power through innovations, success in business ("entrepreneurship") depends very largely on the ability to manipulate the financial and political levers of the State. It may also be pointed out that economies of scale in the power to exploit often appear as technological economies of scale; contrariwise many putative uses

of technological economies of scale turn out as involving diseconomies of scale since the economies get eroded by the need to redistribute the surplus among the privileged partners as the enterprises become enclaves of affluence. (The excessive retardation in the rate of growth of industrial employment fathered by dependence on foreign technology and encouraged by deliberate government policies has accentuated the ballooning of the unproductive sector. An analysis of industrial growth in Gujarat and Maharashtra where the new "technology-intensive" industries have tended to be concentrated would confirm this point). Smuggling and accumulation of capital through the evasion of taxes become as legitimate as and, in fact, better paying than, genuinely productive activity. In the bourgeois system of national accounting of course, all these incomes should rank on par with the wages of actual workers in factories and farms.

Until perhaps the middle sixties the Government of India directly tried to counteract this trend. But now it has just become another partner in this game of grab-as-grab-can: the recent increases in excise duties on essential goods and in railway fares are a clear indication of this. In a market where the demands for practically all commodities and services consumed by the common man exceed their supply it is easy to squeeze a large and larger surplus out of his output the only question is when will the proverbial flexibility of the ordinary Indian reach its stress limit?

It is interesting that the general conclusion that has been reached by considering the regional variations is also confirmed by inspection of data relating to finances of private and public limited companies.⁵ Generally speaking, the large joint stock companies had higher profit rates and smaller shares of wages to value added than the small public and private limited companies. Further, the foreign controlled rupee companies had the highest profit rate and the smallest shares of wages in value added. It might be considered curious that the foreign joint stock companies do not manage to curb their profits: the reasons are perhaps that they are most-

TABLE 1

Statewise Growth in employment in the organised sector and factories in India.

	Employment in the organised sector		Index of employment in the organised sector (Base: March 1961=100)	Employment in factories (lakhs)		Index of employment in factories (1961=100)
	March 1961 (lakhs)	June 1969 (lakhs)	June 1969	1961	1969	1969
Andhra Pradesh	7.1	9.2	129.5	2.28	2.58	113.2
Assam	7.4	7.4	100.0	.80	.80	100.0
Bihar	10.5	11.7	111.4	1.92	2.62	136.5
Gujarat	7.2	9.1	126.3	3.61	4.15	115.0
Kerala	3.9	7.1	182.1	1.72	2.05	119.2
Madhya Pradesh	7.9	9.6	121.5	1.69	2.13	126.0
Maharashtra	15.7	24.3	154.8	8.27	9.78	118.3
Mysore	4.4	7.8	177.3	1.78	2.60	146.1
Orissa	3.4	3.8	111.8	.38	.71	186.8
Punjab and Haryana	4.4	6.5	147.7	1.32	1.88	142.4
Rajasthan	4.3	5.5	127.7	.57	.83	145.6
Tamil Nadu	10.2	14.7	144.1	3.30	4.21	127.6
Uttar Pradesh	13.1	17.7	135.1	3.38	3.99	118.1
West Bengal	17.0	22.7	133.5	7.39	8.23	111.4
Union Territories	4.4	8.4	190.9
Total (All-India)	120.9	165.4	136.8	39.18	47.99	122.5

Source: Reserve Bank of India Bulletin, August 1970 and Indian Labour Statistics 1973.

ly dependent on capital raised in India and that it is easier for them to remit profits if the publicly shown rate is high. During the official "recession" of 1966-1968, many large business houses acquired smaller companies. Furthermore, the weight of the large business companies and of foreign controlled rupee companies may well be increasing over time. (This has, of course, as much to do with inter-industrial shifts favouring large and foreign controlled companies as with any absolute superiority the large companies may enjoy within an industry). That is, the monopolistic exploitation of labour may be increasing, assisted by the dependence the Indian bourgeoisie have on foreign technology.

Failure

The failure of the Indian bourgeoisie and other elements of the ruling coalition to either generate new technology or to use old indigenous technology more effectively or to acquire new technology from abroad at a fast enough rate and

to utilise it properly is shown up in agriculture as much as in industry. Some of the groups of food articles whose prices have gone up fastest are pulses, oil-seeds and inferior cereals because these are precisely the crops which have not benefited, even temporarily, from imported technology and which have been discriminated against most by the government's encouragement of monocultural practices based on private profit and maximisation in the very short run.

With the effective increase in the power of private enterprise and the increasing disarray of the fiscal and monetary system (bank nationalisation without any decline in their ability to draw on banks for the purpose of aggrandisement) the government has increasingly let go its controls. Decontrol of sugar without the creation of a buffer stock and its effects are well known phenomena.⁶ The Dutt Committee had already documented the phenomenon of development of 'black' factories and

'black' capacity—that is, factories or capacities which were not licensed—even large monopoly houses. The registration of small-scale factories or workshops has always been a random phenomenon. With the increasing laxity of inspection of goods chargeable to excise duty, the phenomenon of 'black' production has been accentuated.⁷ There has always been a thriving market in the smuggling of goods and gold from abroad. The apparent prosperity of the Bombay metropolitan area until recent times was based very much on such clandestine activities. Supporting all these activities in the real sector there is the evergrowing stock of 'black' money, although businessmen are ingenious enough to make 'white' money support 'black' activities when the need arises, which means practically all the time in some cases. The stock of black money is large enough and the network of black activities is extensive enough now for limited stringency of the official monetary system to have practically no effect on the prices

of goods or their output. Many economists have reported that the supply of bank advances or even advances by the whole official financial sector have little power to explain the current spate of inflation. This merely strengthens our submission that the government's encouragement of unproductive expenditure in the form of defence, administration or relief, its willingness to accommodate every demand of the private sector for cheap credit, its unwillingness to tax the rural rich where the resources have increasingly drifted⁸, its tendency to further cosset the urban rich by giving new relief to people paying income tax, its resort to deficit financing far in excess of the planned or 'safe' limits, and its similarity of behaviour with monopoly houses in further helping to raise the prices of essential commodities have created a situation where the government's writ (which is infrequent enough as far as the rich are concerned) has ceased to run for major sections of the population.

Are there any hopes for curing this situation? The natural question is, do the rich who ultimately determine economic policy in India desire the end of this process? One should have thought that top industrialists would automatically want an end to the inflation which discourages long-term industrial investment. The answer, is not so obvious. For, like the God Vamana, monopoly houses have three feet—one in the field of industry, one in that of trade and other in that of finance; when the industrial foot feels weak, the trade and finance feet are strengthened. Moreover, with the current governmental craze for exports, the transfer of capital from India to even more attractive havens such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Switzerland, Brazil and perhaps even South Korea has become quite easy. Small industrialists with not much hold on trade or finance are going to be hurt. But traders, large farmers, defence contractors have never had it so good. If the anger of workers, peasants, and perhaps of even that wobbly class, the salaried middle class, is strong enough to force the government to come down hard on some partners of the ruling coalition, then only will there be some effective action. But this government has become

adept at playing one section of the people against another at creating temporary plenty in one part of the country at the expense of permanent scarcity in the rest of the country⁹. Also, short-term relief expenditures have the advantage of making clear where the levels of political patronage are held and keeping the henchmen of the ruling party in line. The hope that international aid-giving agencies will jibe at unchecked inflation in India because the effective external value of the rupee is declining fast is not to be taken too seriously, for again India can hope to play one superpower against another, particularly now that with a starving population, she has one of the strongest armies in Asia. Furthermore, inflation in the advanced capitalist countries themselves serves as an excuse for some degree of inflation in the underdeveloped countries. (But, of course, inflation in advanced capitalist countries with reasonably flexible wages and a high standard of living has very different implications from inflation in India and other countries with the same degree of poverty among the vast majority of the population).

As the economic crisis deepens and contradictions do develop, let us say, between the interests of large industrialists and those of larger farmers and traders the contradictions between the people and the ruling class also grow sharper. Hence even if large business houses find the market base for their accumulation eroded by the combination of inflation and stagnant output, they cannot move against the rich farmers without losing their political ally in the countryside. This is particularly important because there is a large degree of overlapping between the concentration of large farmers and the concentration of people directly concerned with defence, particularly in northwest India. On the other side, the large farmers may risk seeing the markets for the foodgrains produced in their farms shrink because of slow industrial growth, since they know that this will in fact help them tighten their hold on the political and repressive machinery at the price perhaps of a greater degree of dependence on foreign industrialists⁸.

In the near future, all that one can

hope for is that the sheer terror of what people can do when they decide that death through resistance is preferable to death through starvation or prolonged malnutrition may induce the ruling coalition to contain the greed of some of its constituents within the tolerance limits of exploitation. If there is the political will to do it, then there are enough instruments available to at least bring back the economy to a situation of orderly slow motion from that of stagnation through disorder and starvation. Whether anything short of a social revolution will ensure either much faster growth or an equitable distribution is another matter. Our analysis in the first part of this paper shows that, to put it conservatively, such a change is extremely unlikely within the context of the present class structure of Indian society.

1. See Reserve Bank of India **Report on Currency and Finance for the year 1970-71** (Bombay, 1971) Statement 5 and Government of India Planning Commission: **The Fourth Plan: Mid-term Appraisal**, Vol. (Delhi, 1972), Chapter 6.
2. See C. Kennedy and Thirlwell: "Surveys in Applied Economics: Technical Progress", **Economic Journal** Vol. 62 (1972).
3. For the latest survey of foreign collaboration in Indian industry, which confirms the earlier trends, see "Survey of financial and technical collaboration in Indian industry—1964—main findings", **Reserve Bank of India Bulletin**, XXVIII(6), June, 1964. See also A. K. Bagchi: "Foreign capital and economic development in India: A schematic view", **Frontier** Autumn Number, 1971; reprint in Kathleen Gough and Hari Sharma (ed.): **Imperialism and Revolution in South Asia** (Monthly Review Press, 1973).
4. See "Agricultural advances of public sector banks—An analysis", **Reserve Bank of India Bulletin**, April 1974, pp. 641-668, and "Maharashtra Rs. 700 crores down the drain", **Economic and Political Weekly**, September 7, 1974.

5. See R. K. Sau: "Growth and fluctuation in the Indian economy", **Economic and Political Weekly**, VIII, Nos. 31-33, Special Number, August 1973; S. L. Shetty: "Trends in wages and salaries (and profits of the private corporate sector, **Economic and Political Weekly**, VIII(41). Oct. 13, 1973; "Finances of Indian Joint Stock Companies, 1965-66", **Reserve Bank of India Bulletin**, Dec. 1967, pp. 1530-1614 (Particularly for variations in profitability by size-classes of companies); "Finance of branches of foreign companies and foreign controlled rupee companies, 1967-68", **Reserve Bank of India Bulletin**, March 1971, pp. 403-19.
 6. See in this connection, "Finances of sugar industry", **Reserve Bank of India Bulletin**, July 1973.
 7. I am indebted for this point to discussions with Nirmal Chandra.
 8. Witness the farce of the appointment of the Committee on Taxation of Agricultural Wealth and Income (the Raj Committee) and the prompt shelving of its **Report** (Government of India, Ministry of Finance, October 1972).
- * It also deploys ruthless coercive machinery to contain any kind of organised dissent.

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Two Very Important Personages

ARUN MAJUMDER

AMONG historical scenes and personages we discover some who bear close resemblance to each other in accent and idiom, pretension and posture, magnificence and manoeuvre. Not all resemblances are genuine, some are indeed caricatures. Even all genuine resemblances may be only surface. An eminent Indian economist is however more Hegelian than Hegel himself and hence does believe that "all facts and personages of great importance in history" may occur more often than twice. First as farce, then as tragedy. But after that? He says nothing. We think a third occurrence may take place as absurd drama. In not so exact terms, rather in airy terms, he is on the way to the proposition that the France of 1848 has reappeared in the India of the seventies of this century. From his conclusion it seems that Louis Bonaparte appeared as farce, while Indira Gandhi as tragedy. But from the way he treats Louis Bonaparte, it further seems that Marx made Louis an object of farce, while the great French President was a misunderstood hero of a historical tragedy. The secret of his understanding of Louis lies in his discovery of **L'Extinction du Pauperisme** (Extinction of Poverty)—a brochure written by Louis Bonaparte in 1844. The economist revels at the idea that much of what was written in it is particularly appropriate for the developing countries including India. He speculates accordingly that the mid-nineteenth century in France might have resembled the situation in present-day India; otherwise how could Louis think of the problems of under-development and their correct solutions so much ahead of time?

In the brochure Louis Bonaparte proposed that unemployed labour should be organised in agricultural colonies to bring under cultivation two-thirds of the uncultivated land in France over a period of two decades. The purchasing power of the people created thus by the development of agriculture could also solve

the French industry's problem of market. The state-power of France should supply the required amount of credit for financing the clearing-up operation of uncultivated land and the actual tasks of production. The objectives of the project were indeed alluring: Huge employment, high wages, more production without disturbing the property rights of peasants, wider markets for industrial capital without disturbing other factions of it—the landed aristocracy and the finance aristocracy.

What Bonaparte said in his brochure was nothing new, it was only more elegant and deceptive. Contemporary Saint Simonians said before him that there were ways to form agricultural colonies with bourgeois bank credit, bankers, merchants and manufacturers forming trustees of the colonies. Saint Simon himself held in 1815 that "bankers especially were to be called upon to direct the whole of social production by the regulation of credit". The historian Thompson¹ claims that **L'Extinction du Pauperisme** is "based on Maudslowi's **Essai Sur L'extinction de Mendicite en France** (Essay on extinction of beggary in France) and linking up similar suggestions by Saint Simon and other socialists with Napoleon's scheme of settling old soldiers of the Grand Army in the Lands". Maudslow's book was published in 1829, 15 years before Louis Bonaparte's.

Nobody among his contemporaries put much stress on uncultivated land because in mid-nineteenth century France, the uncultivated land was not worth cultivating for two reasons. The first was that "plenty of ground still occupied by woodland or waste, was admittedly either quite unsuitable for cultivation or so unpromising as to offer no adequate return to justify the labour and expense of reclamation".² In fact, the movement for land reclamation was at its peak in the Middle Ages, while the dawn of the fourteenth century saw the movement near suspension. In the sixteenth and early eighteenth centuries, the move-

men; was revived but nowhere near the level of the Middle Ages notwithstanding the fact that the second phase was patronised by the state power of Henry IV and Louis XIII, association of technical experts and Dutch business houses. By the middle of the eighteenth century, "it was no longer a question of bringing waste land under plough—quite the reverse, since technical improvements which allowed fuller use of good soil also permitted the abandonment of poorer land which had formerly been cultivated".³ The second reason was that it was necessary to keep waste land, woodland and forests for the growing requirements of grazing, timber and commercial hunting. These requirements grew over time.

While almost everyone among his contemporaries was suggesting a golden mean between the impotence of peasants' petty holdings and developmental use of private property along bourgeois lines, Louis Bonaparte built his castle on the uncultivable land of France to satisfy the surging crowd of unemployed people entering Paris from the countryside. As a matter of significance, he totally forgot it after his election victory and the last edition of his brochure was published in 1848, before the election and before his twenty-year rule of France actually started.

It is therefore not surprising that what was a conscious, fraudulent exercise, a pre-election platitude for building up a fatherly Napoleonic image, a magnificent hoax for the rural unemployed, sounded extremely profound to the economist of an undeveloped country to whom perhaps the end-product of wisdom is a grandiose scheme couched in terms of magnificent prolepses. Marx put Louis into the grave of history by calling him a fortune-hunting swindler; our economist sought to resurrect a misunderstood 'social philosopher'. How could a swindler think of 'Garibi Hatao' and state-subsidized agrarian projects for increased production and employment? How could anybody other than a social philosopher conceive of a French way of Comprehensive Area Development Programme (CADP) which was to be delivered lock, stock and barrel to an Indian posterity after 130 years? It may be that the solo song of CADP which bemuses petty-bourgeois intellec-

tuals requires a European priest for a duet. For CADP, the Indian elite needs a Louis Bonaparte transformed into a social philosopher, not an errant soldier of fortune, a mediocre man.

For CADP, perhaps a Bismarck torn from the historical milieu of Germany would have been more appropriate. Developmental colonisation in the form of bigger enclosures of arable land did take place in Germany and England although with different accents—one being pro-feudal, the other being pro-capital—whereas in France, "in releasing a considerable number of properties onto the market, the Revolution brought some reinforcement to small ownership" and "enclosures were still a rarity, except in those regions where arable was being replaced by grass".⁴

Apparent Similarities

It is true that there are some apparent similarities between the French situation of the mid-nineteenth century and that obtaining in India today. In France, the petty-holding peasants constituted the vast majority of the rural population, the number of landless peasants was increasing day by day challenging this vastness, and the phenomenon of capitalist farming remained extremely weak. The great French Revolution was reduced, not to a victory of the Third Estate but to a victory of the smallest part of it, i.e. the propertied bourgeoisie. In agriculture, the bourgeoisie developed itself not on a productive plank but on speculation in the lands of the nobility and of the church, confiscated during the days of the revolution and afterwards put up for sale. This section of the bourgeoisie termed 'landed aristocracy' by Marx, used to exploit peasants not directly but by the state power through land tax, salt tax, wine tax etc. and never challenged the private property of peasant petty-holdings which indeed was the fulcrum of bourgeois exploitation of usurious nature. Therefore, from the historical standpoint, the landed aristocracy was bourgeois in form, but conservative or anti-bourgeois, counter-revolutionary in action. Peasant petty-holders did not form a class in its positive sense because whatever they produced were mostly spent on household consump-

tion; the lion's share of their meagre surplus used to be eaten up by the landed aristocracy of villages and the finance aristocracy of towns through taxation. While therefore they did resent taxes and were against the State dominated by the bourgeoisie of the towns, to them their class solidarity became concrete only in their hostility to towns i.e. hostility to other classes including the petty-bourgeoisie and workers.

The French bourgeoisie as a class was dominated by only a section of it, namely, the finance aristocracy of Orleanist descent which enriched itself mainly through trade, commerce, speculation in State securities, industrial shares and, most important of all, growing State indebtedness. The industrial bourgeoisie i.e. the section which used to deal with productive capital was weak and subordinate to the finance aristocracy in getting its sectional interests realised.

