

frontier

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Editor : Samar Sen

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BY SAMAR SEN FROM 61, MOTT LANE,
CALCUTTA-13
TELEPHONE: 243202

WITH UTMOST RESPECT

AS proof of the "utmost respect" the Government has for Parliament no copy of the presidential order barring detenus held under the amended MISA for smugglers was placed before the Lok Sabha till the opposition leaders were on the point of seeking adjournment of the House in protest against the order. Though the adjournment motions were not admitted by the Speaker, he thought it fit to admonish the Government for committing an "impropriety". The admonition is not likely to shame the Government which converts itself into an ordinance factory during parliamentary recesses and convenes Parliament sessions to regularise the ordinances as laws. The plea of urgency is plain balderdash; the sole objective of the Government is to cut out the parliamentary process and arm the executive with drastic powers carrying out the political behest of the Government. Questionable decisions of the Government are enforced through ordinances; the innocuous ones through Bills. To those who swear by the parliamentary process almost every ordinance is an affront for it implies executive action without parliamentary sanction. Subsequent parliamentary approval is virtually meaningless for by that time executive action has been taken and the Government's objective achieved.

Of 500 odd MISA detenus held under the smugglers' special, at least some are being detained for offences alleged to have been committed several years ago. In the Rajya Sabha, Mr C. K. Daphtary, former attorney-general, has cited an instance of a person being detained now for an offence said to have been committed in 1961. Haji Mastan, who was powerful enough to secure from the then Governor of Gujarat, Mr Nityananda Kanungo, a recommendation for a passport, has publicly claimed that he has been out of the smuggling business for more than a decade. If the so-called smugglers could live in freedom for so long, there would have been no harm in postponing their arrests till MISA had been amended not by an ordinance but an Act of Parliament. It has been said that a Bill in Parliament would have alerted the smugglers and they would have fled the country. A good riddance, one should have thought; especially when it is not possible even for smugglers to spirit away their palaces, and picture-houses and what not. Maybe the Government thinks otherwise. Perhaps in New Delhi's opinion the country cannot afford this kind of brain-drain; a Khorana in the USA is all right, but a Haji Mastan must remain in India to add lustre to Indian politics.

It the ordinance was meant to cut down Parliament to size, the presidential

order is designed to knock down the judiciary from its tottering pedestal. It is a rebuff to the judiciary for daring to criticise the executive as careless. High Courts of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh—the list may not be exhaustive—have set aside detention orders of alleged smugglers as they found that the grounds of detention did not meet even the severely limited requirements of the obnoxious law. A government with a modicum of commitment to the rule of law would have pulled up the executive, but our socialist government has chosen to exclude the executive orders from the jurisdiction of courts; the executive has been liberated;

A Red Herring

For all his good intentions, Jayaprakash Narayan has provided the rulers of New Delhi with a red herring as useful as they would have liked it to be. The Bihar agitation reached its pitch at about a time when the Indian economy was passing through one of its worst food crises. And as things started happening in Bihar and elsewhere, the "distress" stories were pushed to the background. For a couple of weeks it appeared from newspaper reports that the most important thing happening in the country was that some people were trying to organise a rally and others were trying to prevent it, rather than the fact that hundreds of thousands of our countrymen were going without food for days on end and were waiting for the end. It was a wonderful piece of self-deception in which all the parties made their due contribution.

It is indeed remarkable how little reaction a crisis of this dimension has evo-

Our sole agent in Bangladesh

CHALANTIKA BAIGHAR

14, Banglabazar

Dacca-1

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it has been authorised to be as careless, frivolous, and vindictive as it can be. The detaining authorities can now arrest anyone under the smugglers' special to settle personal scores or please their political bosses without any fear of court interference. This absolute power may be used with as much ease against political opponents of the ruling party as against the common man who refuses to give satisfaction to the party and men in power and their minions. No doubt the Home Minister will soon find an occasion to declare in Parliament that all this has been done with the utmost respect for the judiciary and the fundamental rights of citizens.

ked. No heads have rolled, nobody has been hauled up for the tragedy that befell our so beloved "garibs". There has been precious little immediate impact on the policy plane; only vaguely we have been assured that the country will now attach maximum importance to agriculture. The Narora meeting has only repeated some of the old jargon and has added a few new ones. Otherwise it remains the same. We keep on talking of raising agricultural production without being any wiser that it cannot just be done unless the all powerful farm lobby, the kulaks as they are called, is tamed. We still like to believe that only certain changes in the marketing and pricing of farm produce would do the trick. But this is also another kind of self-deception. The fact of the matter is that the biggest obstacle to agricultural development is the lack of political will and no amount of tinkering with the market mechanism will really take us anywhere. An agricultural revolution has to be preceded, not followed, by a total change in the agricultural society. Land reforms have to be pushed through, fiscal burden has to be properly distributed, and the basic infrastructure for farm development has to be provided. This is asking for too much because it all amounts to a violent upheaval to change the present order.

Organising A Famine

A correspondent writes:

No one will probably ever know just how many people have died of starvation (malnutrition?) this year in West Bengal. The only estimate, 25,000, has been made by Mr Promode Das Gupta of the CPI(M). His claim was challenged none too convincingly in Parliament, but significantly, no one from the West Bengal Ministry contradicted him. They don't need to. By now, they realise very well the difference between a sporadic agitation and a mass upsurge. In any case, the democratic left in West Bengal is too emasculated even to agitate at the moment. Does it make any difference to the Congress if 25,000 or even 2,50,000 people die of—well, malnutrition?

The point is, this year's food problem was entirely man-made. The next year can well be a great deal worse, unless the State and Central Governments overhaul the food policy announced by Mr P. K. Ghosh, Minister of State for Food, in the State Assembly recently.