Apparently, in India, the petty-holding peasants comprising middle peasants and poor peasants enjoy a majority in agriculture, the landless labourers enjoying however the highest growth rate in number. Capitalist farms existing more in non-existence transform their surplus into the finance capital of towns, the main functions of which are speculation of various sorts, usury of bourgeois formation. Indian rich peasants perpetrate all types of feudal commerce i.e. land speculation, land grab, money-lending, hoarding etc.

There is predominance of the financial bourgeoisie over the industrial one; in fact in many cases they are one and the same.

This is where the similarities between the class composition of the French society of Louis Bonaparte's period and that of Indian society of the current period end.

These similarities may be enough for India to entertain a swindler-politician with the highest post. In fact some features of the political panorama of both the countries of the respective periods are strikingly similar.

Indira Gandhi resembles Louis Bonaparte much more than India today resembles France of 1848. Both came from near obscurity to prominence by devious means. Both, in words loyal to the people, perpetrated cynical crimes against

them. Louis came to power because after the February Revolution the constituted Provisional Government of bourgeois republicans antagonised all the classes of French society—the petty-holding peasants by imposing wine tax, salt tax and land tax, the Parisian workers by its War Minister Cavaignac brutally killing more than three thousand workers, the petty-bourgeois shopkeepers by making stringent laws of debt repayment, the sections of financial aristocracy and landed aristocracy on points of power rivalry. Indira came to power when the old guard of the Congress party antagonised all the classes of Indian society. The vast peasantry, the main supplier of votes to the feudal Congress, became restive because of severe class-exploitation and in the absence of its revolutionary identity which it could have only under the leadership of the industrial proletariat sought new gods in the place of the old ones. The industrial working class, disgusted by the ugly lust for money and loot among the petty-bourgeois' union leaders as much as it hated capitalists, was ready to vote for anybody to authority who could assure more jobs, less work, more bread, lesser price, more slogans and less torture. The petty-bourgeoisie rocked by severe unemployment, huge retrenchment, skyrocketing inflation, thought that new accents, new idioms, new phrases and new philistines were neces-

sary to deliver the "goods". The "goods" in their reckoning were more jobs, more manipulations, more democracy, more amusement, more cheap everything and more progressive anything. The feudal interests and the semi-colonial finance capital became very much irritated by the inefficiency of the old-guard cliques and cabinets which could only gobble money and power and which lacked the adequate sophistication of a colonial tyrant as well as gambler, a born believer who can turn out machine guns and make-believe at every turn of a crisis.

Louis Bonaparte waved **L'Extinction du Pauperisme**, Indira demonstrated her 'Garibi Hatao' (Drive out Poverty) expertise. Left to themselves, these were quite banal exercises, but in the midst of the given socio-economic milieu and political crisis, they assumed significance. Louis gave chauvinistic succour to French counter-revolution by attacking Rome behind the back of the National Assembly just before his decisive second election in 1852. So did Indira Gandhi by attacking Pakistan just before her meaningful second election in 1971.

Louis ruled rural areas through the domination of priests (who had opposed the French Revolution) who in fact were instrumental in selecting mayors and prefects; Indira rules through the permit-licence-theft combine which recruits members of her party's rural ranks and conducts the 'Panchayati Raj'. A French peasant believed that a priest was an emissary of a mundane god, the Emperor Louis Napoleon, while an Indian peasant parades a make-believe that an angel of the permit-licence-theft combine is his 'Ma-Bap' (Father-Mother) because the combine's wrath means attack from the police who happen to be the graceful emissary of the 'Bharat Mata' staying in Delhi.

Peace and Order

For the administration of peace and order Louis had the Society of December 10 and Mobile Guards; for Indira the parallel bodies are the Youth Congress and many branches of Raw-(Research and Analysis Wing) guards. The society of December 10 recruited its members from "decayed roue's with dubious

means of subsistence" and from "ruined and adventurous offshoots of the bourgeoisie" and therefore consisted of vagabonds, swindlers, pickpockets, gamblers, brothel-keepers, professional murderers etc. Louis was the chief of this Society of December 10. The Youth Congress recruits its members from the ranks of an inordinately swollen colonial middle class on which 'as a class' the only historical mission bestowed by its origin is to be a class of 'rag-pickers'. In its journey through history, it rambles with the mood of a man whose relationship with his master becomes sweet or sour depending on the relative proportion of kisses and kicks he gets. It has no world view of its own, it possesses neither land nor capital, nor productive labour. Hence as a class it has the propensity to make fortunes when there is conflict between other classes. Conflicts and crises help it to show its expertise in gambling, and satisfy its lust for power and dividends. Indira Gandhi herself belongs to the upper stratum of this colonial middle class; in her anger and pleasure one discerns the frustrations and aspirations of this class. This class calls U.S. imperialists "democratic" when it gets food, fertiliser and foreign exchange, it turns anti-imperialist when it does not get these and switches over its loyalty to the imperialist rivals. In the domestic sphere this class follows the same policy vis-a-vis the class of feudal chieftains and that of colonial bourgeoisie.

Louis had personally to pay the daily wage of three francs each to the 'ten thousand rascally fellows' of the Society of December 10 whose tasks were, to arrange mobs for his reception, audience for his public meetings, election manipulation under the rigging-expert Persigny's diabolic scheme, breaking opposition meetings, beating party adversaries like members of Montagne, assaulting striking workers. Louis used to treat on occasion the members of the Society to "cigars, champagne, cold poultry and garlic sausages". In gratitude, the Society members used to yell: "Hurrah for Napoleon Hurrah for sausages!" Youth Congress members do more than the Society of December 10 did, but they do it more as a fortune-hunting

প্রস্তুতি

অক্টোবরেই বেরোচ্ছে

সূত্রী : ২০শে জুলাইকে নিবেদিত ছবি কবিতা ॥
'ব্রেনডেন' বিবয়ে প্রবন্ধ-মশোক বস্তু ॥ সাম্প্রদায়িকতা বিষয়ে প্রবন্ধ-নিশঙ্ক গুপ্ত ॥ ভিয়েতনামের আগস্ট বিপ্লব ॥ মোজাম্বিকের দীর্ঘ কবিতা : কমরেডদের প্রতি-মার্চেলিনো ডস্ সান্তোস্ ॥
অমল মজুমদার, অংশু চৌধুরী ও নিকোলাই শ্চেন্দ্রিনের গল্প ॥ সংস্কৃতি সাময়িকী ॥ মতামত

এবং

চীন বিপ্লবের ২৫-তম বার্ষিকী উপলক্ষ্যে হেমাঙ্গ বিশ্বাসের বিশ্লেষণাত্মক প্রবন্ধ : '৫৭ থেকে '৭৪
—সংস্কৃতিক্ষেত্রে চীনের অব্যাহত সংগ্রাম ॥

business, in a dirty process of feverish competition for more power, a rank nearer to their chief; the higher one can rise, the more mundane things would accrue to him. They shout: "Indira Gandhi jug jug jio!"

Differences

So much resemblance is there between scenes and personages that the Himalayan differences between the two are shrouded. Differences are there in historical perspectives, in purposes for which common postures and pretensions were used. Both situations represent, unabashed domination of counter-revolution, make the force of phrase stronger than the force of reality, force swindle and hypocrisy—the last filaments of any counter-revolution—to reign supreme over all the social classes. But these counter-revolutions are of different nature.

The French counter-revolution in the mid-nineteenth century was the weakness of the great bourgeois revolution of 1789. It was the June uprising of the Parisian working class in 1848 which challenged this weakness; the Paris Commune of 1871 made the challenge more formidable. The inner contradictions of the French bourgeoisie got over this weakness only after 1871. In the proletarian defeats, the bourgeois revolution came to its true self; by coming to its true self, it became a powerful united counter-revolution confronting its revolutionary opposite, the party of proletarian revolution. In other words, the counter-revolution of the phase in which Louis Bonaparte came to power, did go against the social cause of the bourgeois revolution itself. Only the victory of the Third Republic after 1871 did the revolution of 1789 accomplish its purpose and by the victory of 1871, the French bourgeoisie could harness the material and social base of proletarian revolution and make itself a powerful force of counter-revolution against the proletariat.

From the days of the entry of the allies in Paris or the Hundred Days' War in 1815, to the days of Louis Bonaparte, bourgeois development was fettered by the backward social base, although the feudal functionaries did

not exist. It was this backward social base which made the bourgeoisie capitulate with its own counter-revolutionary backwardness. That was why the Revolution of 1789 ultimately won its cause. The tricolour flag of 1789 with the slogans of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity for all became true to itself by announcing in 1871: Liberty, Equality and Fraternity for capitalists alone.

But what about India today? Had she achieved political victory of the bourgeoisie over the landlord class? In spite of phrase-mongering by the intellectual elite, petty-bourgeois socialists and communists, the objective reality answers in the negative. Even the best brokers of the Indian ruling classes publicly admit that there is increased feudal land concentration in many areas of the country, that the ceiling laws should be radically 'reformed', that the shares of share-croppers are in real terms going down day by day, that distress sale of land by poor and middle farmers has been increasing and that the entire body of land reform measures has become a Pandora's box.

Thanks to colonial commercialisation of Indian agriculture, feudal exploitation apparently survives in three forms (i) the size of landholdings being small and holding plots being scattered, the area a landlord or peasant is entitled to hold under the ceiling may be adequate for self-consumption of his family but not for any prospect of economic revolution at the productivity level; (ii) legal loopholes and deliberate designs of the landed interests maintain the degree of concentration of ownership and hence perpetuates the feudal mode of production; (iii) colonial commercialisation maintains feudal exploitation by leaving poor peasants, middle peasants and landless labourers at the mercy of the trading class and feudal moneylenders. The second and the third form of feudal exploitation immiserise the actual cultivators more than they did before 1947. Every law for the protection of the actual cultivator gives feudal exploitation a more rigorous form. The alliance between usurious capital of the countryside and feudal interests has stabilised feudal exploitation in India. Indeed Indian feudalism has long prac-

tised counter-revolution under British imperialism and has acquired experience and knowledge from the various class battles of the peasantry from Tebhaga to Telengana. But in 1967 Naxalbari became its struggle for life where its experience and knowledge were of no use. That was why the feudal representatives of the class had to submit to a middle-class broker selling many dreadful phrases on condition of facilitating for it a decent lease of life. The class supports Indira Gandhi and has started singing socialism. The song is indeed a swan song of feudal counter-revolution.

The Indian bourgeoisie as a class takes this capitulation of State power to the feudal countryside in a spirit of good humour. This is because the predominant section of the Indian bourgeoisie i.e. the financial bourgeoisie, has benefited from the cooperation of the feudal interests in getting supply of crops for sale in exchange for brokerage to the export firms of British monopoly capital. On the other hand it is in the interest of its own class that the commercialised feudalism shares the surplus both with the class of bourgeois brokers and foreign monopoly capitals. As a matter of fact, a sizable number of the financial bourgeoisie has its feudal hinterlands. Again, the Indian financial bourgeoisie was the mother of the industrial bourgeoisie, the father being foreign monopoly capital, mainly of Great Britain. Although the industrial bourgeoisie tends to develop contradictions with all three—imperialism, feudalism and the financial bourgeoisie, its tardy development and humble ambition as a bourgeoisie make those contradictions weak. The industrial bourgeoisie on its part assuming however two paths of its development in India—as purely agent bourgeoisie and as independent Indian

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Assam.

bourgeoisie making collaboration on equal ownership footing with foreign monopoly capital with no technical know-how of its own—became dependent on monopoly capital of the U.K., Japan, USA etc. for designs, know-how, sophisticated machinery and machine parts and finances.

The social base of Indian society remaining feudal in spirit and action, the Indian middle class as a class cannot come out against feudalism as a revolutionary group, although its very class position engenders its contradiction with feudalism as a logical inevitability. On the other hand, its economic base, determined by finance capital and Indian State power, did make it more anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist than anti-feudal. As a class, therefore, the Indian middle class, particularly its lower base, launched anti-imperialist struggles invoking paradoxically the cause of the exploited class of peasantry and workers and hiding peculiarly its own basic class ambition of securing more employment and higher jobs. Before 1947 it was the lower middle class which took an initiative in organising the peasantry's class battle against landlords than they took against the anti-national bourgeoisie. Again it took much less initiative against the Indian bourgeoisie serving the cause of imperialist exploitation than it took against the British rule.

Here the lower middle class with all its verbiage betrays its own opportunist character.

The events preceding and following the transfer of power in 1947 have exposed various masks that the forces of counter-revolution used. Before 1947, the growing industrial bourgeoisie made its organic contradiction with the feudal country-

side a non-issue by a political unity with it; the feudal countryside enjoyed this at the cost of bourgeois development of the Indian economy and acceded to political unity with the bourgeoisie to escape the guillotine of growing class struggle of the peasantry. Again the Indian bourgeoisie looked at its contradiction with imperialism as political, although its unity with foreign monopoly capital was organic. If imperialists go away from India, the industrial bourgeoisie would get a better share of the booty and organic unity could be evitalised in a better form. Imperialism also played safe. Political unity with the feudal countryside was maintained, the industrial bourgeoisie expected, its organic contradiction with feudalism to be resolved in its favour. The Bombay plan of 1944 containing the views of P. Thakurdas, Tata, Birla, Shri Ram etc. could utter not a single word against feudalism while it advocated "full freedom in economic matters" from foreign rule. By making unity with the feudal countryside, the industrial bourgeoisie in fact suspended its development; by acceding to the movement against British rule in India, it in fact exposed its counter-revolutionary ambition of continuing to secure a larger share of the Indian booty extracted by the foreign monopoly capital.

The early sixties in India saw the economic crisis of the political bondage between semi-feudalism or commercialised feudalism and the rapidly growing industrial bourgeoisie belonging to the private and public sectors and the political crisis of the economic bondage between the Indian bourgeoisie and neo-colonial interests. That is why the phantom of CADP is replacing the High Yielding variety of the Green Revolution. The shadow of socialism is replacing figures of total debt to the Pentagon. Moscow has created confusion between illusion and reality. Wealth is asked to drive out poverty, capitalists are asked to bring in the socialism of Brezhnev, the poor are asked to sacrifice more, the upper 40 per cent population are asked to make provision for the lower 60 per cent. In the midst of this non-violent political game non-violent murders of violent people

are going on, violent actions against right reaction are leading to wrong reactions amongst the masses, non-violent nationalisation is making the State exchequer dry, State trading of food grains is sending people abroad to beg for imports of food and fertilisers.

The Indian counter-revolutions desperately sings of socialism.

The nation awaits a new thunderbolt—a new spring thunder.

* This article is the result of examining some comments of Dr K. N. Raj on Louis Bonaparte in the course of his lecture "Some Reflections on the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" given at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta on August 28, 1974. I like to thank Dr Raj for the stimuli he supplied.

1. J. M. Thomson—Louis Napoleon and the Second Empire (Basil Blackwell, 1954) p. 68
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Now Available

Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Chile—Sweezy & Magdoff (23.37); The Scapellato, the Sword—Allan & Gordon (33.57); The Myth of Population Control—M. Mamdani (22.53); Lectures on Marxist Philosophy—David Guest (5.00); On Organization—Stalin (1.50); The Enemy—Felix Greene (25.00).

NEW BOOK CENTRE

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For Frontier contact

VISALANDHRA

BOOK DEPOT,

Srikakulam,

A. P.

Born in 1954, Hindustan Steel Limited was perhaps the largest and the boldest venture of Free India. We believe we have made some contribution to our coming of age as an industrial nation; we have helped to develop our material and human resources, our self-confidence and self-reliance.

GROWING INDUSTRIES

To India's growing industries, as on March 31, 1974, the Bhilai, Rourkela and Durgapur Steel Plants of Hindustan Steel have supplied over 12.8 million tonnes of pig iron, one million tonnes of ingots, 7.3 million tonnes of semis, and 22 million tonnes of finished steel.

Of the finished steel despatches, 3% went for defence needs, 20% to railways, 22.5% to other government departments, 32% to industries and 22.5% to stockists including HSL stockyards.

The Alloy Steels Plant has supplied 20.6 thousand tonnes of ingots, and 188.2 thousand tonnes of finished tool, alloy and special steels valued at Rs 88 crores to the country's sophisticated industries.

We have also supplied about 5.6 million tonnes of coke, a million tonnes of coal chemicals, and 5.34 million tonnes of miscellaneous by-products that include middlings, slags, dolomite, etc.

To the agricultural industry, we have so far supplied over 1.8 million tonnes of calcium ammonium nitrate and 550,000 tonnes of ammonium sulphate—fertilizers, manufactured from by-products, vital to improving India's agricultural yields.

The total sales value of all these materials amounts to approximately Rs 3594 crores excluding exports.

DISTRIBUTION

A Central Sales Organisation, backed by a network of 20 stockyards throughout the country, has been set up to ensure prompt delivery and equitable distribution at reasonable prices. The total sales turnover since inception has been Rs 3886 crores, including exports worth Rs 241 crores (FOB).

Since the Bokaro Steel Plant went into operation in October 1972, over half a million tonnes of pig iron valued at Rs 31.5 crores have been supplied through the Central Sales Organisation to meet the country's demand. It has also exported pig iron valued at Rs 11 crores (FOB).

20 years of significant service

MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT

Hindustan Steel has directly employed and developed a new generation of over 130 000 industrial workers and managers; and generated new skills and technological disciplines which are a basic necessity for the sustained growth of any modern steel industry.

CONSULTANCY SERVICES

The realisation that development of an indigenous consultancy, design and engineering service was imperative to Indian Steel led Hindustan Steel to establish in 1959 its Central Engineering and Design Bureau. It is now an independent Company: "Metallurgical and Engineering Consultants (India) Limited" (MECON).

FINANCIAL POSITION

This is the financial position of Hindustan Steel Limited as on March 31, 1974:

	Rs (in crores)
Total income	4284
Less: Excise duty and freight outward	289
Net income	544
Total expenses	3451
Leaving Cash surplus	2896
Stock of finished and semi-finished products	555
Total surplus	151
Out of this, Government dues on interest	706
We are left with	269
But had to account for depreciation	437
	683
	(—) 246

In the year 1973-74, we have made a profit of Rs 4.71 crores, thus reducing the previous under-provision of depreciation to Rs 246 crores. This represents our accumulated loss so far. From our cash surplus, we met our working capital needs as well as re-invested Rs 118 crores on additions and balancing facilities, and repaid long-term and short-term Government loans to the extent of Rs 170 crores. Our outstanding Government loans are Rs 374 crores.

Currently, our plants have to provide annually depreciation of about Rs 69 crores and interest charges of about Rs 24 crores, that is, a total of Rs 93 crores. Cost escalation of inputs last year was estimated at Rs 38 crores. Excise duty paid in 1973-74 was Rs 101 crores, as against Rs 96 crores paid in the previous year, and yet, significantly, the per tonne steel price in India is way below world steel prices.

WHERE WE STAND TODAY

Today, Hindustan Steel Limited is 20. Young yet mature. To get where we are, we have had to struggle hard and overcome many obstacles including our own inexperience. Harder struggle lies ahead because as our production increases, the infrastructural imbalances—raw materials, transportation, power—come in the way. But we are confident of our progress.

It is the vitality of youth and the faith in our future that have helped us along, even as they have helped along our nation. As we take stock and look at the future, we steel ourselves for greater efforts. With the formation of the Steel Authority of India Ltd., we feel confident of more efficient, more productive service to India.



**HINDUSTAN
STEEL**

Goings-on in The Rig Bug Republic

FROM A CORRESPONDENT

FIREWORKS and fraud being traditionally popular in the Republic Big Sis pulled a fast one on a neighbouring State called Sick-Swim. Idaland forgot floods and famine, torture on young men and women who dared dream of liberating their country from the centuries-old exploitation and injustice, inflation, political murders etc. etc., and hailed the Big Sis as the angel of demoralizing democracy all around even at the risk of being maligned and misunderstood. As to Sick-Swim, it was a country supposedly afloat in the Himalayan canopy of clouds, and staying in that position as if from some sickness. Ida cured it of this sickness by announcing its annexation to earth. Everybody was happy, except of course the denizens of this small country, which was of no account, for they must be sick.

In another bid to strengthen democracy she invited the international expert Kill-Sing freshly laurelled for arranging the liquidation of communism and Allende who were rumoured to have threatened democracy in Chile. Sister Ida went one better. There was a State called Bang in Idaland. Philologists were in debate whether it was an English word, or Hindi word Bhang (hemp), or Sanskrit word meaning dissolve/destroy. The consensus veered round to Bhang (Hindi/Sanskrit), particularly in view of the fact that its capital was called Kala-Kuta (poison). Obviously this was a State with dangerous propensities, obstreperous to the point of denying Wah-Wah and Maha any role in the freedom struggle of the country. Sister Ida dubbed it a mental disease. She ordered the military to quarantine Beng lest its contagion should spread to the rest of the country. Further, she had democracy injected into the bodies of young men and women of this State through their secret parts; she had waves of democracy electrically pumped into their ripped nails and broken skulls. A large number of her political opponents were buying their pardon by offering themselves as targets

for practice-shooting. The number of such volunteers for self-liquidation was swelling day and night. The world was in wide-eyed wonder, marvelling at this distinction of Bharyavarta's democracy. The dissenters were nowhere allowed this amount of freedom, nowhere this option. One of her pups, Goldie, had visited a country famous for its democratic "tiger cages", then he had gone to his own country offering Idaland's "open womb" to the Land of the Eagle. Another pup, Casey, had assured the world that there were no political prisoners in Idaland jails, for Idaland under Big Sis had declared them thieves and dacoits.

The national assembly of Idaland was called Pandemonium. Its members were called by an Indi paper "thugs and touts". Yet Big Sis was not roping it in. She had devised a novel way of eliminating scandals. Those who had uncovered them had all disappeared whether it was uranium smuggling or bank robbery. Now, if she conceded a probe by the members of the national assembly, too many skeletons in her cupboard might be found out. This made her save Allen, another favourite pup of hers. Allen was good at smelling and securing money. This she needed for her drive on behalf of democracy. If money was indispensable Allen was indispensable. Allen was money. Through some alchemy a pup had been transformed into the goose that lays golden eggs. Allen became her standby and her show-piece. Red Flute, the Chief Mannequin of a state, was a runner-up. She was reported considering their adoption as her "sons", thus making a four-some with her own two sons. The slogan "Four Better Than Two" was decoded thus by the people, who lauded her for this farsightedness in thus providing for old age and ensuring against neglect and betrayal.

Meanwhile her pups had started squealing a weird set of slogans these days. One said "Buy when you must", the other "Travel when you must". Still others were coming up fast with "Speak when

you must", "Eat when you must", "Write when you must", "Live when you must". The pups were quarrelling among themselves as to which should be mounted first on the hoardings. Idaland, uncannily, suffering from all kinds of shortages was having an unprecedented boom in its anciently famous harvest of slogans and cant, cliches and rant.

অনুষ্ঠান

বিশেষ শরণ সংখ্যা

প্রবন্ধ :

- * নয়া-উপনিবেশিকতাবাদ : শে বণের ধরুপ
- * নভেম্বর বিপ্লব ও ভারতীয় পরিস্থিতি
- * কনকুশাস ও লিন পিঙ্গাও : চীনের মতাদর্শগত সংগ্রামের বর্তমান পর্যায় প্রসঙ্গে
- * মহাচীনের অর্থ নৈতিক পরিকল্পনা ॥

রোগন্ড বার্জার

- * গ্রামশিচ : একটি মার্কসব দী মূল্যায়ণ
- * একটি কাব্য নাটক : ফরার ॥ অভ্যাক গদোপাধ্যায়

● গল্প :

শপথ / প্রাগৈতিহাসিকের পরে /

নুয়ে ওয়ে দুই ভাই

● অনুবাদ গল্প :

লু তনের অপ্রকাশিত গল্প—গিরি-সংকট ছেড়ে ও আলবেনিয়ার দুটি গল্প। এছাড়া সাম্প্রতিক সংস্কৃতি সমাচার, কবিতা, লিটেরিক ও মতামত।

মূল্য : ৪.০০

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"The Future Is Bright But The Path Is Meandering"

FRANCOIS LESTERLIN *

HAS China become the centre of the world? It would be interesting to show on a globe the visits of heads of state in the course of the last two years. One would probably see a maze of tangled lines much like a complicated spider's web, with one cluster converging on Peking. One would hardly miss the direct Moscow-Peking line—provisionally put to other uses after a flourishing period. Is it just courtesy visits following China's re-entry in the U.N.? Or is it the zeal of the courtiers and merchants, long held outside the borders of the Middle Kingdom, smelling good business at the gates of the forbidden city?? Perhaps both. After having provoked fear, China again attracts, fascinates, intrigues and the slightest of her movements is noted on the hypersensitive seismographs of the foreign chancelleries, whets international curiosity, jams the mass media, and leads the best minds to launch into conjectures. One discovers that China has a foreign policy and that one has to have a policy towards China. The simplified schemes of yester years do not work any more, one does not talk any more of the "yellow peril", the men with daggers between their teeth and paper tigers have been relegated to theatrical design shops.

Has the knowledge of Chinese foreign policy now become more profound than before? It is not evident. Diplomats and others holding key positions in Western countries return from their visit to China with firm assurance that the "Chinese are like everyone else". They try to fit Chinese declarations and actions into their own concepts which have hardly evolved since the time of Metternich and Clausewitz and while so doing they cite personalities to suit their convenience (for example Chou En-lai, an affable diplomat skilled in culture—Western of course, and with whom it will always

be possible to work). Neither can one expect much enlightenment from the "revolutionary groups" who have minutely observed Chinese actions only to loudly denounce the Chinese "betrayal" everytime the Chinese action seems to vary in their eyes from the texts enshrined into dogma.

Western diplomats inevitably make a mistake in forgetting that China is a socialist country heading towards communism, and that its foreign policy is based on the principle of proletarian internationalism. Let us be fair, most of them do not really forget, but continue to believe that it is a mere meaningless formula. Other people have a special notion of this internationalism, which resembles something like setting the whole world afire, openly and actively supporting all revolts, rejecting all forms of co-existence, be it pacific or otherwise; and seeing that China is not acting in that direction, they conclude, with a great sigh of relief, that China's policy is devoid of any principles, just like the rest of the world.

In contrast to these diplomats, there are persons belonging to revolutionary groups who have not had the privilege of visiting Peking—how can one fail to understand their bitterness? They accuse, rather than try to understand, out of the unconscious fear that understanding may lead to involvement. And the big mass media promptly seize, these "leftist" critiques to feed their denigration campaign. This, of course, is not the best method of promoting a true understanding of China's foreign policy and mutual understanding between the Chinese and the other peoples.

The Notion of Foreign Policy

Let us pause briefly and analyse the notion of "foreign policy". It does not have the same significance in countries with different social systems. For a capitalist country with a free enterprise system, it is limited to relations or actions of the government and administration

vis-a-vis the outside world, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Enterprises and organisations belonging to the private sector and even individuals maintain relations with foreign countries, but their relations remain outside the realm of their country's foreign policy. One could object on the grounds that the latter relations should tally with the foreign policy. Nevertheless it is a fact that due to this distinction, a certain gap can exist between the declared principles and the actual facts.

It will soon be known to what extent the multinational firms played a role in bringing about a change in Chile's internal situation that led to the coup d'etat, but the American State Department can continue to proclaim its innocence and its neutrality without lying. Closer at hand, we only have to examine the files concerning the sale of French arms abroad to discover the two levels on which French foreign policy operates. The first level is connected with foreign policy speeches imbued with pacific and moral principles, and the second level is actual business where a client is a client. It is true that one cannot totally eliminate the possibility of a unified outlook of both the public and the private sector in the domain of foreign affairs but such cases are more frequent where powerful private companies have the capacity to influence the State's foreign policy in a decisive manner. The contrary influence is far more rare.

Obviously, for China as well as for other socialist countries such a situation does not exist. China's foreign policy as defined and implemented by governmental organisations includes all—political, economic, social, cultural and ideological relations of the Chinese people with the external world. Everything may be labelled "foreign policy" ranging from the amiability of the Chinese guide who welcomes foreign tourists to Peking, to the Chinese delegate's speech at the U.N., including international trade, exchange of sports teams or the delivery of

* M. Lesterlin, presently working with a publishing house in Paris, served in the French Embassy in Peking.

Chinese cargo to different ports all over the world. This unity demands rigour of a much greater extent since every manifestation of China with the outside world involves the principles of its foreign policy.

These principles are clearly defined. The latest text is a paragraph of Chapter I (General Programme) of the new statutes of the Chinese Communist Party published during the 10th Congress. "Firmly attached to proletarian internationalism, the Chinese Communist Party opposes the Big Powers' chauvinism, unites resolutely with authentically Marxist-Leninist parties and groups all over the world, unites with the proletariat and the peoples of oppressed nations in their struggle to combat the hegemony of the two super-powers i.e.—USA and USSR, to crush imperialism, modern revisionism and reaction and succeed in overthrowing the system of exploitation of man by man, which will bring about the emancipation of humanity as a whole".

This text clearly answers the question "who are our friends and who are our enemies?" As for enemies, the USA and USSR are the privileged ones to be named; as regards imperialism, modern revisionism and the reaction, they apply, with a few rare exceptions, to the rest of the industrially developed world and in an increasing proportion to the developing countries. On the side of friends are the oppressed nations either already constituted into States or in the process of formation. The oppressed people and the proletariat of the entire world, including, in all probability, people of the States classified as enemies earlier; and lastly the parties and groups that are genuinely Marxist-Leninist, not very numerous in the Chinese eyes. Speaking in terms of States, it means few friends, but one can hardly dare to specify them at a time when most governments of the world have been trying to renew links of friendship with China, now being presented as centuries old. Is language undergoing a change and don't words have the same meaning any more? We must take a closer look.

Lesson Drawn from Facts

To begin with, China's foreign policy

can be credited with a certain number of facts which are directly deduced from the principles given above. Although China is undeniably a big power, she is not "imperialist". One could infer that it naturally follows from the socialistic character of the State, but one hesitates in view of the USSR's notorious precedent. Let us put it more simply, China does not station her troops abroad. Chinese soldiers are not directly involved in any war, the Chinese economy does not depend directly or indirectly on exploitation of other States or peoples, no Chinese secret service operates to overthrow foreign governments, the Chinese conception of development is not geared to expansionism or to the annexation of foreign territories, lastly her aid to developing countries is efficient and unselfish and disinterested. One has only to look around to realise that all this is rare and that it could be found, on the one hand, in countries that are too weak to exercise any pressure on international policy, and on the other hand, in neutral countries. Neutrality and weakness are far from being the characteristics of contemporary China.

On the contrary, China is a big power, but she refused to adopt the "super-power" attitudes, which according to her own analyses, follows from chauvinism, imperialism and social-imperialism. The most recent proof of this conviction was China's refusal to vote, as a member of the U.N. Security Council, concerning the cease-fire order in the Middle East. In disaccordance with Soviet-American interventions, she could have exercised a veto as a permanent member of the Security Council. She did not do so to manifest her disapproval of an international organisation which gives Big Powers excessive power in matters concerning the "maintenance of peace".

Moreover, China is not a neutral country. She has taken her stand and supports oppressed nations and peoples, poor and underdeveloped countries. She calls herself a developing country, a part of the Third World. Her analysis of the world situation is an inevitable progress towards a people's revolution in the midst of contradictions which are bound to grow. Contradictions between the Third World and rich nations, the main ele-

ment of this contradiction being the opposition between China and the two super-powers; contradiction between imperialism and social-imperialism, between American imperialism and the capitalist countries of the intermediary zone (Europe) and finally, between Soviet social imperialism and the revisionist countries of the intermediary zone. To avoid feeling discouraged by this mummified jargon, one has to admit the pertinence of this analysis. Below the surface of Soviet-American entente, there exists a struggle for domination that is hardly concealed and this struggle finds a respite in the balance of terror and the need to avoid ruining each other as they continue their race for arms. Both the U.S. and the USSR may sincerely desire peace but a special type of peace which would safeguard their external interests but which run contrary to the aspirations of other peoples. Moreover, European unity contributes to the increase in tension between the North American economy and the European economy, whereas the increase in the standard of living in East European countries introduces centrifugal forces in the Soviet bloc, forcing the USSR to manifest the true nature of its relations with the countries of this zone.

The Chinese are intelligent enough to manipulate these contradictions. The question is to know whether they manipulate them to the advantage of a global revolution or to enhance their own interests. The first interpretation is that they try to preserve their security and their existence and in so doing they uphold the faith that the people's liberation is not a lost cause. In reality, no sensible person can rejoice at the thought of China being threatened. But unless one dismisses China for indulging in fantasy, one is likely to believe China when she declares that she is directly threatened by the USSR. The geographical factor only tends to reinforce this viewpoint as do also the recent events by which the USSR has tried to increase its influence in South Asia and in South East Asia. The ring is closing in and the primary preoccupation of the Chinese foreign policy is to loosen it. From this standpoint a whole series of consequences follows.

A certain normalisation of relations with the U.S., a nuanced attitude towards conflicts near her frontiers (Pakistan, Burma, Thailand, Ceylon) which could swing zones liberated from the U.S. control to the Soviet camp because of the insufficient preparation of local revolutionaries to assume independence of their revolution and even, one hears since the 10th Congress—improve "State to State" relations with the USSR. People who see a betrayal or a Big Power attitude due to these latest developments of China's foreign policy are not always aware of the premises of their reasoning. They are nevertheless clear: Either they think that China's security is not a guarantee of the development of revolution and of people's liberation: The party concerned could easily prove that they are wrong. Or else, they think that China is not really as threatened as she claims to be; but aren't the Chinese in a better position to evaluate their situation? Or they think that the methods used by China to ward off the menace are inadequate, in which case the earlier reply could be repeated. The last possibility is that such people have an interest to see China threatened.

It must be pointed out that this policy of "disencircling" can take unexpected turns: for example, the Chinese are very suspicious of the detente between West Europe and the Eastern bloc, the latest development of which is the "Conference of European Security". They fear that the establishment of the European status quo legalises the presence of social-imperialism in Eastern Europe, relieving the Soviets of all anxiety on their Western borders and enabling them to increase pressure on the Chinese frontier. There is one more factor: whether by negotiation or not, a retreat of American troops stationed in Western Europe could lead to the same consequences; That is why there is a certain ambiguity vis-a-vis the European policy. Though China expresses the wish that Europe be liberated from the presence of the two super-powers on their territory, they view the retreat of American troops with apprehension. But it would be foolish to conclude thereby that the

Chinese are for the permanent maintenance of American troops in Europe.

Dialectics, Space and Time

In reality, there is always a dialectical element in Chinese positions. In order to understand, one must analyse the contradictions that exist in a given situation and one must never forget that the main contradiction needs to be tackled first. Since the beginning of the 1960s it is the conflict with the USSR which dominates the Chinese foreign policy. The texts of the 10th Congress have put the U.S. and the USSR in the same bag but the USSR still remains the major aspect of the contradiction. It has to be further added that the Chinese make two fundamental distinctions in their analyses, which further complicates the affair.

On the one hand, relations with a State are distinguished from relations with its people. As for State-level relations, five principles of peaceful co-existence are applied and which explain why China, when invited, exchanges ambassadors with any State, whatever be its political or social regime; obviously, certain States are duly warned that such an invitation will not have any success. This is the case of the South African Republic and of Portugal who are classed as racist and colonialist States. As for the people, China gives verbal or active support to their struggle for emancipation. It is quite possible that these two elements may contradict each other in connection with China's relations with a given country: This was the case of Pakistan and of the secession of Bangladesh. China's attitude is explained by its desire to maintain normal State relations with a neighbour and also due to a precise analysis of the Bengalis' struggle, described as a national bourgeois one and too much dependent on Indian intervention. Here one finds one of the Chinese criteria of an authentic revolution—relying on one's own forces.

On the other hand, relations with the people are distinct from relations with communist parties. China has no sympathy for revisionist parties which follow the Soviet line. China considers very few parties as "friendly", in other

words as authentic Marxist-Leninist. That is why no sympathy was shown in China when the communist struggle in Sudan against President Nemeiri met with the fate that one knows. On the contrary the Chinese press gave great publicity to the coup d'etat in Chile. Contradictions (in the simplest form, non-dialectical)? Not as much as it may seem at first sight... The accession of communist power in Sudan would have provided a greater Soviet influence, whereas the toppling of the People's Unity Front in Chile means a reinstatement of American supremacy in the region. One has to be familiar with the mechanism of this dialectics to follow the way the Chinese think. But this alone does not suffice. Everything has to begin with a concrete analysis of a concrete situation. As for foreign policy, it means taking into account two factors: space and time. Chinese communists have earned their reputation as excellent strategists. They are capable of introducing an infinite amount of subtlety in their positions which could seem to ensue directly from the principles of their policy.