Consider what happened this year. The open market price of paddy was allowed to go up to between Rs 120 and Rs 125 per quintal whereas the procurement price was fixed at Rs 73. So the procurement failed miserably—it was designed to—with only 1,56,000 tonnes collected instead of 5,00,000 tonnes as targeted. The State Government lost no time in blaming the farmers, millers, smugglers, traders and political elements—in short, everybody else except itself. Now when the poor peasants are making distress sales no government agents are there to buy paddy at even less than the procurement price. The rich peasants are purchasing them and, after paying the 'levy' out of it, are keeping the rest to be sold at high prices later.

So much for the role of the State Government. As for the Centre, during the first three months of 1974, it supplied West Bengal 3,60,000 tonnes of wheat against its requirement of 6,00,000 tonnes. Despite official claims that there was really no scarcity as such, and that the situation would have been better but for the hoarders and smugglers, there

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was a genuine scarcity of food in West Bengal this year.

Regardless of these stark facts, the State Government publicly shed tears over the increase in the smuggling of food-grains from villages to towns and from West Bengal to Bihar, where the prices of grain were higher. A State Government official told this correspondent that the Bihar authorities did not bother about the smuggling if the traffic was favourable, that is, when the State was at the receiving end of the supply line. Given present conditions, this is merely practical wisdom. Thousands upon thousands of tonnes of rice are annually smuggled into Bihar from West Bengal as a result.

The procurement price made it easier for the millers to claim later that they could not buy 3,60,000 tonnes, their quota, from the market and market logic upheld their case. Interestingly enough, the Food Corporation, told by the State Government to take its hand off West Bengal, did much better at procuring paddy when later it was humbly called in by the same State Government. It offered the sellers priority in fertiliser allocation. Briefly, these were the reasons for the collapse of the official efforts and the consequent spell of rather severe malnutrition this year.

And in 1975, it looks as though food will be altogether priced out of the reach of the poor, even if one concedes that there will be no scarcity, as in this year. The target is the same, 5,00,000 tonnes. But millowners after handing over only 1,50,000 tonnes to the Government at the procurement price, have been left free to buy and presumably to hoard any amount of rice, at any price! Husking mill owners too, can go as they like, provided each hands over to the Government only five

tonnes of rice! The only trouble is, no one, including the Government, knows how many husking mills are there in West Bengal. If this is beginning to read like something out of George Mikes' comic efforts, one can only regretfully say that the resemblance is unintentional. Bear in mind, too, that the peasantry is economically weakened by distress sales and many have sold ration cards to the rich. From the big cultivators, the Government expects to collect the rest, or 1,50,000 tonnes. For this, the Chief Minister, Mr Ray, has asked the Chhatra Parishad to provide at least two volunteers for each of West Bengal's 38,000 villages, i.e. 76,000 volunteers. The CP leaders agreed at first but later backed out, claiming that the official scheme was fantastic. Actually, they wish to pressurise the State Food Minister and the Chief Minister for their own narrow ends.

In such a situation, the parties which possess certain components of a rural organisation, like the CPI(M), and in certain areas, the SUC and the RSP, will undoubtedly have a significant role to play. Whether they will be able to seize their political opportunities is rather less certain, on the basis of their past performances. In any case, anyone who wishes to learn how famines should be started in good crop years and how to keep populations from growing, should take a correspondence course from the socialist West Bengal Ministry.

Warning

How far Mrs Indira Gandhi has moved towards imposing her authoritarian leadership on the Congress party was clearly seen in her end-of-the-session address to the party's recent high-level conference at Narora (UP). Following the Congress split the trend was already visible when Pradesh Congress committees in different States were dissolved and ad hoc committees of "loyalists" formed, when men with no conceivable popular base of their own either among the people or in the party were imposed as Chief Ministers on the States, etc. All that manoeuvring to gain a dominant

hold over the party was in the heyday of the "Garibi Hatao" slogan and many perhaps were deceived into believing that it was a "socialist" clean-up of the party. It was nothing of the sort. Why it was considered necessary is clear now. The Narora speech was made when scandalous corruption cases of the Bihar Ministry were exposed by some soft-liners in the Congress demanding dissolution of the Bihar Assembly and a probe into the corruption cases, and when they protested against the police repression on the people of Bihar. Though they made a hasty retreat later, it was enough for Mrs Gandhi, storming at them she made it absolutely clear that she, "the elected leader of the party and the Government" would not tolerate such an "anti-party stand". To ensure that her audience took her seriously, she reminded them of the "1969 split". "The party would have been completely finished if I had listened to those forces at that time".

Apart from this modest description of herself as the single-handed saviour of the ruling party, the implied threat of throwing out the "critics" rather puts Mrs Gandhi on the other side of the fence.

In 1969, she was the "critic" against corruption, reactionary policies, etc., of the united Congress party. In 1974 she is threatening to throw out of the party not the hoarders and profiteers, the touts and hucksters, not those for whom a ministership is just a means of making money, but those who expose the crying corruption in the organisation. The repressive machinery of Mrs Gandhi's Government is showing its might all over the country to protect the interests of the monopolists, landlords, hoarders, and profiteers and the party and Government that represent them. Inside the party there is ruthless suppression of all dissent, even though it never goes beyond the vocal stage, in the same holy cause of saving the same vested interests and anti-people elements.

For Frontier contact

PABITRA KUMAR DEKA,

Assam Tribune,

Gauhati-3,

Assam.

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On Measurement Of Inequality

Ashoke Rudra

THERE has been during recent times a considerable amount of work done by economists and statisticians with the aim of finding out whether inequality in the living standards of the people has increased or decreased in the country. The usual finding has been that inequality has increased or at least not decreased since the country launched itself on the course of "planned development".

This line of research has however got very strict limitations which are partly due to the nature of the data that have been used. Most of this work has been done on the basis of consumption data collected and presented by the National Sample Survey (NSS). This particular Survey has been carried out in India in a continuous sequence of rounds ever since 1951. In each round a "random sample" of households selected from the entire country are interviewed by trained field investigators. A very detailed account of all the items that have been consumed by each such household during a specified period is built up on the basis of the household enquiry, and these individual household accounts are statistically processed to build up national estimates.