Experience shows us that the same event calls for different reactions depending on the area of its occurrence, whether it occurs in the zone near the frontiers, in the Asian zone, in the zone where the super-powers dominate, in intermediary zones such as Western Europe or in other remaining parts of the world. At the level of principles, revolutionaries in Burma, Thailand or Angolo and the people of Chile, Ireland or Czechoslovakia receive an identical Chinese support for their "just struggle for liberation". But in practice, the support takes varying forms, depending on the

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geopolitical situation of the event. In fact, Peking has to consider immediate security as a priority. Any direct Chinese aid to revolutionary movements taking place near her frontiers would lead to a violent reaction of the super-powers dominating the area, thus aggravating the super-powers' threat against her and jeopardising her main aim. It is not surprising that the analysis of the people concerned does not always tally with the Chinese interpretation of the local situation.

The time element remains an element that is least emphasised but which, however, seems to us to be of utmost importance. For the Chinese, duration is an essential component of revolutionary action both inside the country as well as at the level of foreign policy. Some of the analyses which form the basis of Chinese foreign policy can be verified only on a long-term basis: This is true of the inevitable people's revolution and the elimi-

nation of man's exploitation by man. If it weren't for the long-term factor, events in the last decade would question the validity of the analysis itself. In fact many attempts at liberation and revolution in the Third World have been "bloody" failures giving rise to the most violent reactions. One can hardly reproach the peoples crushed by a certain power for not having as much patience as the Chinese had before the perspective of liberation, but we have to acknowledge the great experience of Chinese communists in this domain. From 1927 to 1949, they had the opportunity to be convinced that revolution meant a lesson in perseverance. Their hesitation concerning certain revolutionary movements can be explained by the fact that they fear that a counter-revolution, more violent in nature, may annihilate a liberation movement which does not have a strong social foundation. The Chinese are not far from thinking that this sort of "progress" which involves regression is worse than the status quo. Indonesia, Bolivia and Chile unfortunately confirm this point of view.

Short-term and an average term period remains to be analysed. It is in this time-horizon that comes reinforcement of "intermediary zones". This zone, essentially European, plays a vital role in the hegemonic perspective of the super-powers. It is therefore not surprising that China is more preoccupied with this problem. However, the top priority is accorded to the problem of frontier security and that of Soviet expansionism which requires a continuous watch.

Must we conclude that the Chinese are propagating a policy that is limited to the present moment? To put it in other words, we may say that China is not satisfied with handling contradictions only according to their importance, but they also try to resolve them in the chronological order of their occurrence. Both these elements sometimes coincide but not always.

Besides, haven't the Chinese said so themselves: "The future is bright but the path is meandering."

Gramsci's Concept Of Hegemony

PRITAM SINGH GILL

(The first part of the article is devoted to a discussion of the theoretical elements of Gramsci's concept of hegemony. The second part deals with its application to understanding the forms of hegemonic domination of the Indian bourgeoisie over the subaltern classes of society.)

Part I

The significance of Gramsci (and to a lesser extent of Lukacs) lies in their being able to provide new theoretical solutions and new insights into the confusion of Marxist thought and practice in the wake of the failure of the potential revolutions in Europe in 1917-20, the collapse of the Second International and the reformist degeneration of the leadership of most of the communist parties in Europe. Both of them, especially Gramsci, recaptured the best revolutionary traditions of Marxism, realised and renewed the emphasis on the conscious role of man in changing history, "on the problem of agency in the making of a revolution". "The recurring tendency of Marxism to become petrified into a schematic system of fixed categories, eternally valid, invoking concepts rather than rediscovering them in relation to each new conjuncture, has made the work of Gramsci particularly relevant to the problems of postwar socialism in the west".¹

Gramsci's elaboration of the concept of hegemony reflects his creative awareness of the problems of revolutionary theory and practice in a new historical conjuncture. In essence, this showed his attempt to construct a theory of superstructure; a theory which could delve deep and relate in a most articulate manner the different levels of relationships between the various forces of superstructure and the economic structure. He fought and struggled against various tendencies of vulgar materialism which attempted to show superstructure as a mere first order derivative of economic

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structure. "The claim, presented as an essential postulate of historical materialism, that every fluctuation of politics and ideology can be presented and expounded as an immediate expression of the structure, must be contested in theory as primarily infantilism and combated in practice with the authentic testimony of Marx, the author of concrete political historical works".² The tendency to reduce the various levels of superstructure as mere emanations from the economic structure and thus considering laws of historical development as being inevitably determined by economic forces, leads to various theoretical distortions of Marxism, and in moments of organic crises, to political opportunism, capitulation, passivity and "imbecile self sufficiency". Opposed to these fatalistic distortions of Marxism, Gramsci posed the question of active political intervention. The real significance of the concept of hegemony is therefore, political as well as philosophical. "... the political development of the concept of hegemony represents a great philosophical advance as well as a politico-practical one".³ Gramsci always referred to Lenin for philosophical inspiration for the development of the concept of hegemony. "... the greatest modern theoretician of the philosophy of praxis (Lenin) on the terrain of political struggle and organisation and with a political terminology gave new weight in opposition to the various 'economist' tendencies—to the front of cultural struggle, and constituted the doctrine of hegemony as a complementary to the theory of the State as force..."⁴ Though, as such, the word hegemony does not figure in Lenin's works,⁵ what Gramsci thought to be its importance was in Lenin's brilliance and success in organising the hegemonic relationship between the proletariat and the peasantry, his struggle against the economism and spontaneism of his times and his general theory of the proletarian revolution. But "Gramsci went far beyond Lenin in seeing hegemony as a political and cultural predominance of the working class and its party aimed at securing the 'spontaneous' adherence of other groups".⁶ The concept of hegemony as understood and used by Gramsci has been most

succinctly expressed by one of the students of his thought as "Hegemony is an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religions and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotations".⁷

Gramsci's early journalistic political period of life during the Ordino Nuovo (New Order) period, his relentless struggle against 'theoretical' syndicalism and 'voluntarism' during the factory council movement in Turin; his works on the role of intellectuals, on the Southern Question, on the nature of State power in Western societies can be better understood and appreciated in context with his theoretico-political concept of hegemony. He had realised the importance of the struggle on the cultural front at an early date of his stormy political life. "As early as in Grido del Popolo (Cry of the People) and more fully in Ordino Nuovo, culture, for him meant the mastery of a critical awareness of the proletariat's historical task, a lever for the economic-corporative phase of the resistance and class struggle to the political and the revolutionary phase, it meant the affirmation of the distinctiveness, the ideological and political independence of the working class as opposed to the subordinate view characteristic of reformism and, in the final analysis, also of maximalism".⁸ He considered the cultural front "as the battleground for the restoration of Marxism and its affirmation as a world concept in the broadest and the most organic view of hegemony".⁹

Force and Consent

Gramsci's ideas on the concept of hegemony as developed in Quaderni (Prison Note Books) can be considered as a refined, sophisticated, developed extension and improvement of his ideas and intuitions of the Ordino Nuovo period. He started by analysing the national peculiarities and the nature of State power in Western societies. He understood very precisely that the "determination which in Russia launched the masses

on the revolutionary path was complicated in Western and Central Europe by all the political superstructure created by the greater development of capitalism".¹⁰ His studies on the question of intellectuals led him to investigate the peculiarities of State power in the West where the State is "usually understood as political society (or dictatorship; or coercive apparatus to bring the mass of the people into conformity with the specific type of production and the specific economy at a given moment) and not as equilibrium between political society and civil society (or hegemony of a social group over the entire national society exercised through the so-called private organisations, like the Church, the trade unions, the schools etc.)"¹¹ In other words, the modern State was equal to political society + civil society where 'coercion' in the domain of political society and 'persuasion' in the domain of civil society are combined in order to maintain the domination over other subordinate classes. The ruling class rules both through 'force' as well as 'consent'. In general, it rules through 'consent'. Only in moments of organic crisis, when its power is threatened and rule through 'consent' becomes impossible, the ruling class resorts to naked repression, force and coercion. And even then "the attempt is always made to ensure that force will appear to be based on the consent of the majority, expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion—newspapers and associations—which therefore, in certain situations, are artificially multiplied."¹² It is through the various organs of civil society that the ruling class 'mediates' the consciousness of the 'subordinate' social groups and thus maintains the intellectual, moral and ethical hegemony over the other 'subordinate' social groups.

It is only because of the importance assumed by the various organs of civil society that Gramsci posed the problem of proletarian hegemony in all spheres of intellectual, cultural and moral activity. In practice, it meant that the proletariat must be successfully able to project its aspirations and programmes as the aspirations and programmes of the other allied social strata of society. The demands of the proletariat

must have an appeal of universality. The other 'subordinate' social strata of society must feel a sense of involvement and participation in the struggle of the proletariat. The proletariat must be able to reveal to the masses that its struggle for the social transformation is the struggle for the emancipation of the whole people. The ideals of the proletariat must become the ideals of the whole society. The authority of the proletariat must prevail from the phase of the struggle for power to to the phase of conquering and consolidation of its power. Gramsci also emphasised the fact that any 'leading' group seeking to attain hegemony will have to keep in mind the economic corporative interests of the other allied groups. "Undoubtedly the fact of hegemony", Gramsci pointed out, "presupposed that account be taken of the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed—in other words, that the leading group should make sacrifices of an economic-corporative kind", because "though hegemony is ethical-political, it must also be economic, must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity."¹³

But Gramsci also turned his guns against the other side of the error, i.e., of limiting the struggle only to the economic stage. This tendency was represented by 'theoretical-sindicalism'. Criticising this tendency in the workers' movement, Gramsci pointed out that, "... a subaltern group... is prevented by this theory from ever becoming dominant, or from developing beyond the economic-corporate stage and rising to the phase of ethical-political hegemony in civil society, and of domination in the State..."¹⁴ It was in this context of going beyond its own economic interests that Gramsci emphatically called upon the proletariat of the North to sacrifice its sectional interests in order to win an 'hegemonic alliance' with the Southern peasantry. And it was in this context of the need for total, integral intellectual, moral, ethical and political unity that the role of intellectuals occupied such a significance in Gramsci's

thought. Gramsci called intellectuals "experts in legitimation", in mediating the ideological and political unity of the existing hegemonic structure, rendering it acceptable to allied and subordinate groups, universalising its dominance. Such an intellectual, moral and political alliance must transcend its struggle for hegemonic domination from the phase of struggle for State power to the phase of conquest of State power. From the moment in which a subaltern group becomes really autonomous and hegemonic, thus bringing into being a new form of State, we experience the concrete birth of a need to construct a new intellectual and moral order, that is, a new type of society, and hence the need to develop more universal concepts and more refined and decisive ideological weapons.

Gramsci considered the party to be the political agency of the working class which will organise its hegemonic leadership over other 'subordinate' social groups in order to lead the masses for the creation of a workers' State. It is the party, whose development is tied to the dialectic between the intellectuals and the masses, that will educate the masses to bring them under the intellectual, cultural and political hegemony of the working class. An association can be called 'political party' only in so far as it has succeeded in making concrete its own notion of the State, in concretising and diffusing among the masses its own programme of government, organising, in terms of practice, that is within determined conditions, in relation to real men and not abstract phantasma, a State.

Part II

Gramsci's concept of hegemony when applied to understanding the inter-relationship between the Indian ruling class, the Marxist movement and the Indian people gives some illuminating insights into the relative ideological superiority of the Indian bourgeoisie and the failure of the Marxist movement. Marxism, both as a theoretical-philosophical system and as a political movement, in India, has been, on the whole, in a backward state. More so as a theoretical-philosophical system than as

a political movement. As a political movement, except in the mid-sixties and that also in a transitional conjuncture, limited to a few places in India, revolution had not been much of an aspiration of the general masses. It was confined mainly to West Bengal. The electoral victory of the United Front in 1967, the general political upsurge of the subaltern classes (working class, poor peasantry and petty bourgeoisie), the dissolution of the UF government simultaneously caused by and resulting in the outburst of the left-adventurist Naxalite movement, were the reflection of a potentially revolutionary situation bursting out in disordered fashion in the absence of an ordered revolutionary control. Low political consciousness, Stalinist methods of Party organisation and the extreme 'economic' alienation of some sections of the oppressed classes fused to create the conditions prevalent in that period. Reformism in collaboration, centrism in retreat and left-adventurism in 'action' disrupted, weakened and threw into disarray the promising revolutionary movement. The Indian bourgeoisie—one of the most farsighted and mature bourgeoisie in the backward dependent capitalist countries of the Third World—continues to retain its hegemony—political, cultural and moral—over the minds of the general masses even if the latter are 'economically' alienated from it. The hegemony acquired by it has its historical roots. The Indian bourgeoisie had been the unchallenged leader of the national movement for freedom against British imperialism and is, therefore, able to project itself as the leader of all Indian masses. Its leaders—Gandhi and Nehru—had been among the most farsighted, intelligent and devoted leaders the bourgeois class of any country can aspire to produce. None of the leaders of the working class stand anywhere before the national stature and personal charisma of these two leaders of the Indian bourgeoisie.

Many-faceted

The hegemony acquired and maintained by the Indian ruling class has its own specific Indian character. The Indian bourgeoisie uses ways and

means at various levels to maintain and strengthen its political, cultural and moral hegemony which apparently seem in contradiction to each other but in reality are compatible parts of the overall structured complex designed to maintain and strengthen its hegemony. It encourages ignorance where ignorance helps it; it gives 'knowledge' where knowledge helps it; it uses nationalism where nationalism helps it and 'socialism' where socialism helps it; it uses 'secularism' where secularism helps it and communalism-casteism where that helps it, it uses 'ancient Indian traditions' where that helps it and modern progressive outlook where that help it. To the vast millions of illiterate and backward ignorant peasants, the Indian ruling class gives more ignorance by giving them, through numerous subtle ways of direct or indirect encouragement and patronage, a countless number of religious, obscurantist and even witchcraft organisations and institutions, a while army of Sai Babas, Bal Yogis, gurus, sants, acharyas, conjurers, sorcerers, charmers and exorcists, and thus frustrating any attempt aimed at creating critical self-awareness among these masses. As for the educated ones, the Indian ruling class starts by inculcating in them at school level the belief that Gandhi is the 'Father of the Nation' and Nehru the 'chacha' of all Indian children. At higher levels of education in colleges and universities, it gives them more refined versions of 'bourgeois history' by extolling the role of national bourgeois leaders, it teaches them the sophisticated versions of bourgeois ideology through bourgeois political economy, bourgeois political science and bourgeois sociology. The whole process is a mediated one through various ways, overt and covert. Only a small section of this educated elite, namely, technocrats, bureaucrats, business managers etc., acquired all the cultural and social values of the capitalist class "which correspond to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling class".¹⁵ To sway the urban petty bourgeoisie, the Indian ruling class uses different methods—by giving them the catchy slogans of 'Garibi Hatao' and so-

cialism on the one hand, and national sovereignty, nuclear explosion and all that jingoism on the other. And then the Indian bourgeoisie has at its disposal the absolute control over the cultural via media—the radio, cinema, press and now TV—to spread and inculcate among the masses the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois consciousness. (In Punjab TV has gone even to the villages now).

The Indian Marxists are completely lacking in efforts to combat the cultural onslaught of the Indian bourgeoisie. For example, even the theatre movement of some earlier decades which had played a splendid role in winning sympathy for, and even active support and participation in, the communist movement, has now come to an end. All this is not to say that the Indian bourgeoisie has not resorted to 'strong arm' methods. In fact, it has not hesitated to use the most ruthless weapons of its coercive apparatus to suppress any challenge, big or small, to its political hegemony, be it the economic strike of the organised railway proletariat or the political challenge of the petty bourgeois Naxalite youth or the armed revolt of the tribal peasantry in Naxalbari, Srikakulam, Debra-Gopiballavpu and Mushahri, to mention a few instances.

Revolution, Marxism and scientific socialism are still enigma and abstract words for a vast majority of the Indian people. Marxism as a theoretical-philosophical system still remains the fashion and luxury of a very small section of the metropolitan elite and percolates to the general masses through politically low-level cadres and party (parties) journals in a very backward, distorted and sometimes even in an anti-Marxist form. Indian capitalism despite its weak economic structure has been able to consolidate and strengthen its superstructure in various existent forms and at different levels. It maintains one of the best coercive apparatuses in the world and is continuously extending and strengthening its methods of educational, cultural and ideological control. So strong is the ideological and moral superiority of the Indian bourgeoisie that the Marxists become ex-Marxists and make a jump to

join the ranks of Cabinet Ministers. Left intellectuals in India are not directly related to the struggles of the working class and, therefore, are reduced merely to the status of negative supporters of the ruling class—mere critics of the conditions imposed by the ruling class. The Indian bourgeoisie has been very intelligently able to assimilate and absorb into its orbit in various ways the petty-bourgeois representatives of the working class. Revolutionary Marxist intellectuals and the working class face an uphill task of challenging the ideological and structural domination of the ruling class.

Intellectuals should actively engage themselves in legitimising the ideology and programme of the working class. This task is a two-pronged task: sharpening the tools of Marxist theory and ideology so that Marxism becomes the most advanced theoretical and ideological system assimilating in the process the best refined elements of the history, culture and traditions of the Indian people; and simultaneously taking this advanced theory to the oppressed classes so as to enable them to understand the present socio-economic formation and then change it. The first task will provide the oppressed masses "its intellectual weapons in philosophy" and the second "material weapons to the philosophy". The party, the revolutionary Leninist party, the political organisation of the working class, will act as a mediation between the working class and its petty-bourgeois representatives, the intellectuals. The party will act as a vehicle through which the intellectuals reach all the other subordinate classes of society (poor peasantry and various segments of the petty-bourgeoisie) in order to win them over to the programme and leadership of the working class. Only a working class in an active alliance with poor proletarian and semi-proletarian peasantry will be able to overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie and complete the tasks of both revolutions—socialist and bourgeois democratic—long overdue in India.

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On The Question Of Revolutionary Unity

BY A GROUP OF OBSERVERS

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15. Prof Asok Sen (Seminar June 1974) uses this rather narrower concept of hegemony applicable only in the social context of an advanced civilised European society, to assert that the Indian bourgeoisie has not been able and is not capable of achieving social hegemony. Prof. Sen though correct to the extent that the Indian masses because of their economic backwardness have not reached the stage of acquiring the social values and mores of the bourgeois class, fails to note the specificity of the character of hegemony achieved by the Indian ruling class in diverse ways. Hegemony achieved by the Indian bourgeoisie is essentially political in character, in the sense, that the Indian masses in the absence of critical self-awareness on their part, passively 'consent' to the political rule of the bourgeoisie. P. C. Joshi and Bipan Chandra in the same issue of Seminar devoted to a discussion on 'Marxism and India' have made some illuminating points on the need to create critical self-awareness among the Indian masses.