The sampling procedure is such that the sample fails to catch in its net those who belong to the upper income range. A more strict statement would be to say that there is a very high probability that people belonging to the higher income ranges would be drastically underrepresented. (This proposition can be rigorously proved in terms of the calculus of probability). This means that the very high consumption levels of the very high income groups do not get reflected at all in the NSS data. It may be noted here that by very high income groups we do not mean millionaires or "monopoly capitalists" or "feudal landlords". The "very high income range" is a relative concept, and in the context of our country starts pretty low. A very large part of what are called the urban middle classes belongs to this category. Thus, as a rough measure all those who earn

income above the exemption limit for direct income tax on non-agricultural income may be considered to belong to this category. They constitute a very small fraction of the population and they are highly underrepresented in the NSS sample. Again, just for the sake of illustration, most of these who, in today's transport situation in the big cities, can afford to travel regularly in minibuses would belong to this "very high income range".

The fact of this very high income range being left out of the NSS sample results in underestimation of any measure of inequality. That is because people belonging to this category, while constituting a very small fraction of the population, consume at several times higher per capita rates than the section of the population covered by the sample.

Yet another defect of the NSS consumption data is that while they provide an adequate account of the consumption of non-durable consumer goods, they very seriously underestimate the use of durable consumer goods. This is because durable consumer goods, by their very nature, are purchased at very infrequent intervals and also the greater part (in value) of durable consumer goods is consumed by the people of the higher income ranges. The underestimation of the consumption of durable consumer goods leads to the underestimation of the inequality in the living standards of even that section of the population that is covered by the NSS sample. Thus, production statistics would reveal that during the period of planning the one line of industrial production that has expanded very fast, faster than any other line, is that of durable consumer goods. Once again, we need not think only of such items as are consumed by only those whom the middle class people regard as affluent, like luxury apartments, motor cars, refrigerators, cooking ranges, telephones, tape recorders etc. Such items as radios and electric fans and even bicycles which the urban middle classes, and even a section of the work-

ing classes, have come to accept as a part of their daily life, but which remain just as well beyond the reach of the greater part of the masses of the country, are equally relevant. The spread of these durable consumer goods among certain small sections of the population has caused an increase in the inequality in the standards of living that fails to get caught in any statistical exercises carried out with the help of NSS data.

Social Consumption

A third drawback of the recently carried out work on inequality arises from the fact that no attempt has been made to take account of the highly unequal distribution of social consumption. This again is the result of the studies having been based on NSS data, which, as we have seen, relate to household consumption only. By social consumption is meant all the services that are provided by the government either free or at highly subsidised prices. Most of these public services are such that they benefit only a small section of the population, leaving totally out the vast majority of the poor masses. It is well known that even such elementary and primordial necessities as schools and hospitals, roads and drinking water, are beyond the reach of most poor villages. Public funds, raised from the masses, are however being used more and more to finance such institutions as television broadcasting centres or research institutions and universities whose contribution to the general wellbeing of the country is very nearly nil. There is no universal medical insurance in the country; but a tiny minority of the population is given the benefits of free medical services or medical expenses reimbursement schemes. Housing is a basic necessity for all human beings. Forgetting for the moment our village dwellers, the slum dwellers of Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi and other industrial cities live in exactly the same unspeakable subhuman conditions as at the time of the country's independence. While nothing has been done for them, fantastic quantities of public funds have been used up to provide "quarters", practically free of any rent, and quite often luxurious by the country's stand-

ards, to a tiny section of the population, which include, government servants and certain other categories of people. We have only provided a few illustrations. There is a great deal of scope for work to be done in this area of unequal distribution of social services.

Another drawback of the studies on inequality which are under discussion is that they ignore the very important fact that the price policy of the government is such as to benefit a small section of the population at the cost of the poor masses. In other words, these calculations fail to take account of the inequality that is created by the price policy of the government. This policy is such that a per capita Rs 200 of monthly consumer expenditure of a person does not represent just the double of the per capita consumer expenditure of Rs 100 of a poorer person, but more than double. The differential purchasing power of the rupee arises out of the fact that most of the essential consumer items consumed by the poor masses are left to the market prices, whereas the luxury consumption commodities are either indirectly subsidised or their prices are controlled. In this democratic country wedded to socialism, where the official economic policy is said to be geared to Garibi Hatao, it is a fact, strange but nonetheless true, that prices of food items and clothing are left to the market forces, (excepting the very partial rationing of some of the food items) whereas commodities for which strict price control exists are items like motor cars and scooters and services like upper-class train fares. These are examples of direct subsidy. One important channel by which indirect subsidy is given to all the items of non-essential consumer goods is through the artificially low price maintained for foreign exchange. The various manufactured consumer goods with foreign patents that have flooded the market for the benefit of a tiny minority of the population would be all much costlier if the imported raw materials on which they depend were priced at the free market price of foreign exchange. The subsidy on foreign exchange is also made to benefit the rich more directly. Thus, the rich can go on foreign country visits or send their children to be educated abroad by bringing foreign

exchange at the controlled rate of Rs 8.50 for a dollar, whereas it was perfectly possible for the government to change him Rs 20 a dollar.

Lastly, till now no work has been done on inequality in the standards of living as between different social categories and classes. The only social division the NSS data involve is that between urban and rural consumers. The finding that disparity between people at different income levels has increased is important but also it is very important to find out how the relative standards of living have moved as between such social classes and categories as, say, the industrial workers, white collar workers, retail traders, wholesale traders, small and medium capitalists, business executives, government servants, intellectuals (teachers, writers, artists, journalists etc.), landless labourers, poor peasants, medium and rich peasants etc. Pending detailed research, we would like to state that it is very likely that among the above groups standards of living have gone down for some whereas there are some others, (who are certainly not part of the ruling classes but who all the same receive the favour of the ruling classes) whose standards of living have been deliberately made to improve by various policy measures. To assume that the standard of living of all sections of the population other than the ruling classes (monopoly capitalists, landlords etc. and their direct henchmen (senior government servants, business executives) has fallen might turn out to be wrong. The present writer would expect a painstaking research project on this question to reveal that there has been in operation a systematic policy to isolate some of the above classes (say, a part of the white collar workers, intellectuals, professionals) from the rest of the masses by allowing them an improvement in their living standards.

Some of the points, made rather sketchily here, will be taken up in the latter parts for a fuller discussion.

Naxalite Prisoners In Kerala

From A Special Correspondent

THIS Report is based on personal interviews, communications and investigations and is concerned with the Naxalite prisoners in the Central Jail, Trivandrum. It is as objective as one can be when one is face to face with fascist repression. A repression which has found, as will be shown in the course of this Report, silent supporters in the leading circles of the Right CPI and the CPM. Throughout the Report the masculine gender is used when referring to the political prisoners, because the vast majority of the political prisoners are male. The only woman political prisoner is Ajitha Narayanan about whom very little information was available at the time of preparing this Report.

The moment a cadre is arrested he loses all human liberties. He is asked to remove his shirt and throughout his interrogation he is forced to remain in this half-clad state. The idea is to humiliate and intimidate him... especially so when everyone around him is not even in ordinary dress but in uniform. The police van which is used to transfer the cadre from the point of his arrest to the interrogation centre contains more than enough seats for all the policemen and the cadre to sit down upon; but the police insist upon the cadre sitting down on the floor of the van. Once the vehicle starts to move the beatings begin. With the cadre in the centre as their target the policemen on the side-seats use their boots, rifle-butts, and lathis on him. All this is accompanied by the most abusive threats that can be imagined. The policemen in this case are ordinary constables. The officer who makes the arrest occupies the front seat next to the driver, and he has no hand in this beating-up except as a silent appreciator. Being guardians of law and order it would never do if the officers were to indulge in such bloody pastimes in front of the public they have their fun at the interrogation centre and it is all as part of their duty. The inter-

rogation centre is headed by an officer of the rank of Superintendent of Police. The police department which runs this centre and heads the anti-Naxalite operations in the State is variously known as the Special Branch, the Crime Branch, and the Anti-Naxalite Squad. The officer in overall charge is J. Padikal, a member of the IPS. Below him come two Deputy SPs, Laxmana and Murali Krishnadas. The former was the officer in charge of the police hunt which led to the torture and murder of Varghese, one of the leaders of the Naxalite movement in north Kerala. At that time, even the Right CPI was moved by the horror and anger which this murder provoked among the public, to appeal to Chief Minister Achutha Menon to investigate the incident. As with all troublesome investigations this, too, was helped to die a natural death, and the Deputy SP, Laxmana, is now so enthusiastic about his job, that one of his favourite gambits during interrogations is to raise the barrel of a rifle to the face of a cadre and ask him, "You... Do you know what happened to Varghese?" As if, the whole of Kerala does not know...

The Deputy SPs are assisted by two sub-inspectors (who have now been promoted to the rank of Circle-Inspectors), Alex and Shanmugathan. It is this group of officers who interrogate, i.e. torture, the political prisoners at the interrogation centre. Previously this centre used to be housed in a rented building in Pottakuzhi, a suburb of Trivandrum. Recently it has been shifted to Shasthamangalam, an upper-class residential area in Trivandrum. From the outside the interrogation centre presents the picture of a well-built house. Inside the building all the rooms are usually kept open, but there is no question of escaping since the place is heavily guarded. As soon as the cadre arrives at the interrogation centre he is pushed into any one of the rooms. The rooms do not contain any furniture. The floor will have to serve as chair, table and bed. Either the cadre is interrogated in that room itself or he is taken to some other room. But he is never kept for long in one particular room or interrogated by one particular person. The idea is to confuse the cadre,

'Interrogation'

Interrogation is just a high-sounding anti-septic name for plain, murderous, torture. Torture is inflicted at many levels. The level varies according to the resilience of the cadre, his importance, and more than all that, according to the sadistic tendencies of the torturers. At the ordinary level torture takes the form of beatings with hand, fists, lathis, and rifle-butts. In the interrogation centre all this is done by the officers. The constables render the necessary help by holding the cadre's body in place, etc. A favourite form of beating is to hold the head of the cadre between the knees of the seated officer and to first hit or hit him with a rifle-butt on his bent back. Another favourite is to kick the cadre on the solar plexus with a booted leg. This, as said earlier, is at the ordinary level of torture. At a still higher level, and as an example of how sadistic these monsters are, we have a case-history where a cloth was wound around a young undertrial's penis and then set aflame so as to produce a confessional statement from him. This may sound too horrible to be true, but even more terrible is what is known in police jargon as the 'green broomstick trick', where a fresh broomstick (so that it would not break) is forced through a person's penis. And all this has been happening under a regime headed by a CPI Chief Minister, and where the CPM constitutes the chief opposition. But we will come to that later.

In a personal interview a cadre told me how he was constantly beaten up by groups of officers from 8 in the evening to 4.30 in the morning. At about 8, two officers, a Deputy SP and a sub-inspector came in accompanied by three to four constables and a writer. The officers sat on chair and the cadre was forced to kneel down in front of them. The constables kept to the side of the kneeling cadre. The writer sat slightly away with an open book and pen to note down anything that the cadre would say in reply to the questions that he was being asked by the officers. The questions were mainly political, organisational and to a lesser extent, personal. Each answer was followed by abuse, a slap on the face or a kick in the stomach. And

as the session progressed, rifle-butts, lathis, and fists were used. Sometimes the cadre would faint. Thus they would revive him with water and begin again. At about 10, this particular cadre was taken to another room where a fresh group of officers tortured him, asking him the same questions. This took place until 4.30 in the morning by which time the cadre was unrecognisable due to swellings, bruises and blood.