THE question of unity of the Indian Marxist revolutionaries has come to the forefront. An extremely necessary and a most welcome development. The moment true Marxist-Leninist revolutionism started dominating the political scene around 1967, disunity appeared, gradually gathered momentum and finally ran riot. The process is being reversed now.

Clearly unity is the fresh, new, rising force; disunity the old, dying force. The realisation of the absolute need for revolutionary unity is no passing petty-bourgeois caprice this time; it is a realisation from the bleeding heart of experience. The cadres of the different Naxalite groups mean business this time. They are going to move on towards unity and they are going to brush aside all obstacles in the way. Therefore, those who would stand in the way of revolutionary unity are sure to be swept aside sooner or later. Those who are opposing unification out of ignorance or honest confusion, will mostly be won over to the cause of unity. Those who would try to strangle unity at its birth out of cunning, out of revisionist or sectarian motives, out of a base desire to stick to group leadership at any cost, are sure to be thrown out of the revolutionary arena. This process may take some time to complete; but it is inevitable. That is to say, it is the thousands (perhaps hundreds of thousands) of struggling, self-sacrificing cadres bearing the revolutionary fire in their hearts and moving inexorably towards unity who will determine the next phase in the progress of the revolution, namely, the phase of the formation of a correct revolutionary party with a demonstrably correct course of action, and not a handful of factional leaders who are afraid of unity for fear of losing their leadership.

But what would be the correct process of achieving this substantial, work-

able unity? What would be the right way of approaching it? Certainly from the broadest possible (revolutionary) angle. Why? Because no group (or "party" has in course of these 7 or 8 years been able to prove itself correct. What is the test of the correctness of a theory or programme? Surely practice. And practice has overwhelmingly proved that not a single group or "party", in spite of its revolutionary "desires", had the right revolutionary orientation in the Marxist-Leninist sense. True, they had broken through the base, hypocritical, cowardly revisionist fence. But they had no idea how to advance correctly from the revisionist position, how to make a revolution in the concrete conditions of this country. That is because they were led by petty-bourgeois intellectuals who failed to apply the principles of the New Democratic Revolution laid down with such absolute clarity by Mao Tse-tung. The latest developments of the Marxist-Leninist theory drawn from the Chinese and Vietnamese experience lay ready at their hand and they emphatically claimed to have mastered them. But the moment they started their revolutionary "practice", they turned Marxist-Leninist principles topsyturvy, and the more disaster overtook them, the more doggedly did they persist in these mistakes until their ruin was complete. Their petty bourgeois class and historical background gave them a kind of absolutist arrogance, an air of omniscience which stood in the way of their owning up their mistakes, which made self-criticism (an essential Marxian revolutionary attribute) impossible. In short, since Naxalbari or rather since the "coordination" days the Marxist revolutionary path was never trodden in practice by any Naxalite group or "party". There can be no justification on the part of any Naxalite group, therefore, to sneer at any other, to think itself superior to

any other, or to claim unity exclusively on its own formulations and programmes. None has yet found a concrete path for the onward march of the Indian revolution. None has been able to present a programme which has worked, which has taken the revolution even half a step ahead. None, not a single group, no leadership whatever, has, therefore, the right to look proud and superior. If unity has to be achieved, a true unity that would work, it must be sought on the broadest basis and not around any preconceived centre or "party", because no such centre has existed since the break up of the Co-ordination Committee and the formation of the CPI(ML).

The suggestion offered by several groups especially by the Assam-Tripura Zonal Committee that unity should be achieved around the reassembled remnants of the original Central Committee of the CPI(ML) elected in May 1970 should, therefore, be carefully reconsidered. If it is considered merely a step towards a true all-embracing unity, there can be no harm in it. But if such an arrangement is based on the idea that the political and organisational orientation of the CPI(ML) Central Committee was basically correct, it would be a grave mistake and would inevitably muddle up unity instead of promoting it. For events have proved that the political orientation of the CPI(ML) was not correct, that it could not but have been grievously wrong since the CPI(ML) did nearly everything wrong in practice, and since such overwhelmingly wrong practice could never emerge from a correct orientation. The Chinese Communist Party leaders committed many (chiefly "Left") mistakes between 1927 and 1934. But as Mao Tse-tung points out in the **Appendix on Party History** (Peking, Vol. III, p. 177) the mistakes committed, including the grave errors of Li Li-san and Wang Ming, were deviations within the framework of a basically correct orientation. The blunders of the CPI(ML) right from the beginning, were, on the other hand, of such a nature that revolution seldom seemed possible. It would also be quite wrong to claim that everything was right till the May 1970 Congress and that it was quite some time after the

Congress that the deviation appeared as a result of the usurpation of power by the Charu Mazumdar clique. The basic deviations, such as the spree of secret ("guerilla") individual killings at Baharagora and Gopiballavpur, Charu Mazumdar's anarchist pamphlet **A Few Words on Guerilla Action** which became the strategic Bible of the Party, the absurd slogan ("We are sure to win because) "China's Chairman is our Chairman, China's way is our way", the spurning of trade union activities and the consequent abandonment of the proletariat, the beginning of the violent "cultural revolution" in the cities, had all appeared before the May 1970 Congress and found direct or indirect support in its proceedings. That the proposal (put forward by Ashim Chatterjee) to set up Charu Mazumdar as the Indian Revolutionary Authority had failed to get through because of the opposition of a handful of delegates led by Sushital Roy Choudhury and that no one had cared to go into the roots of such an unmarxist proposal showed that, in spite of genuine revolutionary desire and genuine hatred of revisionism, the CPI(ML) lacked an overall Marxist orientation, that in spite of the seemingly correct broad revolutionary principles it laid down on paper, Marxist-Leninist principles failed to dominate its thinking and its actions.

Disaster

The disastrous things that followed were merely a natural development of this petty-bourgeois anarchist line, the reverse side of petty-bourgeois revisionism. Isolated individual killing was an escapist device (unconsciously) adopted to evade the difficult task of organising a revolutionary war, of confronting the massive might of the state power in a great protracted war—and, thus, was revisionist in its ultimate origin. Some of the other painful absurdities can be selectively mentioned. They talked of a new democratic revolution and an agrarian people's war, but in practice pursued a course of secret individual killing (and that too without proper class distinction) which increasingly isolated them from the people. They talked of building up armed bases in

the remote rural areas, but actually poked the enemy in his most powerful strongholds, the cities, and by killing ordinary policemen (while leaving their big bosses untouched) united the whole police force against them. They let their non-antagonistic contradiction with the huge masses of CPI(M) cadres turn into a mortally antagonistic one and invited simple self-destruction, to the infinite glee of Right reactionaries and revisionists alike. Spurning the proletariat (whom they theoretically described as the revolutionary vanguard), they picked on the lumpenproletariat as their closest allies and increasingly blackened their own image in the people's eyes. They decided to stage a cultural revolution (and that too by violent means) before the new democratic revolution had advanced a single step just because a cultural revolution was taking place in China seventeen years after the end of the 22-year-long new democratic revolution. They made tall claims about big base areas, revolutionary radio stations, huge enemy losses and even liberated areas within big cities. These actions on the part of a "communist party" were no stray deviations on the part of recalcitrant cadres; every one of them had found support and justification in the pages of the CPI(ML) journals. The mistakes kept piling up until they came down like an avalanche, because all inner-party democracy was suppressed and the path of advancing through criticism and self-criticism was sealed up.

Was there then, no struggle between two lines, between the correct Marxist-Leninist line and the wrong line (or lines) within the CPI(ML)? Certainly, there was. The right line had predominated over the wrong revisionist line among the Naxalites in general from the Naxalbari uprising till about the middle of the Co-ordination phase, and that is why the revolutionary forces made solid progress during this period. But since the abrupt formation of the CPI(ML) the wrong line in the form of "Left" adventurism, i.e., anarchism, and sectarianism came to predominate increasingly over the correct Marxist-Leninist line which was reduced to the merest trickle. And since it is the principal aspect of a

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contradiction that chiefly determines the character of a situation or process, the wrong sectarian-anarchist aspect came to determine the overall nature of the CPI(ML) line, overshadowing and obscuring the feeble correct aspect.

It would, therefore, be wrong to seek true and comprehensive revolutionary unity in India on the basis of the assumption that the CPI(ML) Central Committee line of 1970 was a fundamentally correct one.

The roots of all these terrible un-Marxist mistakes can be found in the over-simplified mechanical formulations (naively imitative of some of Mao Tse-tung's observations on certain aspects of the Chinese situation) in the political and organisational resolutions adopted at the 1970 Congress. They betray ignorance of the need of understanding the particularity of the contradictions inherent in the Indian scene, the unique course of Indian history and philosophical thought, the unique feudal-colonial combine and the present flood of debasing neo-colonial culture (many of Midnapore guerillas successfully slipped off to Kharagpur, Midnapore town or Jhargram for quick visits to cinema halls), the tremendous influence of religious superstition and the all-enveloping network of metaphysical thought, the almost complete absence of even the rudiments of Marxist understanding among even the "vanguard", the special neo-colonial rot responsible for the special debasement of the vast petty bourgeoisie, the comprador cultural orientation of nearly all educated people, the all-powerful counter-revolutionary propaganda machine, the fast dwindling of all social and patriotic feelings, the strange lack of anti-imperialist feeling, the sedulously cultivated tradition of **ahimsa** (non-violence), the long absence of any fighting on Indian soil and complete ignorance of military matters on the part of the CPI(ML) CC members—who were supposed to lead the civil war.

The old anti-British anarchists never professed Marxism-Leninism and had no mass line. Guided by purely metaphysical and religious principles, they believed in a small revolutionary elite injecting revolution into the masses by

means of a few token acts of anti-British violence. Doubtless their ideas were wrong and their schemes impracticable, but there was no discrepancy between their theory and practice. The CPI(ML) leadership were operating in 1969 and 1970, in an enormously advanced historical stage and nearly 40 years after the end of the old main phase of the anarchist era. And yet, their practice was in no way, qualitatively speaking, an advancement on the old anarchists' practice. In a way, it was more backward. For, while the old anarchists tried to kill either big Englishmen or else their big Indian comprador agents (e.g., big police officers, big bureaucrat district magistrates etc.) the CPI(ML) revolutionaries killed middle and middle-rich peasants, small businessmen and police constables. The enormous gulf between their supposed theory and actual practice showed beyond doubt that in spite of the heroic self-sacrifice of thousands of cadres, the politics of the leadership still lacked the fundamentals of the Marxist-Leninist approach.

Fragments

We now consider the different fragments of the CPI(ML) each claiming a correct stand. It would not be difficult to briefly pass by the two Charu Mazumdar groups. While the pro-Lin Piao (Mahadev Mukherjee) group is in the final stage of anarchic schizophrenia, the anti-Lin C.M. group is hypocritical—unless its naivete be unbounded. It is meaningless to say that Lin was wrong while C.M. was right since the two lines were obviously the product of the same petty-bourgeois feudal-absolutist mentality and since, at any rate, C.M. had betrayed the CPC and his own comrades by suppressing the Chinese criticism which showed that his line had been grossly wrong (November 1970) long before Lin—whose contribution to the Chinese Revolution had once been tremendous—committed his act of betrayal (September 1971).

As for Suniti Ghosh, his recent writings (including the huge cyclostyled document he propagated some time ago) contain nothing but hackneyed generalisations, and not a single formulation which can lead to any revolutionary

breakthrough. All his reassessments are purely mechanical and get nowhere near the historical class-roots of the stupendous blunders made—of which, he was one of the central sources. In fact he does not seem to be aware of the blunders having any class root at all, and this is natural considering the fact that he himself symbolises the failings of the class from which the disastrous blunders sprang. In the huge cyclostyled document (referred to above) he had been compelled under extreme pressure from his followers to insert half a page of casual, perfunctory self-criticism in which he "confessed" that till about mid-1972 he had been unconscious of the blunders made because of his inability (till then) to grasp the Marxist ideology. One simple instance would, however, expose his inability to grasp a single point vital to the revolution. In his letter published in **Frontier** (3 August 1974) he denies that in his earlier "Statement" (**Frontier** July 20, 1974) he had supported the Party's "annihilation of class enemies" line, saying that "the strategy, not the tactical line adopted at this stage (1969 to the death of C.M.) was broadly correct"—specifically warning us that "one should not mistake the strategy for tactics". The fact is, Ghosh is himself quite ignorant of the simple distinction between 'strategy' and 'tactics' which the great Marxist leaders have made plain as daylight. Strategy means the art, the overall planning or formulations guiding an entire campaign or war and is generally applicable to all parts and aspects of it, while the aim of tactics is "not the winning of war as a whole but the winning of some particular engagements or some particular battles..." (Stalin, **Foundations of Leninism**, Ch. VII). The "annihilation of class enemies line", i.e., the individual assassination line of Charu Mazumdar adopted at the 1970 Congress was meant not for winning one or two battles, but for application to the entire vast Indian revolutionary situation, and was, thus, a strategic and not a tactical formulation. (See Mao: **Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War**, Sec. 3; Peking, Vol. I, p. 183). To say, therefore, that one does not support the in-

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“Where words come out from the depth of truth,
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection,
Where the clear stress of reason has not lost
its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-
widening thought and action—
Into the heaven of freedom, my father,
Let my country awake”.

—RABINDRANATH TAGORE

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individual annihilation line while supporting the strategic line is like saying that one is not going west but only in the direction of the sunset. Besides Suniti Ghosh was the man who played a leading part in misdirecting the movement and, finally, in suppressing the Chinese criticism—the circulation of which might have saved the lives of countless misguided cadres.

The claims of the group, led by Satya Narain Singh to be the real CPI(ML) Centre would be interesting to consider and we shall do that after taking note of the ambiguous stand of Ashim Chatterjee as reflected in his "Statement" published in *Frontier* (18 May 1974).

That Ashim Chatterjee is a total revolutionary with an indomitable spirit has been attested by all the communications he has been sending out since his first incarceration in Hazaribagh Jail. But, politically, he appears to be rather confused and his stand on organisational matters is by no means clear. He considers "the task of reorganisation of a real all-India centre" the prime task at the moment, but assigns the task to "all the Central Committee members, both former and present". This makes no sense at all besides suggesting that, in spite of his call for building up a real revolutionary centre (implying that no such centre exists), he has a sneaking inclination towards the big "Central Committee" pompously paraded by S.N.S. Then, by saying that "our party CPI(ML) is the only hope of India", he again shows unconscious persistence in the sectarian, closed-doorish spirit which, consciously, he wants the cadres to overcome. Then, the assertion that Charu Mazumdar was "an unconscious victim of an international conspiracy", again reflects an outlook which looks upon external influences as primary causes of change and shifts the main responsibility for Charu Mazumdar's mistakes on to the Lin Piao clique. Chatterjee betrays a touch of C.M.'s well-known "China in danger" obsession by calling upon the Indian revolutionaries to frustrate "this black conspiracy against the Red bastion of the world's people"—as though the primary duty of the miserably downtrodden and unorganised Indian people is to rescue China (which, because of its revolutionary

inner organisation, has been moving from strength to strength) and not to strive for their own deliverance. He loses sight of the simple fact that the best way to strengthen China and the socialist world would be to turn neo-colonial India into a free socialist India, into another great communist base. Then, by saying that "a very strong revolutionary tide is engulfing the whole country very rapidly", he is again largely mistaking his wishes for reality, that is, even now indulging in "Left" dreams. Finally, by claiming in the midst of this prevailing confusion that "the general orientation in the party is, as always correct", he shows that he has failed to draw any real lessons from the terrible experiences of the last five or six years. Since, as he himself so correctly points out, "it is the political line that matters ultimately", his persistence in such erroneous political thinking in so many matters causes his well-wishers no small anxiety.

S.N.S. Group

A gist of the claims of the S.N.S. group may be had from Santosh Rana and his comrades' letter published in *Frontier* (10 August, 1974). Rana firmly supports the S.N.S. leadership and calls upon all cadres to join it. Rana claims that the S.N.S. leadership "have not only formulated a correct Marxist-Leninist line but have also led the party in implementing it and reintegrating the party with the masses". He adds that "the achievement in carrying forward the revolution by implementing the mass-line is remarkable, though not spectacular".

A correct Marxist-Leninist line since November 1971? And implemented too? And with remarkable success to boot? Well, no one thinks so, simply because it is not true, simply because any one can see that neither the S.N.S. group nor any other group has been able to take the revolution a quarter of an inch ahead; that since November 1971 till about the end of 1973 the revolution has clearly been on a further downward course. That is, the claim put forward by Santosh Rana can in no way be sustained.

First of all, on what basis was the "CC" reorganised? On nothing more

positive than a combined hostility towards the "C.M. clique". The "C.M. clique" was wrong; but in what way were the "reorganisers" right? Satya Narain Singh in his *Bihar Thesis* had not opposed the individual annihilation line; he had merely opposed its application on rich peasants; i.e., his opposition was not to the line itself, but only to one aspect of its application. Secondly, it was S.N.S. who had most derisively criticised Asit Sen (whose overall armchair politics we do not seek to defend) for correctly advocating continued participation in trade union activities. That is, as regards the two great fundamental blunders, S.N.S. basically stood quite close to C.M. until the propagation of the Chinese document, i.e. an external influence, mechanically opened his eyes. That is to say, although the *Bihar Thesis* contained some relatively correct observations for which some credit is surely due, the opposition of S.N.S. and his group to C.M. and his group was of a quantitative, not qualitative nature in spite of all the high-sounding phrases used.

The case of the Ashim Chatterjee-Santosh Rana group is still more open to criticism. They were the staunchest adherents of the C.M. line and went farther than any other group in implementing it. By their own confession (See the WB-Bihar-Orissa BRC's document on the national situation), one fiery rebuke from C.M. was enough to make them disband the huge harvest uprising they had organised and to throw away the guns they had captured in Gopiballavpur. It was Santosh Rana who inflicted the crullest insult on Sushital Roy Choudhury for having opposed certain aspects of the C.M. line. (Even S.R.C. had not realised the basic un-Marxist absurdity of the individual assassination line, though he seemed to have been moving towards such a realisation when the end came.). Then, strangest of all, till about March 1971 the Ashim-Santosh group continued to brand Satya Narain Singh as a "revisionist" and even as a "counter-revolutionary traitor"—and, then, suddenly not only joined hands with him but made him the centre of the "reorganisation". What made them take this 180-degree turn? Again,

the Chinese criticism. So, again an external influence, not any inner understanding, turned them overnight from a violently pro-C.M. to a violently anti-C.M. position. The same mechanical movement led them from being violently anti-S.N.S. to a course of the closest political identification with him.