Yet another interesting case-history is that of P. T. Thomas, formerly of the Accountant General's Office, Trivandrum. He was arrested from his lodge; an arrest which was witnessed by quite a few people. Since the police considered him one of the top leader of the CPI (M-L) they tortured him ruthlessly. And when things did not work out to their satisfaction they blindfolded him and injected him with what they later boasted to him to be sodium pentathol. Why did they blindfold him? Obviously, to prevent him from recognizing the man who administered the drug to him. One suspects that even members of the medical profession are in league with these torturers; suspicion that will be confirmed again and again in the course of this Report. Meanwhile, the AG's Office Union, of which Thomas was an activist, filed a habeas corpus in the court. The police responded by saying that they had no idea of the whereabouts of such a person, that the said person was actually absconding, and therefore the police were also looking for him. But, after the merciless torture and the drugging Thomas was in no condition to be brought before a court. He was quickly taken to a nursing home in Ambasamudram in Tamil Nadu for medical treatment. Again we have an instance which reveals the complicity of certain members of the medical profession in the skullduggery of the police. After this the police took him to Marina Beach in Madras City and let him out of the van with one rupee in hand. A few minutes later P. T. Thomas, wanted by the Kerala Police, was spotted and arrested by the Madras City Police. Hours later he was produced before a magistrate who remanded him to custody; and the ordinary newspaper readers were amazed at the quick-

ness with which the police had traced and arrested an absconding person.

Central Jail, Trivandrum

At present there are 45 male political prisoners in the Central Jail, Trivandrum, one of whom has been hospitalised on the advice of doctors. Out of the remaining 44, 7 have been convicted in the Kongad Annihilation Case. Among the convicted cadres, there are some who are also being prosecuted under other cases. The rest of the 37 are undertrial prisoners, and it should be noted that they comprise the vast majority of the political prisoners. According to law, undertrial prisoners are to be allowed relative freedom within the walls of the prison. They are to be allowed to wear their own clothes and should not be forced to wear convict dress. But at the Central Jail, the political prisoners are treated even worse than hardcase convicts. They are locked up in segregation wards, and allowed out only to clean themselves (and that too only for 5 minutes in the morning), and for a few minutes after lunch. The inmates of one cell are not allowed to communicate with the inmates of another cell. Besides this, they are not allowed to receive or send letters, to see visitors except at the whims and fancies of the jailor. They are also forced to wear convict dress except when they have to appear in court. The present Superintendent of the Central Jail is one Janardhanan Nair, the brother of the former I. G. of Prisons, Raghavan Nair. Janardhanan Nair was, until recently, the king of all he surveyed; the master of a miniature world with immense possibilities of making a fast buck plundering the impoverished rations (cloth, foodgrains, vegetables, etc.) of the prisoners. And everything was going along fine until the Naxalites came. Soon they began to speak out against the corrupt practices of the jail administration. They began to point out how certain prisoners who could afford it, could get anything they want in prison, except women. In short, the whole system of graft and corruption lay exposed; the kingdom that Janardhanan Nair had so assiduously built up lay in a shambles... and all because of the Naxalites; and with that, the jail administration's ven-

detta against the Naxalites was intensified.

Provoked by this fascist oppression the Naxalites went on a hunger-strike which lasted 16 days in 1971. At the conclusion of the strike they managed to wrest certain rights from the jail administration. But still they were not allowed to read or write, and to secure this right they were provoked to go on another hunger-strike which lasted 20 days. So far all protest actions by the Naxalites have been peaceful to the extreme. Yet all these peaceful protest movements have had to face violent suppression at the hands of the jail authorities. One such instance is the incident of October 25, 1972 in the Central Jail.

As can be understood by now, the Naxalite prisoners are being treated as criminals and not as political prisoners. Therefore the main demand that they have raised is that they should be treated as political prisoners. And the peaceful protest movement of October 25 was also based on this demand. On that day, except for eleven undertrials all the rest had to appear in court. In the afternoon, after lunch, the undertrials who had to appear in court were taken to court. Inside the jail, as part of their peaceful agitation, the eleven undertrials refused to go back into their cells. They pointed out that as undertrial prisoners they were entitled to spend some time outside their cells. At once the jail warders headed by the Chief Jailor fell upon them and began to beat them up with lathis. After this they dragged them and threw them into their cells. Some of the Naxalite prisoners suffered fractures, the majority of them were bathed in blood, and some became unconscious. Meanwhile the jail authorities called in the Armed Reserve Police, who cordoned off the prison and lined the path that led from the main entrance of the jail to the segregation wards. When those who had gone to the court returned they were split into groups of five and made to walk the gauntlet from the main entrance to their wards. What followed was coldblooded. The majority of the political prisoners fell on the way. They were abused, kicked with booted legs, and hit with lathis and rifle-butts. Finally they were dragged and thrown into their

cells. Few minutes later the doctor-in-charge came in to report on their condition. On the basis of his report the beatings continued throughout the day and well into the night, until the doctor felt that any more beating would cause permanent injury or death. This is what this Report means by the complicity of certain members of the medical profession.

Insanity, Suicide

The result of this beating was terrible. One of the undertrials had his hip bone dislocated and was in terrible pain for many months since the doctor-in-charge refused to acknowledge the fact that he required medical treatment. After this show of violence and calculated brutality, the youngest of the undertrials, a boy hardly 16, began to show signs of insanity. Another undertrial was driven to commit suicide. Both these cases, before they had reached such a critical stage, were referred to the doctor-in-charge who in his superior wisdom passed it off with a shrug of his elegant shoulders. Two of the undertrials who were being treated for tuberculosis were also among the ones who were beaten up. If nothing else the doctor could have prevented them from receiving such treatment, but he chose to remain cold-bloodedly silent. And speaking about coldbloodedness, we have the example of another gentleman—the I G of Prisons, Copala Menon. Some of the undertrials complained to him about this brutal treatment by the warders... and he, true to his class, replied: "The beating has only begun".

The October 25 incident is only one among the many examples of brutality and bestiality inside the Central Jail. A more recent (May 7, 1974) incident was when Joseph Thomas, an accused in the Erumeli Case, was Beaten by the warders. Often the warders cook up cases of misbehaviour against the political prisoners and inflict punishment on them. Abusive language, beatings, and threats of bodily harm have become common features in the daily life of the political prisoners. They are allowed visitors only on the whims and fancies of the authorities. The same is the case with

writing and reading material. Letters are often not delivered to them; and any letter posted from the jail rarely reaches the outside world.

Some of the prisoners have been in jail from 1969, that is, over four years as undertrials. In the meantime, some of the undertrials, employees in Government services, have been dismissed from service. One such case concerns Sathyadas, who was a clerk. After his arrest he was given a show cause notice by the concerned department. He replied by pointing out that all the charges in the notice were sub judice, and that since he was only an undertrial his guilt, if any, was yet to be proved. The concerned department did not even care to accept this explanatory letter, and Sathyadas was served with a termination notice. Thus oppression within the jails and outside goes on, and all under the aegis of a government which is headed by a Chief Minister whose party has repeatedly called for the release of all Naxalite prisoners! This brings us to the roles of the CPI and the CPM concerning the Naxalite prisoners in Kerala.

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CPI and CPM

When the news of the October 25, 1972 incident reached the outside world a report was prepared and offered to all the major newspapers in Kerala; none of them cared to publish it. The report was also offered to **Deshabhimani**, the organ of the CPM State Committee. But it refused to publish it because, as they said, it would be difficult for them to publish such a report without mentioning or being sure of the source. The first is nonsense because newspapers do publish reports without mentioning the source. As for the second excuse, the **Deshabhimani** could very well have investigated the basis of such a report if they had their suspicions about its source. The fact is, in deciding not to publish the report the CPM was taking a purely political decision. As long as somebody else is busy doing the 'necessary job' by keeping the Naxalites under lock and key, why upset the apple cart? The CPM in Kerala has completely wished away the recent Amnesty International report by ignoring it. But the CPI cannot play the same game. It is in power; and therefore it holds gala conferences in Delhi and calls upon everybody except Achutha Menon, to release the Naxalite prisoners. Thus the farce goes on.

Meanwhile inside the thick walls of the Central Jail in Trivandrum, just as in the numerous jails spread throughout the world's largest democracy, the struggle goes on. A struggle which is based on the elemental demands of human existence. A struggle which has been put down by most violent methods of suppression. Suppression which has found silent acquiescence on the part of the so-called left and democratic forces in the country. But suppression is bound to fail, because, as Ho Chi Minh put it so beautifully,

"Under the pestle how terribly the rice suffers!

but it come out of the pounding as white as cotton.

The same thing to man in this world occurs;

Hard trials turn him into polished diamond".

And this is the testimony of history.

Another Conspiracy

From A Correspondent

Sircilla-Karimnagar: The Andhra Pradesh Government has initiated one more conspiracy case, this time against the innocent peasants of Sircilla taluq of Karimnagar District. Some 14 "extremists" were arrested "along with 16 guns on 7-8-1974 on a hillock in Sircilla forest". They were said to have been surrounded while parading, but two were captured. On 25-8-1974 four more people were arrested on Gaddigutta (another hillock in the same forest) with "24 guns".

The Andhra Pradesh Government led by Mr Vengal Rao, boasts on every possible occasion that it has completely suppressed the Naxalite movement. To substantiate its claim, it may quote the number of revolutionaries killed in "encounters", the arrests under MISA and the number of conspiracy cases launched against the revolutionaries. No doubt it stands second to none throughout the country in the number of conspiracy cases.

If we study the background of the latest conspiracy case of Nimmapalli, we can well understand the nature and holowness of the others.

Nimmapalli is, relatively, a big village. It has a landlord, Banthala Raghava Rao, who owns 600 acres. He killed a number of innocent people branding them communists during the Telengana struggle. No one in this village has escaped from his atrocity. Everyone is fed up with the suffering. It is his routine to manhandle someone in the village every day. Villagers are forced to do free labour for him. All sections of people are tired of all this.

A new situation arose with the beginning of activities of the Andhra Pradesh Revolutionary Communist Party in this area. Peasant-labour organisations have been set up in the villages. These started mobilising the people on immediate issues.

The Harijans of Nimmapalli were given some 21 acres of land some 25 years ago during the Telengana struggle. Pattas were also granted them. This was done

Southern African Diary

(August-September 1974)

NARENDRA SINGH

by the landlord to win over the Harijans to his side from the communists and in return of their free labour on his land. Following a dispute between the landlord and the Harijans over free labour, the landlord forcibly evicted them from their lands. They approached the authorities for action. But nothing happened. The Harijans then cut the Tel crop, raised by the landlord on the disputed land. But the landlord took away the crop with his hoodlums from the houses of the people.

This year in June people cleared the land and were about to plough it but the landlord came and tried to plough it with his tractor. There was a clash. The landlord's son, Hanmanth Rao, personally drove the tractor over the people and their ploughs. Some people were injured. The peasants struck back with stones. Those who came with the landlord remained silent spectators and did not dare to interfere. The landlord was injured. Frightened by this outburst of anger of the people, he raised his two hands folded, as a mark of submission and surrender to them. They stopped stone-throwing as the tractor stopped dead.