The C.M. line was wrong and rebellion against it was welcome. That could have been a positive feature. But how deep was the basis of this rebellion? As we have seen, it was skin-deep. The C.M. clique (whom they had unflinchingly supported) was responsible for all the blunders; therefore combine against the C.M. clique and oust it forthwith. And to do that combine with all who were opposed to C.M., combine with and raise to leadership even S.N.S. who used to be thought of as a counter-revolutionary even yesterday! Professing Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought all the time they did not, however, ask themselves the simple question: What class psychology (emerging from what class ideology) was responsible for the blunders? What class psychology are we exposing and condemning? What class viewpoint are we professing and manifesting in its place? In short, what were the historical and class realities behind the blunders, the "split" and the "reorganisation"? These questions did not strike them and they were quite unaware of their existence—just as ignorant as Suniti Ghosh was and still is. In the mechanical assessments of the 7th November Resolution, therefore, they were content to put the whole blame on a "Charu clique", excusing themselves with minor apologies. They did not realise that elimination of the "Charu clique" did not mean a change in vital class-orientation; that it did not lead to the elimination of the self-righteous, domination-seeking feudal-colonial petty-bourgeois class-psychology. Consequently what happened was that Charu Mazumdar passed out, but petty-bourgeois ideology (of the peculiarly Indian brand) stayed on. Only, in sharply opposing "Left" adventurism, it unconsciously swung over to the opposite pole of Right revisionism. The leadership, instead of leading the revolution on-

ward, started exerting a dragging, dampening, clogging influence on the aspirations of the advanced cadres. That is the secret of the widespread discontent, at times verging on rebellion, among the cadres of the different Naxalite groups and most of all among the cadres of the S.N.S. group.

Santosh Rana says: "If the revival of the C.C. be a correct step in 1974, why was it wrong in 1971?" Well, all other questions apart, it was not right because of the simple reason that the vast majority of cadres do not think it was right, because they do not think that this centre is a proper revolutionary centre. Revolutionary cadres are today intensely eager to unite to form a powerful command-centre and carry the revolution ahead, and they clearly do not have faith in the S.N.S.-led "C.C.'s" exclusive leadership. They want to create a more comprehensive and representative, a more correct leadership out of the unity of the different groups. What is the use of claiming in the face of this that the S.N.S.-led centre is the correct Party centre, that all should join it and, if they do not, they would be splitters?

If, as Rana claims, the S.N.S. leadership has been pursuing and implementing "with remarkable success" a correct Marxist-Leninist line since November 1971, why have the Government and the police been able to put increasing pressure on the people and to increasingly suppress all democratic movements since then and why were thousands of cadres and dozens of top-ranking leaders helplessly arrested in 1972 and 1973; why did such massive demoralisation take place among the jailed cadres (particularly of the S.N.S. group), hundreds of whom have on coming out receded into normal life; why have sympathisers and shelters become so scarce, why is there such an all-pervasive cynical despair, such a deep crisis of confidence, among the acutely suffering people; why have the vast petty-bourgeois masses (who should form such an important component of the revolutionary united front) become more blindly selfish, mean and grabbing than ever; why has the vast student community, once the terror of reactionaries,

become more debased and is more under the influence of reactionaries than ever; why doesn't anyone have any hope about the future and why have people been falling back increasingly on gambling and on superstitious idol-worship, the crudest forms of fatalism? Are all these the signs of the "remarkably successful" leadership of a correct communist party?

Documents circulated by the S.N.S. leadership also bear ample evidence of a revolutionary stagnation and of all the opportunism natural to such a state. **Liberation** (January-April 1973) is replete with it. In the same breath the S.N.S. leadership issues a joint call with the Pulla Reddy group for the formation of a correct Marxist-Leninist party and, in its draft programme and draft constitution (obvious preparations for a party congress) proclaims itself as the correct Indian Communist Party, as the vanguard of the Indian proletariat and predicts (exactly as C.M. had once done) that "the day of victory is not far". In the draft programme, again, there is no analysis of the intricate particularities of the Indian contradictions and absolutely nothing on the specific course the Indian revolutionary war might take. There is just one reference to military matters—enough to shame any intelligent ordinary cadre: namely the profound formulation that throughout the people's democratic phase of the revolution guerilla war will remain the main form of war. Supreme leadership of a Communist Party intending to stage a war of liberation and such ignorance of simple military matters cannot go together—and the advanced cadres of these days are wise enough to realise that.

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Suppression

The bureaucratic suppression of "Comrade X's" dissenting opinion, in the same issue of **Liberation** and countless such acts of bureaucratic suppression of inner-party democracy, giving rise to ever-deepening protest among the cadres and even high-level leaders show that S.N.S. is trying to put himself—of course, in his own subtle way—exactly in Charu Mazumdars position even at the cost of throttling the revolution. The 'C.M. clique' used to pull up, insult and expel cadres for doubting the wisdom of the "Left" adventurist line. Today the S.N.S. clique is pulling up, isolating and suspending cadres for criticising the "CC's" revisionist inaction, for its failure to promote unity and to push armed struggle ahead, for holding up the onward march of its own advanced units. Why? Plainly because it is at bottom a social-democratic leadership incapable of leading an armed struggle. And since it cannot carry armed struggle ahead itself, it won't allow

anyone else to do it, to "steal the revolutionary glory". Therefore, like the CPI(M) leadership but far more subtly, it has to go on discouraging all immediate preparations for building up armed Red bases in the strategic countryside—saying that it would be rash. Continuation of the very old dog-in-the-manger policy of Indian "communist" leadership.

Thousands of advanced high-quality cadres are burning with the desire to forge ahead and build revolutionary armies and base areas while the leaders of the different groups are in effect holding them back by all sorts of devious means. The cadres, not finding their group leaders equal to the task, are seeking unity and a united command while the leaders are, by putting forward all sorts of preconditions, trying to thwart unity for fear of losing their leadership.

We repeat, unity is the rising force today; disunity the decadent one. The cadres will unite, by however difficult a

process, and sweep aside those who would stand in the way of unity.

As regards the basis of unity, it will be decided by the representatives of the countless revolutionary cadres through repeated and prolonged discussion at different levels, and the efforts of the group leaders to put a ban on their cadres meeting other groups will prove futile. But the basis of unity should be a very broad Marxist-Leninist one for the reason—already explained—that while all the Naxalite groups were generally right in their political ideas, not a single group or "party" (including the biggest of them, the CPI-ML) could show how, exactly in what way, the revolution could in the concrete context of the Indian contradictions be taken ahead without major disasters. It is for the new type of deep-thinking, broad-minded, quietly convinced and absolutely determined young cadres increasingly coming into prominence to find that way out.



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The Bengali Bhadrakok

BENOY GHOSE

BHADRALOK' is a 'gentleman'. 'Gentle' itself is derived from the Latin 'gens' and the genitive 'gentis' means family or breeding. The bhadrakok, therefore, must have a long respectable pedigree and once a bhadrakok one is always a bhadrakok. This point of pedigree is conceded, although reluctantly, by Henry Peacham, one of the earliest theorists of gentility, in *The Compleat Gentleman* (London 1622), who laments that drinking, swearing and whoremongering were no bar to gentility at the English court. None of these traits or any complex of similar traits was any bar to gentility for a Bengali bhadrakok, during his long period of evolution from the seedling stage in the second half of the eighteenth century, to the present multiform flowering stage in the second half of the twentieth. With the advent of the English merchant-rulers, wealth became an important attribute of gentility, but by itself it did not confer gentility in Bengali society. One must have a caste status, in addition to wealth, to become a respectable bhadrakok. Those who raised themselves only by riches, having no distinctive status in the caste hierarchy, were treated disrespectfully as 'upstarts'. This was one of the most important social factors, besides the many limitations inherent in the colonial situation, which inhibited the normally anticipated functioning of the traditional artisan castes and mercantile castes of Bengal as adventurers in the non-traditional economic fields. They had practically no incentive to work hard for any new trade or business other than their traditional ones, and to convert their idle 'hoards' into 'capital'. But this is a different theme, perhaps the most important in the social history of Bengal, which has not yet been probed by any historian. Some American scholars have been trying, of late, to explode the 'myth' that the Bengalis had been non-entrepreneurs in the economic field, with the help of a diary of a family in a district of West Bengal. The motivation behind this magnificent piece of research is not

known to us. This much we know that it is not a 'myth', but a 'reality'. I have seen many such diaries, besides the case studies of at least one hundred families of traditional artisan castes and mercantile castes of West Bengal, written between 1951-52 and 1971-72, which testify to this great historical truth. I am not speaking here of the economic efforts of men like Dwarkanath Tagore, Ramdulal De, Motilal Seal, Madan Dutt and others, and the tragic consequences of these efforts.

The fact remains that people below the rank of high-caste Hindus had never bothered about becoming bhadrakok under the British Raj. Even English education, which alone induced some kind of social mobility among the lower castes and that also in the anonymous urban milieu of the city of Calcutta, proved spurious in the end. The opportunity for English education of the boys belonging to the mercantile-artisan castes was also very much limited in the city. They had, therefore, no other social choice before them but to abandon the idea of being shaped into city-based bhadrakok like the upper-caste Hindus, and to cling to their traditional occupations, often with the desperation of a drowning man. For Bengali society as a whole, it was a blessing in disguise. It helped in counteracting the social-cultural imbalance created by the bhadrakok in the city. By refusing to submit to the process of deculturation, like the loyal bhadrakok, or to adopt uncritically the superimposed cultural models, or to pronounce an irreverent condemnation of their own cultural style (like the young Derozians), the non-bhadrakok of Bengal, at the cost of their own stagnation and decay, put up a stubborn resistance to the total 'deracialisation' of the Bengalis. They, the non-bhadrakok, stuck resolutely to their traditional cultural forms, their language, their food habits, their familial behaviour, their mores and customs, their dress (loin cloth, fatua or a short banian and chati or countrymade slippers), their ways of sitting down and walking, of

resting, of laughing, of lamenting, of talking and gossiping, of enjoying themselves, quite unlike the bhadrakok who flung themselves upon the imposed culture, with a sense of guilt and inferiority (of a bugger 'native'), sharing with the 'superior race', that is the British, their convictions, their doctrines, and their social, moral and cultural attitudes. For the bhadrakok, it is an ideal case of 'alienation', but in the official texts and in the dissertations of Indian historians, it is found in the name of 'assimilation'. Frantz Fanon the author of *The Wretched of the Earth* and *A Dying Colonialism* says in his 'Racism and Culture' (Fanon's speech before the First Congress of Negro Writers and Artists in Paris, September 1956): "It is not possible to enslave men without logically making them inferior through and through. And racism is only the emotional, affective, sometimes intellectual explanation of this inferiorisation". The upper-caste Bengali Hindus who became bhadrakok or 'babus', by their caste status and wealth, and English education, were completely enslaved and logically made inferior through and through. What had been the social and moral consequences of this enslavement of the Bengali bhadrakok babus?

Tragic

The consequences had been unimaginably tragic. The first phase of the emotional-intellectual expression of this inferiorisation was directed towards Westernisation, that is, towards imitation and almost unconditional adoption of the new cultural model of the superior race of the rulers. The rising bhadrakok, including the English-educated elite, suddenly witnessed the liquidation of their own systems of reference, the collapse of their own cultural patterns. Because they had no other solution left, the bhadrakok 'class' adopted the new ways of thinking and seeing things, imposed upon them by the superior white rulers, and thought of these ways as 'progressive'. Rammohan and Vidyasagar tried, to some extent, to resist this trend of deculturation. But, in spite of their efforts, the trend continued to persist. The only psychological consolation, rather compensation, for this new species of bha-

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dralok was to raise themselves to the superior status of their white rulers and to become 'chota sahibs' in their own country, among their own people.

It took about two generations for the bhadrlok to understand the absolute futility of their social alienation and their new progressive ways of thinking and seeing things. The 'inferiorised' bhadrlok, after a fairly long period of deculturation, came back to their original self. The culture, abandoned with contempt, became an object of passionate attachment, because the culture of the enslaved bhadrlok was dying and no life was circulating in it. Having formerly emigrated from his own culture, the native 'babu' began to explore it with fervour. The intellectual 'babus' then began to consult their gurus and astrologers before making a decision. Saints, human-gods, miracle-men started strutting on the social stage as more important people than the Bentincks, Cannings and Rippons. Tradition was no longer looked down upon, and the traditionalists also did not look small. The sense of the past dawned on the bhadrlok and they went into ecstasies over each rediscovery of the past. The past, becoming henceforth a constellation of eternal values, became identified with the eternal TRUTH. It was a swing from one imbalance to another, but it was a victory of the non-Westernised 'non-babus' over the Westernised 'babus'. The glory of that victory has not yet dimmed in the dazzling blaze of the fourth quarter of the twentieth century. Let me illustrate my point with a few instances.

It was the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century. Rammohan's Brahmoism and monotheism were then dying or already dead. Devendranath Tagore, his torch-bearer, "was essentially a Hindu in all his spiritual aims and aspirations. He ever remained so" (Sivnath Sastri). Keshub Chunder, known as 'the thunderbolt of Bengal', brought down the Brahmo Samaj in public regard, and Sivnath says, "I say this with great, very great regret, and with a sense of shame..." Keshub's thunder was silenced by the magic spell of a Hindu saint, and he began to dance and sing with his devotees like Gouranga Mahaprabhu. The great Brahmo

leader, Rajnarain Basu, wrote to Shibchandra Dev (1878): "...it is evident that the Brahmo movement is a superficial one, and has not penetrated into the very depths of Hindu society. Hindu society must be moved in a Hindu way". Actually, Hindu society began to move after that in a big Hindu way. The period "was marked by a strong current of religious revival and social reaction, which positively set back the movement of progress not only in Bengal but all over India" (B. C. Pal: *Memories*). Idolatry and polytheism also followed the Hindu way. The babus, big, medium and small, revived it with great zeal, and the white sahibs were the most honourable guests on all such festive occasions of idol-worship. All kinds of social reform, like widow-remarriage, child-marriage, inter-caste marriage, polygamy, dowry system, for and against which the enlightened liberal reformers had fought some of their great battles for social progress, were all cast to the winds. 'Harisabhas' and 'Harisankirtans' began to flourish on an unprecedented scale (B. C. Pal: *op. cit.*), and all cries of reform and progress were submerged under the rapturous melody of Chaitanya's sankirtan. That was how the 'Renaissance' was given the typical Bengali babus' funeral, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. And that is why the 'Renaissance' is given a state funeral today, in the last quarter of the twentieth century, with the revival, on a fantastic scale, of idolatry, polytheism, magic, superstition, dead cults, avatarism, astrology, ancestor-worship, casteism, communalism, and what not!

"Nationalism"

About nationalism. The educated Bengali babu, the bhadrlok-elite, took a leading part in the formative period of Indian nationalism. "The educated classes are the voice and brain of the country. The Bengalee Babus now rule public opinion from Peshawar to Chittagong...it is the case that during the past year the tour of a Bengalee lecturer, lecturing in English in Upper India, assumed the character of a triumphal progress" (Cotton: *New India*, 1885). The Bengali lecturer, lecturing in Eng-

lish, was Surendranath Banerjea. Nationalism was born with the blessings of Hindu revival and reaction, and it was evident from the beginning that it was riding for a fall, by alienating the Muslims. And in spite of several exercises in Hindu-Muslim unity, the inevitable fall came in 1947, when we got 'Divided Bengal' and 'Divided India'. But that is a different story, and a very long and sad one. By the end of the nineteenth century, after about twenty-five years of lecturing on nationalism, we find that the basic character of the bhadrlok babus, their unflinching loyalty to the ruling class, has not changed much. These are brief newspaper reports (January 1900):

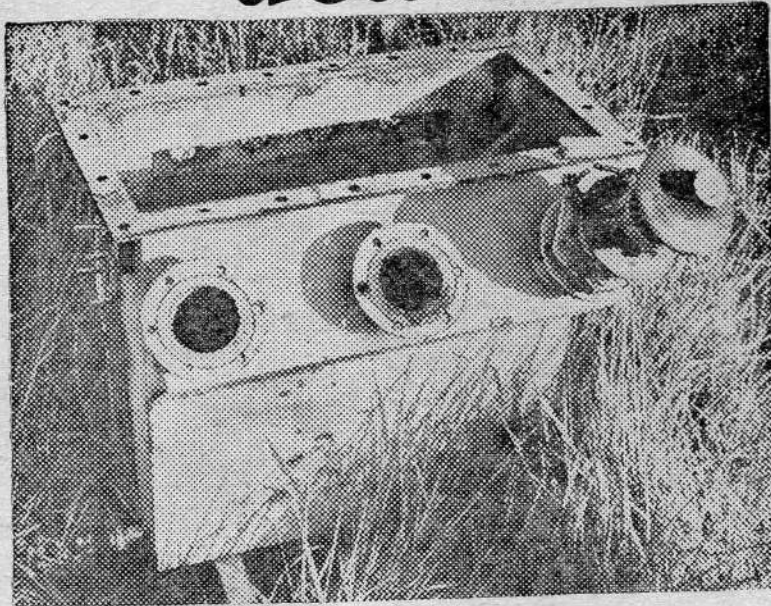
"...Professor of Sanskrit at the Calcutta Presidency College is arranging, in association with some leading Hindus of Calcutta to celebrate a Kali Poojah at the Kalighat Temple for the purpose of invoking the goddess to confer victory on British arms in South Africa."

"Some Hindoo residents of Calcutta have engaged Pandit...to perform a Swastavan ceremony today for the success of British arms in South Africa."

"At a meeting held on Friday at... residence, it was decided to hold a poojah and sankirtan party at Kalighat today, to commemorate the success of British arms at South Africa" (June 1900).

These are all about the Boer War. And the fate of the indentured and un-indentured Indians was involved in it. The miserable lot of the Indians in South Africa forced the Indian National Congress of the 1890s to pass resolutions, protesting against the tyranny on Indian settlers, at almost each session since 1894. Still the Bengali babus who were ruling public opinion from Peshawar to Chittagong in the 1880s were going to celebrate Kali puja at the Kalighat temple, under the leadership of a Bengali Professor of Presidency College, for the success of British arms in South Africa and to commemorate the victory of the British imperialists, it was decided at a meeting held at the residence of perhaps the biggest Bengali babu in Calcutta that a puja and a sankirtan party should be held at Kalighat. The history of the nineteenth

Another one put to death



Who stands to gain by such activity except the culprit?