The Police

After this, the police unleashed a reign of terror in Nimmapalli and Konaraopet in particular and all the neighbouring villages. Wherever there were peasant-labour organisations the people were beaten up mercilessly. A police case was initiated against 19 people (none were Harijans) alleging that they waylaid and beat the landlord in an attempt to murder him. All the 19 accused attended the court and secured bail. Four days later, two peasant-labour leaders on bail were taken away by the police from their houses on 21-7-1974 on the pretext of securing some information from them. They were accompanied by five more new people. All the seven were tortured and kept in illegal custody for 18 days. Peasant-labour associations all over the State and civil liberties committees agitated against their arrests, issued pamphlets and statement to the press. College students in Karimnagar town boycotted classes and took out a procession and submitted memorandums, registering their

protest and demanding the release of the arrested people. This issue was raised in the State Legislative Assembly. The Chief Minister declared that the Harijans of Nimmapalli would be given all security against the landlords and their land will be safeguarded. Afterwards the government declared that its police had earlier arrested some 14 extremists parading with 16 guns on Morrigutta. Surprisingly the names of the people arrested on 21-7-74 were included in the list of the apprehended. The rest of the fourteen names announced were taken into custody by the police in Konaraopet village in the presence of many people. After this, Vengal Rao declared in the Assembly in reply to a question that the government will not tolerate the extremists acting in the name of Harijans and peasants. After his statement, four more innocent people were taken into custody in Konaraopet village in the presence of many people. The police later announced that they had been apprehended on Gaddigutta with 24 guns.

The Government established police camps in three villages, Konaraopet, Nimmapalli and Earnapally. In every village members of the peasant organisations were put to harassment. Ordinary people also were hounded about. Peasant organisation has become a banned word. Goppu Ganganna, who accompanied the relative of the arrested people to the Sircilla Magistrate's court to submit a search warrant petition, was severely beaten by the police on his return to Konaraopet village. K. Fajaiah, secretary of the Taluka Civil Liberties Committee, who led the Karimnagar students in the protest procession, is being hounded by the police and was accused in the conspiracy case. His house in Vemulawada has been raided by the police.

Like all reactionaries Vengal Rao and his government can never understand the strength of the people. People are becoming more and more class-conscious and organising themselves strongly against the landlords and their agents. People, and people alone, are the motive force of history. This is being proved here once again—Vengal Rao or no Vengal Rao.

WITH Guinea-Bissau's admission into the United Nations the chapter of liberation struggles in West Africa is over. While Portugal officially recognised the independence of Guinea-Bissau, the Africans in the republic deliberately ignored the event. The African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC) dates the country's independence from last September 24, when the party declared the country free from Portuguese rule.

The economy of Guinea-Bissau is now PAIGC's next war. Hundreds of refugees have begun leaving South Senegal to return to their homes in Guinea-Bissau. The Portuguese forces across the border have been cooperating in the return of refugees and the clearing of mines from roads. Likewise hundreds of PAIGC men have been cooperating with the Portuguese authorities in police duties, particularly in the urban and suburban areas of Bissau. It is understood that the Portuguese escudo would remain Guinea-Bissau's currency for the next three years. Among the white businessmen, although the small ones want to leave, those controlling large business plan to stay. Several foreign businessmen have arrived in the hot, humid, ocean-front city of Bissau for talks with the new government. Swedes appear to be in the front, as Sweden has been widely acclaimed for helping the guerilla movement.

South Africa now remains the arena of liberation actions. Among the Portuguese colonies, Mozambique is also turning a corner with the agreement signed between the Portuguese and Frelimo. But Angola still is a scene of action. Against the white minority regimes, the struggles and reactions continue now in Namibia, South Africa and Rhodesia.

ANGOLA: The MPLA leadership crisis got resolved in a post-Congress meeting in Brazzaville on September 3. The three factions signed a communiqué

in the presence of Presidents Nyerere and Ngouabi, pleading to unite and fight for the independence of Angola. The MPLA Central Committee was reconstituted to comprise 39 members, with 16 from the major faction of Dr Neto's camp, 13 from the "Eastern Revolt" group and the rest from the "Eastern Active Revolt" group. A political bureau of nine will have three representatives from each group, with president Neto and two vice-presidents, Andrade and Chipenda, of the other two factions. The agreement was reached by concerted efforts of the four Presidents of neighbouring African States (Tanzania, Zambia, Congo and Zaire), who had been mandated by the OAU summit to bring unity among the Angolan liberation movements. Their first task was to bring unity within the MPLA. The end of the leadership crisis within MPLA marked a new era in the liberation struggle. Next on the agenda as a key issue for discussion, when the MPLA Central Committee meets for the first time "very soon", is the question of a united front with the Front National for liberation of Angola (FNLA).

An FNLA communique issued in Kinshasa early in August announced the arrival of another contingent of Chinese instructors. The FNLA weekly bulletin spoke of a "large quantity of arms and equipment" from Rumania, as part of friendship and cooperation agreements signed in Bucharest last January. The Portuguese Government is reported to have sent for the first time a representative to Kinshasa for talks with the FNLA leader Holden Roberto. Reuter reports the receipt by FNLA of a gift of 450 tons of military equipment from China, along with a considerable consignment of medical and health equipment. (Lisbon Radio, 10 Sept.).

FNLA has announced that it was waiting for the arrival of the new MPLA leadership to discuss unifying their efforts to free the territory from Portuguese rule. Holden Roberto has called on all "real combatants and patriots" of MPLA to ignore the delaying tactics by their leader, Neto, and get on with the job of setting up a common front. "After the Brazzaville agreement re-

conciling the three MPLA factions, there is no longer anything which honestly stops our brothers of that movement making contacts with us, as laid down in the Bukavu (Zaire) agreements, with the aim of creating a common FNLA-MPLA Front". FNLA has also accused the Angolan military junta of trying to label it as a movement of terrorists and extremists, and of trying to exclude it from its role of representing the Angolan people.

UNITA President, Jones Savimbi, has invited the rival nationalist movements of MPLA AND FNLA to prove charges of his collaborating with the Portuguese colonial authorities. Describing "as complete forgeries" letters published in the France-based Third World weekly "Afrique-Asie", he threatened taking up arms against the other groups to gain recognition of UNITA's share in the liberation honours. AFP Interafrican News Survey, 6 Sept.).