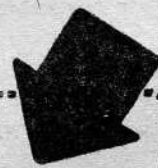
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century Renaissance closes with these pujahs, swastayans and sankirtans at the Kali temple. And the remaining seventy-five years' history of this twentieth century can be summed up in a few sentences, if one understands from this brief sketch the essential character of the Bengali babu, including the English-educated Bengali bhadralok-elite.

Most of the militant nationalist leaders who were emitting revolutionary fire through their pen and mouth in the first quarter of the twentieth century, made a *volte face* within a very short time and became worse than moderates. Some became yogis or Krishna worshippers. This was quite in tune with the ethos of the bhadralok 'class'. Then a group of bhadralok read Marxism in Indian prisons and in London, became inspired with the teachings of Marx and Russian revolution, and decided to become communist revolutionaries. During the last fifty years, the workers' and peasants' movements, under their leadership, have undoubtedly grown in size and form, but the historical and political truth is that the more they have grown in size and form the more their

revolutionary content has diminished. They have been more mechanically routinised than dialectically revolutionised. Why has this been so? Because of the predominance of the same upper-caste middle-class bhadralok babus in the leadership of the communist movement. The appellation 'comrade' can hardly mutate a bhadralok into a revolutionary. That is why the communist movement in our country has been a set ritualistic pattern of slogans, processions, strikes for better wages, prayers and petitions to the rulers for alleviating people's distress etc. It is nothing but a repetition of the same pattern of our nationalist movement, under the leadership of the same middle-class bhadralok.

There is another reason why the communist movement in our country is being steadily eroded of its revolutionary content, as the possibility of the revolutionary situation steadily increases. The communist leaders, political and intellectual, have almost totally failed to probe the structure of Indian society, as well as its massive superstructure, with its social-cultural-religious institutions.

This superstructure is like a stratified rock, built through ages, and its solidity and stability has been tested through many reform movements, including those of the nineteenth century Renaissance and the twentieth century Gandhian reforms. The various forms of Indian religion, for instance, with their emphasis on what the social anthropologists call 'liminality' and 'communitas', reaffirm continually the order of structure and help to restore relations between the actual historical classes and groups who occupy positions in that hierarchical structure. The political consciousness of the masses, under this superstructure, will always have a possibility to drift to 'communitas', religion having the strongest hold on the masses. Political mass movements, affected by this 'communitas', will also always have a possibility to drift to millenarian and humanitarian movements, particularly when these are led by the middle-class bhadralok. And it is a historical truth that among the middle-class gentlemen of India, the Bengali bhadralok provides the model.

IMPERIALISM AND REVOLUTION IN SOUTH ASIA

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Gathering Clouds Of A Police Raj

SUBHASH CHANDRA SARKER

IN independent India no other expenditure has perhaps increased as fast as that on the police. In the course of the twenty-four years from 1950-51 to 1974-75 the expenditure on the police (of the Central Government alone) rose by as much as fifty-two times—from a reasonable Rs. 3 crores in 1950-51 to the threatening sum of Rs. 156.40 crores in the budget estimate of 1974-75. The spurt in the increase in police expenditure by the Central Government could be traced to the time of assumption of power by Mrs Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister in January 1966. In 1966-67 the expenditure on police was Rs. 48.27 crores. But in the course of the very next year it rose by an amazing fifty per cent to Rs. 72.60 crores, in 1968-69. It is perhaps not without significance that the years 1967-68 and 1968-69 were also the years of the temporary eclipse of the Congress party which, while retaining power at the Centre, had to yield power to non-Congress parties at one time in as many as seven States of the Union. It was from the moment when the (non-Congress) State governments depended the least on the Central Government for the maintenance of law and order that the central expenditure on police increased by leaps and bounds—indicating a desire on the part of the Central Government to require additional strength for policing purposes—if need be against the wishes of the State governments. In 1971-72 the Central expenditure on police reached the figure of Rs. 118.82 crores—nearly two and a half times that of the amount five years earlier! And in the budget of the current year the allocation is for Rs. 156.40 crores which is sure to grow by the time the financial year comes to an end.

At the same time the expenditure of the State governments on the police has been increasing even almost as fast—doubling every ten years or so. This expenditure already exceeds that on general administration. Thus, in 1971-72

the State governments spent Rs. 244.33 crores on the police, compared with Rs. 210.67 crores on general administration and Rs. 57.57 crores on justice and jails—and Rs. 183.81 crores on medical and public health and Rs. 351.64 crores on primary education. In the next five years ending in March 1979 the State governments are expected to incur a total expenditure of Rs. 1,816.08 crores on the police. In view of the rising incidence of expenditure on account of increased dearness allowance granted by almost all the State governments to their employees in the wake of the rise in the level of prices, there is no doubt that the actual expenditure on police would be much more than what is estimated. In 1978-79 the per capita expenditure on police in the States of India (exclusive of the expenditure of the Central Government on police) would be Rs. 7.63 compared with an expected average per capita expenditure of Rs. 6.73 on medical and public health. Among the States Maharashtra shows the highest expenditure on police during the Fifth Five Year Plan—the expected amount being Rs. 258.45 crores, followed by Uttar Pradesh Rs. 222.30 crores, West Bengal Rs. 214.91 crores, Madhya Pradesh Rs. 137.18 crores, Bihar Rs. 135.73 crores, Gujarat Rs. 116.92 crores and Andhra Pradesh Rs. 118.63 crores. Expenditure on police in no other State would exceed Rs. 100 crores during the Fifth Plan period.

Although the State governments are spending more and more on the police, the Central Government justifies its action in creating a larger police force under its control. The Secretary of the Union Home Ministry said, "We feel these are all thoroughly justified and our present experience also is in line with that. Not a month passes in which we do not have pressing requests from State governments on account of one trouble or the other and it is a fairly intricate task of operation and control to ensure the optimum deployment, as it were, of

the forces available". If the validity of such an explanation for increasing the expenditure on the Central police force were to be conceded, the logical conclusion would be that the increasing expenditure incurred by the State governments on the State police was utterly infructuous and wasteful. It is not extraordinary to find the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament expressing grave anxiety over the matter. In its report the Committee expressed the view "that expenditure on police organisations of different kinds has been increasing at such a rapid rate that it calls for an urgent review by an independent high-powered commission. The expenditure on police both at the Centre and in the States has reached levels where clearly they are eroding the resources available for developmental activities. The Committee trust that Government will take a decision in this matter and appoint the commission within the next two or three months." This report was presented to the Lok Sabha on 30 April, 1974. Almost six months have passed since then. But the Government of India is yet to announce the appointment of such a commission to scrutinise the justifiability of this huge outlay on the police.

CRP, BSF, CISF

A large part of this outlay in recent years has been due to the phenomenal growth in the strength of the Central Reserve Police (CRP) and the Border Security Force (BSF). A third element has been the emergence of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) which grew ten-fold in four years. The strength of the CRP has risen from 16 battalions in 1964-65 to 60 today. According to the Secretary of the Union Home Ministry, the increase was nothing extraordinary to be commented upon. "In fact, we in the Home Ministry think that we could have done with some more increase, but we have tried to manage with the least level we could manage with", the Secretary is on record to have said. The expenditure on CRP went up from Rs. 13.57 crores in 1968-69 to Rs. 38.78 crores in 1973-74.

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deployment of the CRP in 1973 it is seen that out of 82 deployments in the year as many as 58 were made in the non-Hindi speaking States and 24 in Hindi-speaking States. But 56 per cent of the total strength of the CRP was drawn from the five Hindi-speaking States of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. Perhaps in this linguistic imbalance lies the root of much of the complaints of barbarism against the men of the CRP who had to cope not only with the ordinary difficulties of policemen in an unrestful society but also with the additional handicap of a communication gap due to ignorance of the languages of the locality where the CRP men have been generally employed. This poses a peculiar danger to the integrity of the country. For in a clash between the public and the police, which is unfortunately a matter of daily occurrence, resentment grows only against the police. But if the offending police and the suffering public speak different languages, as is bound to be the case under the existing state of affairs (where West Bengal deployed the largest number of CRP men in each of the three years 1970-71, 1971-72 and 1972-73 but contributed only 1.97 per cent of the CRP strength), the danger of linguistic riots breaking out would become very real and to that extent national unity will be impaired.

The CRP has also become involved in political controversy. In 1968-69 on three occasions CRP units had been sent to Kerala and West Bengal without any request coming from any of these governments and in one instance the CRP unit had not been withdrawn even when the State Government concerned (West Bengal) had asked for its withdrawal. This may also have contributed to the acts of irresponsible conduct of which the CRP men are being increasingly accused all over the country. One instance of such conduct was seen in Cooch Behar in the northern part of West Bengal when the CRP firing on 27 August resulted in the death of a school teacher and severe injuries to others. According to an editorial in "The Hindusthan Standard" of Calcutta, "In Cooch Behar there was

no justification for the police firing on a group of school students who were protesting against the highhanded manner in which the CRP were dealing with the driver and assistant of a bus that had earlier collided with a police van." (Calcutta, 29 August, 1974).

Expenditure on the Border Security Force more than doubled between 1968-69 (when it was Rs. 25.44 crores) and 1974-75 (in the budget for which a provision of Rs. 57.41 crores has been made). The Public Accounts Committee was sceptical about the justification for this growing expenditure in view of the fact that there is a large standing army whose duty it is to protect the boundaries of the country. "Moreover till 1968 the State forces were successfully guarding the border. There is an appreciable rise in expenditure even after the cessation of hostilities on the eastern border. . . . This calls for an explanation", the Committee observed.

The Central Industrial Security Force was created in 1969-70. It grew in strength rapidly and accounted for 10,220 men in 1971-72. In the following year its strength increased by more than fifty per cent to 15,545 men. The sanctioned strength is 17,330. It has been inducted into 71 public sector undertakings. The Public Accounts Committee has called upon the Central Government to "review the entire position to see whether it is necessary to have such a large number of forces each created for performing limited functions in addition to the one responsible for overall maintenance of law and order and protecting government properties".

Constitutional Aspects

What deserves particular attention is that each of these three cases of the expansion or creation of the Central police force—CRP, BSF and CISF—impinges on the functioning of the State police force and opens a scope for considerable confusion. Already the Centre-State relations in the country have been bedevilled because of what the Sixth Finance Commission has described as the Central Government's proneness "to encumber themselves with routine administrative and supervisory functions". The

wisdom of further queering the pitch through the duplication of police forces is not beyond question. The Centre-State Relations Inquiry Committee headed by the former Chief Justice of Madras High Court, Mr P. V. Rajamanner, observed: "The State police should be relied on for maintenance of peace within the State. The interference of the Union in the upkeep of law and order seems to be contrary to the provisions of the Constitution. Even Article 355 in the sense in which it has in our opinion to be interpreted cannot enable the Union to station the Central Reserve Police for the day-to-day policing of the areas of a State, a function allotted in its entirety to the State by the Constitution. We are of the view that the Central Reserve Police should not be sent to any State except at the request or with the consent of the State". (Report of the Centre-State Relations Inquiry Committee, 1971, Government of Tamil Nadu, Madras, page 190). This is all the more applicable to the CISF.

From 1969-70 onward the Government of India has provided Rs 19.80 crores to the States on loan-cum-grants basis for the purpose of modernisation of the police forces through (a) providing modes of faster transport, (b) providing them with better communication facilities such as VHF wireless transmitting cum-receiving sets, and (c) equipping them with forensic science laboratories. "In fact", the Joint Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, told the Public Accounts Committee, "we now give assistance of roughly Rs 5 lakhs towards the building part and there is no limit for the other parts". On 31 March 1974 the States were due to repay the Central Government Rs. 12.82 crores as loan for modernisation of the police force. The State-wise break-up of the amount of outstanding loans, which perhaps also indicates the thrust of police expenditure in various States, shows that West Bengal was the heaviest debtor with Rs. 1.80 crores to pay back, followed by Rajasthan (Rs. 1.38 crores), Orissa (Rs. 1.28 crores), Tamil Nadu (Rs. 1.21 crores), Madhya Pradesh Rs. 1 crore), Maharashtra (Rs. 91 lakhs) and Kerala (Rs. 81 lakhs). Other States each had an

outstanding of less than Rs 80 lakhs. On the same date the total amount due to the Central Government from State governments as loans for police housing was Rs 48.08 crores of which again West Bengal accounted for the largest amount (Rs 6.02 crores), followed by Maharashtra (Rs 4 crores), Madhya Pradesh (Rs 3.88 crores), Andhra Pradesh (Rs 3.69 crores), Uttar Pradesh (Rs 3.68 crores), Tamil Nadu (Rs 3.59 crores), Karnataka (Rs 3.05), Rajasthan (Rs 3.04) crores), Kerala (Rs 2.88 crores), Orissa (Rs 2.41 crores), Bihar (Rs 2.38 crores), Jammu and Kashmir (Rs 2.18 crores) and Gujarat (Rs 2.10 crores). Assam had an outstanding loan on this account of Rs 1.99 crores, Punjab Re 1.21 crores and Haryana Rs 1.12 crores. Other States had an outstanding of less than Rs 1 crore each. However, this substantial amount already spent does not seem to have enhanced police capacity to deal with anti-social criminals, although it must be conceded that political opponents now do get a much rougher treatment than a few years ago.

A Policeman's Query

The justification for the increased outlay on the police has been questioned not by members of Parliament alone. Even the former Director-General of the Central Reserve Police (CRP) which has acquired an unenviable notoriety for its misconduct all over India, has raised this question. Mr V. G. Kanetkar was the first full-time Inspector-General of the Central Reserve Police (CRP), in which capacity he joined on 28 June 1963. There were 12 battalions then. He was subsequently made the Director-General of CRP. He left the CRP (and also retired from Government service after 35 years and 7-1/2 months) on 15 September 1969. By that time in the CRP there were 52 battalions, a group centre, four training institutions and also three signal battalions under a wireless adviser attached to the Directorate-General. There were two Inspectors-General, three Deputy Directors and seven Deputy Inspectors-General. Having worked so vigorously and effectively for strengthening the CRP Mr Kanetkar raises the question if it is a thing of pride that a

large reserve police force had to be maintained in the country. Mr Kanetkar writes, "In a span of ten years the Force expanded from one Bn. to 52 Bns with ancillary institutions. This solid increase created thousands of new posts and upgraded quite a few excluding that of the head, but whenever I pondered over this transformation, I could not help comparing it with the opening, with fanfare, of a new maternity home in the middle of a family planning drive. The necessity to augment the strength of the Force was felt because conditions in the country were causing concern and it was

argued that if troubles at different spots had to be contained, the CRP must have enough strength to be available for despatch anywhere in aid of the local police. Was it then a thing of pride that a huge reserve had to be created only because the internal situation was deteriorating?" (V. G. Kanetkar, *Vales of Crime*, Bombay, 1971, p. 159).

The same question applies to the growth in the strength of the police force as a whole, which has necessarily diverted funds from much-needed national endeavours to a purely unproductive occupation.

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Exploitation, Struggle And Banabibi

BY A CORRESPONDENT

IN a class-divided society culture must be viewed as something related with the classes. Folk culture has been influenced in its course by the culture of the exploiters, but never did it lose its character of a culture of the exploited.

Uneven development left remnants of tribal culture not among the "scheduled tribes" only but also amongst the toiling masses of the country. Village communities with their feudal character remained more or less unchanged for a pretty long time. Even now the village stands for the feudal system. In this system the exploiters are mainly the big landholders, the jotedars and the money-lending mahajans. They tried to transplant their ideas among the toiling masses. It is a fashion to show the liberalism of Brahmin culture saying it tried to assimilate the folk gods and folk culture within its fold. But the truth could not be concealed. Abanindra Nath Tagore admitted in his **Banglar Brata** that this liberalism was most unliberal in character. In accepting the 'bratas', he admitted, the Brahmins attempted to bring the others under their clutches. Yet the toiling masses, the exploited sections were never and are never without their culture. Contradiction between the exploiter and the exploited is always reflected in folk culture, though the influence of Brahmin culture could not always be avoided. In a study of folk culture the remnants of tribal culture, changed by feudal culture and Brahmin culture, may be there. But above all, the struggle of the people, their fighting spirit is the dominant factor there.

The Sunderbans is an area which was long secluded from the mainland. Most of the area was not accessible to an ordinary man. Life was hard there. The British rulers were interested in the early period of reclamation work. But soon they became disinterested. Most-

ly the middle class adventurers came here in the role of supervisors and employed people who were mostly of aboriginal descent. These people had to struggle with almost primitive weapons against all possible dangers from nature. So the first contradiction in the area was between man and nature. This contradiction in such a form under British rule was unique. Similar situations were created in other parts of country also but insecurity could nowhere prevail for so long. Though tribal men were brought from other places, the main fighters, so far as the records go and the present composition of the population shows, were the Poundras and the Namasudras of aboriginal descent. They were, as the records of the rulers show, most competent to work in this area.

After a certain stage of reclamation the zamindars and their representatives in the area and other exploiters firmly established themselves on the reclaimed land. The hard-working people were no more allowed to enjoy the facilities they could enjoy in habitable areas. The fetters became strong enough for the toilers. So contradiction between the exploiters and the toilers got the upper hand at this stage. In the cultural field also the exploiters tried to establish their supremacy.

But jungle life could not be abandoned, though further reclamation was prohibited by the rulers. Collecting of timber, honey and wax and fishing in the jungle areas are even now the practice. Jungle-life demands team-work, a collective life. Individuals get no importance there. But as soon as the jungle-goers are back in the locality this collective attitude becomes redundant. Exploitation does not spare them. The contradiction between jungle-life and the life in the locality becomes thus the most unique feature of the Sunderbans. The culture of the Sunderbans is more

or less centred around this contradiction.

Jungle life

So any study of the culture of this area should begin with the study of culture in jungle-life.

Tribal life distinguishes no individual. Ego cannot be established here. It is because of the primitive means and methods of production, the severity of nature and insecurity of life. Men who came here had a tradition of tribal life which could not be washed out by the exploiters. Under the new conditions in the Sunderbans when they tried to adopt themselves they had to rely on the collective. Though this collective differs from the tribal one in many respects and the influence of the organised social life in the locality penetrates every now and then, yet culture, tribal in nature, may be easily traced in this life. There are some unwritten rules observed by every jungle-goer which will lead to such a conclusion.

In the jungle whenever a man is killed by a tiger a piece of cloth is hoisted like a flag by his mates near the spot. This is meant as a precaution for the fellows who will come later. Several cases revealed that the loss is not much mourned by the jungle-goers. A new member is recruited and they again start for the jungle. Such loss is inevitable and there is no time to shed tears over it. But the hoisting of a flag as a precaution is a must.

No dispute or conflict is allowed in the jungle area. Even if it is unavoidable, it is to be settled in the locality and never in the jungle.

Blood relationship is not a factor to be counted here. A few years back a dispute became unavoidable in the jungle area between two parties of fishermen. One of them addressed somebody of the other party as a blood relation. He was sharply contradicted by the man addressed. He said that such a relation was to be considered only when they would be out of the jungle, but never in the jungle area. He added that the father-son relationship also was of no use here. A sense of new life under the peculiar conditions of the jungle cannot depend on relationship in the locality. On the contrary, equality amongst the jungle-

goers is above everything.

This sense of equality is a hindrance to the establishment of a dominating god. The fight against the severity of nature gave birth to magic among the tribals. In the jungle area the influence of magic is also a prominent feature. The hard-working jungle-goers are quite helpless against the man-eaters of the Sunderbans. Magic is practised as a security measure. The magicians were mentioned in O'Malley's Bengal District Gazetteers as 'fakirs'. They are now called 'gunin' or 'boule'. The word 'boule' used to be applied to every jungle-goer. But now the word is reserved for the magician. Hereafter the use of the word in this essay will bear the same connotation.

These 'boules' may come from any religion. They may be Hindu or Muslim or Christian. Jungle-goers are committed to none of the established religions. No god of these religions can save them from the Royal Bengal Tiger. They must have a strong faith, as equality prevails amongst them and they cannot depend on any dominating god. They must rely on magic. Their magicians also cannot be committed to these religions. The quality a magician needs is a strong personality. A batch of jungle-goers would depend on a 'boule' and as such he has not scope to falter. Whenever danger is imminent a 'boule' must go forward. He is to impart firm faith to the jungle-goers and so a strong will is an essential quality for a 'boule'.

'Boules' may be classified into two groups—'guner boule' and 'hukumer boule'. Of these 'guner boules' are of older origin. They are not guided by any person, but by the 'mantras' or magic words. They get it from any source. But the 'hukumer boules' are guided by 'hukum' or order of some 'hukumdar boule'. Such 'boules' should take the name of their 'guru' in the jungle. They are of later origin. The jungle-goers belong to an organised society which is feudal in character. Though they work under conditions favourable for a tribal collective, the bearings of this organised society cannot be denied. Feudal culture encroached on their culture and as a result even the magician tended to be under some lord. Mablej Fakir of Khulna was a famous 'hukumdar boule'.

He had disciples of both religious, Hindu and Muslim. The author came across a man of about 65 who in his early boyhood saw this great 'fakir'. After partition many of his Hindu disciples came to this area of West Bengal. This 'fakir' would never go to the jungle. But his disciples would always take his name when in the jungle.

The magic words or the 'mantras' seem to be meaningless in a locality, Hindu gods and the Muslim lord 'Barkat' are in many cases mentioned in the same 'mantra'. These gods are sometimes threatened that if they fail to safeguard the people, they will be cursed or rebuked. Such a threat to any god is out of the question in a feudal society. Kali, Durga, Bara Goopi, Barkat—none gets authority over the jungle. The power of the magic words is supreme.

There are several types of 'mantras'—'Pitu', 'Kachuli', 'Chalan', 'Jalan', 'Lakshman gandi' etc. Each 'mantra' has its own peculiar function. 'Lakshman-gandi' will not allow tigers into a specified area. 'chalan' will force any tiger to a direction desired by the 'boule'. Some 'mantras' are to be uttered loudly, some silently, 'Mantras' according to some magicians, may be communicated to others and that will not weaken the charm of the 'mantras'. Others hold opinions contrary to this. 'Mantras' according to some magicians, are not to be uttered in the locality because they might cause danger to the place. Some hold that these 'mantras' should be practised every day in a lonely place, but the 'boule' should be careful so that no 'mantra' enters a goat's ears. Such practices show the indigenous character of the 'mantras'.

'Boules' cannot be separated from other jungle-goers. They do all the work of a jungle-goer. Only those who are old are exempted from hard jobs. These boules are often killed by the tigers, but faith in the 'mantras' amongst the regular jungle-goers is not shaken.

As life in the reclaimed areas became securer the zamindars, jotedars and other exploiters established themselves firmly. Laws and orders of the British rulers could not however be established. Rules laid down by the exploiters were supreme. Exploitation became as crude

as possible. Some of the exploiters who had connections with Calcutta shook off all their cultural pretensions when exploiting in this area. They were greedy, profit-mongering adventurers. Though 'Damarudhar' of Trailokyanath Mukhopadhyay was not a permanent dweller of this area, he is a typical cultural representative of the exploiters here. The only difference from the exploiters residing here is that the latter had no attachment to others and no excuse for their misdeeds was even necessary.

Some goddesses like Sitala and Manasa became entrenched in the area. They came from an old heritage. Exploiters also did not dare to dishonour these idols. Durgapuja in some places was introduced by these exploiters. Kalipuja and Basantipuja were also introduced. In each case the exploiters took the initiative. But the melas in connection with these pujas became often a place of corruption. The mela in connection with Basantipuja in Bali soon became notorious as a place for gamblers.

Banabibi

The exploited people became helpless and their sense of equality in the jungle-life was shattered. Their hard labour seemed to bring no prosperity. Wealth was drained out. Naked exploitation on the one hand and no scope of further economic development on the other made life more or less stagnant. Resistance on the part of the people under these circumstances become passive in nature. The episode of Banabibi along with the story of Dukhe Saha and Dhana Moule is an outcome of such resistance, a product of the contradiction between jungle-life and life in the reclaimed areas.

No religion claims Banabibi to be its own. According to the legend, she is the daughter of a Muslim fakir. Yet she is worshipped by the jungle-goers of all religions. 'Hajat' making is the old method of her puja. But idol making is also a practice now. Islam recognises no goddess and idol-worshipping is prohibited. Hindus cannot recognise her because of her origin. Cocks and ducks are sometimes offered to her. There is no definite 'mantra' in her puja and no

priest is required. She is worshipped outside the village and beside the river in most cases. But at least in one case she is being worshipped by a Brahmin priest and almost within the village. All these facts prove her folk origin.

The time of her puja (worship) leads to the same conclusion. Established religions would fix a common time to worship their gods and goddesses. But there is no fixed time for Banabibi. The jungle-goers worship her before starting for the jungle or after arriving there. They have also a practice of worshipping her after a safe and successful return. There is also her yearly puja. It is held in different places at different times. The time of work determines the time of cultural activities of the people. When struggle or work goes on no other thought is permitted. But as soon as the season of work is over and people get the return, there are festivals. Mostly dependent on agriculture as the country is, most of its festivals are connected with the post-harvest period. Before the season of work, cultural activities are mostly connected with prayer. These two aspects of folk culture—prayer and festivals—date from very old days. The climate in different parts of the country causes variations in the time of cultivation and harvesting. Naturally periods of prayer and festival are not the same everywhere. In the Sunderbans the situation was markedly different. There was no specific period for reclamation. Work went on throughout the year. Though the period of cultivation became specific, reclamation work or collection of timber, honey and wax had no fixed period. On the other hand people engaged in these activities came from various parts of the country and they had their specific time for prayers and festivals. So Banabibi is being worshipped throughout the year on the one hand and on the other there is her yearly puja which is influenced by the cultural heritage. The fixed time differs from place to place and even among people of the same profession. Sometimes her puja is retained among the cultivators who were once engaged in reclamation work. Vitality in such pujas is absent—the puja being only traditional. Perhaps these pujas are parts of prayers.

Some fishermen coming from East Bengal (now Bangladesh) claimed that they were familiar with the goddess even before leaving their old abode. They worship her in the month of Magh (January-February). They could not explain the reason for the time. Perhaps this was related to cultivation and their festivals mingled with the yearly puja of Banabibi. Most striking is the time observed by the Rajbansi fishermen. They worship Banabibi in the jungle in the month of Kartik (September-October) and again in the locality in Agrahayan (October-November) The Rajbansis adopt the 'komor' system in fishing. The season of 'komor' ends in Kartik. So before leaving the area of Banabibi they must do her puja. In the locality they would worship her in a festive mood in Agrahayan.

Banabibi is of very recent origin. Gopendra Krishna Basu in his **Banglar Loukik Deb Devi** tried in vain to trace her origin. The contradiction which gave birth to her cannot be dated back more than 150 years. In O'Malley's Bengal District Gazetteers where gods and goddesses, fakirs and several aspects of folk culture are mentioned, there is not a single word regarding Banabibi. In places the jungle-goers know her after coming to the West Bengal part of the Sunderbans. But she was readily accepted by these jungle-goers. In these areas, after magic Banabibi enjoys respect and faith. She is worshipped, for she is always with the distressed jungle-goers. She demands nothing from her votaries but she is not ready to tolerate Dakshin Roy, the 'kafer' who devours human beings. Such a goddess who demands nothing but protects human beings from tigers can serve no purpose of the exploiters. She is a folk goddess.

To understand the cult of Banabibi is to understand the folk culture of the Sunderbans. The exploiters did not abstain from going to the jungle areas. But the environment did not suit them. They could not but try to establish themselves there. Naturally the law of equality was in question. To thwart their influence which was unable to take roots there a goddess was created by the people. Moreover, on their return to the locality

they fell easy prey to these profit-mongers. Banabibi was created to keep up their spirits. She is ever benevolent to the toilers. She fought in two cases. In the beginning she had to make her way, fighting with Narayani, mother of Dakshin Roy. It was a bitter fight and after a fierce battle Banabibi emerged the winner. She took possession of the 18 bhatils but distributed these among others. The exploited sections of the people were satisfied by the beating up of a torturer. Nothing more at that stage could be thought of. But the reflection of the people's desire is clear when we find Banabibi prohibiting forcible encroachments on others' areas. Didn't encroachment by force uproot many of these hard-working men from their homes?

The second fight was against Dakshin Roy who came in the disguise of a tiger, to devour Dukhe Saha. This time Banabibi did not go herself but sent her brother Sa Jangali to beat back this demon with a 'khapsra', the wooden stick. Sa Jangali went forward and struck hard this abominable beast on the head with his strong fist. The animal fled and Sa Jangali chased it. Dakshin Roy took shelter at Bara Gazi's place and Sa Jangali reproached the Gazi for sheltering a demon who was in the habit of eating human beings. Bara Gazi mediated between Dakshin Roy and Banabibi and ultimately the former surrendered to the latter.

Nothing more is said about Sa Jangali, brother of Banabibi. But he is none the less an important figure. Gorky said, "It is quite feasible that notable people of antiquity provided raw material for the invention of gods". Here, there is no question of antiquity. Yet Sa Jangali is created after the image of his creator, the jungle-going people. His weapon is primitive. He fights not as a god, but as a jungle-goer. Stories of such a fight with some tiger are not uncommon here. Sa Jangali is the idealisation of the toilers in the jungle. Such heroism was required in jungle-life and man became hero.

Dakshin Roy is worshipped in the southern part of 24-Parganas. But his class character is revealed in the Banabibi episode. He exacts human life as

rent. He is ranked with a Royal Bengal Tiger, the enemy of the people. Dr Tushar Chatterjee, an academic pundit of folk culture, tried to prove him a god of cultivation. The academic pundits "have been completely silent regarding the unmistakable signs of a materialist mode of thought inevitably precipitated by labour processes and by the facts of ancient man's social life". Hatred for the exploiter is expressed somehow or other in the folk culture of a class-divided society. It was never intended to be concealed. It is the exploiters who always glorified themselves and distorted folk culture by any and every means. The Mangal Kavyas bear this imprint of distortion. Folk gods were replaced by the exploiters. But the scope for rebellion was always utilised by the folk. In the episode of Banabibi and the story of Dukhe Saha and Dhana Moule hatred for Dakshin Ray is so clearly ventilated that there is little scope of mistaking his character. He might have replaced some god of cultivation, but he himself is nothing but a representative of the exploiters.

Another goddess is there, Narayani, who tried to stand in the way of Banabibi. She is mentioned as the mother of Dakshin Roy and that is enough.

The Banabibi episode is connected with a story the nutshell of which is as follows.

Dhana and Mana were brothers. They had enough, yet Dhana wanted to go to the forest to collect honey and wax. Mana tried in vain to stop him. Arrangements were almost ready when Dhana found that he needed one man to help him. He went to Dukhe, a poor cowherd, and told him that it was a shame for him to tend cows for others. He invited Dukhe to join his team, where he would have nothing to do but stay on the boat. He also promised to arrange his marriage on return. In the same way his mother was coaxed to agree and Dukhe started with the team.

In the jungle everything was not all right. Dakshin Roy specifically demanded that Dukhe be given to him to be devoured. Dhana pretended not to agree, but ultimately gave way. Dukhe refused to leave the boat to collect

some timber when asked to do so. Dhana began to reproach Dukhe. Dukhe had to get down and the boat left without him.

Dukhe on his return from the woods found not the boat but Dakshin Roy in the disguise of a tiger. He according to his mother's advice prayed to Banabibi but afterwards became senseless. Banabibi at once appeared along with his brother on the scene. Sa Jangali went forward to teach Dakshin Roy a good lesson. Chased by him, Dakshin Roy fled to Bara Gazi for shelter. Bara Gazi mediated between him and Banabibi and Dakshin Roy surrendered to her. Dukhe was taken to his land by Kalu Roy, a friend of his.

Dukhe's mother had been told by Dhana that Dukhe had been devoured by a tiger. Severely shocked she was about to die when Dukhe came back. Now Dukhe by the grace of Bara Gazi became a nawab. He called Dhana Moule to his court. Dhana had not the courage to disobey. Shakily he appeared. Though Dukhe did not punish him, Dhana could not be sure. To avert Dukhe's wrath he arranged the marriage of his daughter Champa with him.

Call of the Jungle

The call of the jungle is not at all sweet to a common man. Until and unless compelled no one desires to risk his life. But the exploiters would not let them stay at home. Sweet words and promise of a bright future would be used to seduce the common people. Dhana, when he first appeared before Dukhe, said, "I have come to know your condition. Your father on his death bed asked me to look after you. What are you doing?"

A real wellwisher no doubt! So long he had no time to honour the wishes of a dying man. Only when he needed a man on his boat did he come to the cowherd. How sweet was his promise! He would get Dukhe married on their return!

That is not all. The law of jungle life, the law of equality and inter-dependence, was deliberately violated by this exploiter. He was hesitant for a moment, but at last he shook off his mask and dedicated the poor boy to

the demon who devours human beings. This was more than enough to arouse the wrath of the people. The appearance of Sa Jangali and his chasing of Dakshin Roy reflect the extent of this wrath.

But would Dhana be spared? As the economic development was stagnant at a certain point and there was no other scope, Dukhe, the representative of the toiling masses, had to be changed into a more powerful man—a 'nawab'. He could behead Dhana any time. But Dhana, a real rogue, knew how to bribe a more powerful man and this time he managed to escape by marrying his daughter to Dukhe.

This socio-economic part of the legend with the story of origin and establishment of Banabibi is depicted in **Banabibi Johuranama** or the story of Dhana Moule and Dukhe Saha by the poet, Muhammed Munsif, of Bhursut Kanpur. The book is influenced by a great extent by Mollah culture. Yet in the book desire and reality as reflected in the minds of the toiling masses could not be distorted altogether. The social part of the story is played by the local 'jatra party'. The 'pala' is naturally very popular in the area. Banabibi appears before Dukhe in the disguise of his mother. The 'pala' is full of songs which express the emotional side of the story. Many songs are composed separately to glorify the benevolent goddess. But the 'pala' is so popular that these songs seem dull.

The economic background of the Sunderbans is unique in Bengal. Life is nowhere so insecure in the battle with nature. The cultural aspect accordingly is unique too. Nowhere else in Bengal in the last hundred years can folk culture be seen in its more or less unpolluted nature. Magic, myths, folk religion, tales of exploitation, all these characteristics of folk culture may be traced in this area. Attempts to explore the social life will reveal many other aspects, no doubt. Even from this standpoint the Sunderbans is the call of the day.

Defend Prisoners

The Legal Aid Committee has been functioning since August 1972 to help thousands of political prisoners living in sub-human conditions in different jails in India. Most of them being poor people and peasants are not able to defend themselves against the large number of charges (sometimes as high as 60) framed against them. If any one was granted bail or acquitted, he or she would be tagged onto other cases and rearrested.

The Legal Aid Committee tried to stand by the side of the victims irrespective of their ideology.

The task was not easy. Getting information and instructions from the prisoners, organising legal defence in various courts, acute financial and numerous other problems, specially in a regime of police terror, stood in our way. But a large number of friends, sympathisers, and democratic-minded people and organisations cooperated with us to tackle the problems.

Up to June 1974 nearly 2,000 political prisoners from different jails sought legal help from the committee.

One hundred and forty bail and habeas corpus petitions were moved for detenus and bail was granted in 56 cases. Twenty-one were released. The rest are pending hearing.

One hundred and forty bail petitions were moved for undertrial prisoners; bail was granted in 20 cases.

Sixty-six Sessions cases were attended; 46 were acquitted. Eleven are pending trial. The rest were convicted.

Twenty-eight appeal cases were filed before the High Court in connection with death sentence and life imprisonment; two appeals were filed before the Supreme

Court. Sixty miscellaneous appeals were filed before various courts.

During the past two years the committee has participated in various democratic movements to demand the release of all political prisoners and protect the civic and democratic rights of the people at large.

The committee knows that very little could be done so far and that our efforts barely touch the fringe of the vast problem. The committee appeals to progressive and democratic people and organisations to set up support groups in their respective neighbourhoods in order to provide continuous help to the committee.

It invites criticism of its work and suggestions. It appeals to all concerned to come forward and help it financially, organisationally and by communicating information about those still languishing in jail.

Cheques drawn in favour of Bina Banerjee may be sent to either of the addresses given below Money orders, cash and communications to the office (2):—

1. Bina Banerjee,
Account No. 10816
United Bank of India, Sealdah.
Branch, 28, Acharya Prafulla Chandra Roy Road, Calcutta-9.
2. Jayasree Rana, Secretary, Legal Aid Committee, 9, Old Post Office Street, (First Floor), Calcutta-1.
Office hours: 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.
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