The Front for Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC) has in its communique reported recognition of the right of the Cabinda enclave to self-determination, by the MPLA leader Chipenda. The two movements have decided to set up a joint commission to work out the future basis of cooperation between Cabinda and Angola. (AFP Interafrican News Survey, 3 Sept.). A serious upset was disclosed in the activities of African liberation movements campaigning for independence of the oil-rich Cabinda. Two separate movements have emerged, using the same name, FLEC. One is operating exclusively in Kinshasa, the Zaire capital, and the other in Cabinda itself, apparently having no connection with the Kinshasa group. (Daily Telegraph, Br., 20 Sept.). Earlier reports talked of the Cabinda based group FLEC, as a front of reactionary tribal groups, equipped, armed, trained and financed by the Portuguese Governor of Cabinda district, with a view to forming an army of young Cabindans to fight the people. The intention of Portuguese imperialism was clear, fitting into the scheme of dividing Angola and separating Cabinda from the rest of Angola. (Radio Brazzaville, 16 Aug.).

A ceasefire was being tacitly observed

between the Portuguese forces and the nationalists in Angola, as a result of unofficial contacts by the Portuguese with the MPLA, FNLA and UNITA. Friendly contacts between the Portuguese troops and the nationalist forces were becoming increasingly frequent. (AFP Interafrican News Survey, 5 Sept.). In Dar es Salaam, an MPLA leader announced cancellation of plans to reopen guerilla war after a four-month truce. Dr Neto said "Spinola's resignation is a sign that Portugal is remaining a democracy, in line with the Armed Forces Movement which controls the situation". (Guardian, Br., 2 Oct.).

Racist Groups

Racist, right-wing extremist groups of whites and others in Angola are reported to be inciting violence. Their activities have been condemned by the ruling junta. The authorities have warned white racist groups of penal sentences for belonging to and assisting associations devoted to crime. Three groups are specifically mentioned in a note published in local newspapers. The National Angolan Army of Intervention and Salvation (RUA), Friends for the Resistance of Angola (FRA), and the Angolan United Resistance (TUA), all three committed to the idea of Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in the style of Rhodesia. (Guardian, Br., 2 Sept.). The white Angolans, resisting independence linked with black guerilla movements and calling for UDI, base their hopes on another section of people in Angola. This belongs to the Katangan soldiers and other defectors from nationalists afraid of independence. The Katangans are remnants of a force of 3500 pushed out of Katanga in 1963 by U.N. troops. They are the last of the men once led by white mercenaries. Throughout the war against the Angolan liberation armies, the Portuguese used the Katangans as small unit spearheads, without officially incorporating them in the regular army. (New York Times, USA, 7 Sept.). A powerful new party has been launched in Angola, that many see as the first open sign of militancy by the big European community and black sympathisers. This Front of Angolan Unity, with an

eye on the so-called "sell-out" in Mozambique, said it would not "docilely tolerate" changes not serving Angola and that it would not tolerate "domination by a single party. (*Daily Telegraph, Br.*, 21 Sept.). A delegation of right-wing groups in Angola, viz. Cabinda based FLEC, the Christian Democratic Party of Angola, and the Nationalist Union of Angola, arriving in Lisbon at the invitation of General Spínola, was jeered at by the MPLA supporters in Portugal. (*Daily News, Tanzania*, 28 Sept.)

Armoured cars patrolled the streets of Luanda amid unmistakable signs that the military junta is determined to prevent any right-wing reaction to the new leadership in Lisbon. Sources in Luanda described the situation as tense, following the resignation of General Spínola, the only man that White Angolans were prepared to trust. (*Times, Br.*, 2 Oct.)

Mozambique

The agreement signed on September 7 in Lusaka, the Zambian capital, between Frelimo and the Portuguese, provides for: Independence on June 25, 1975; a Portuguese High Commissioner to watch over the transitional phase; a transitional government with a Frelimo prime minister and nine ministers of which six would be from Frelimo and three Portuguese; a ceasefire controlled by a joint commission; a Mozambique police force; joint defence of the borders by Portuguese and Frelimo troops; acceptance by Frelimo of financial obligations undertaken by the Portuguese if deemed in the territories' interest; a multi-racial society; creation of a central bank with funds given by Portugal. Frelimo has made it clear that the territory's white settlers (estimated 250,000) are welcome to stay. On September 20 in Lourenço Marques was installed a transitional government that will take Mozambique to independence within nine months. The actual transfer of power was a subdued and sombre occasion, reflecting on one side, the awareness of the problems and daunting ideological severity with which Frelimo proposes to confront them, and on the other, a reminder of the dead and injured in the white rebellion of 12 days ago. The settlers' revolt collapsed after

angry blacks were reported on a rampage in townships surrounding the capital. The black violence was in itself a reaction not only to the settler rebellion to prevent a Frelimo take-over, it was also retaliation against white vigilante groups touring black areas and shooting at Africans. According to *Guardian* correspondent 11 Sept.), for three days the blacks responded to Frelimo broadcasts to avoid retaliation, but then their patience broke. The casualty figures in these racial riots vary anywhere from 9 to 200. It seems that reports of black violence were tendentially exaggerated. The *British Observer* (15 Sept.) reported that most of the killings happened on September 10 night, when gangs of white youths began indiscriminately shooting Africans from cars. By dawn about 50 people were dead, only nine of them white, and almost 400 wounded. A Western diplomat admitted "It was incredible the way Frelimo managed to control the situation . . . in the face of great provocation."

According to some reports, the actual leaders of the MFM have evaded all attempts to find them (*Radio Clube de Mocambique*, 11 Sept.). Frelimo has drawn up a list of MFM leaders, with instructions to shoot them at sight. (*Johannesburg radio*, 14 Sept.)

The economy of Mozambique was reported to be in a state of bankruptcy (*Guardian, Br.*, 20 Sept.). Further reports on the tottering economy of the new State appeared, along with write-ups on the country's relations with its neighbours. There was an apparent purpose behind such reports. Beside talking about the worsening economy, on one side, light is thrown on the unexplored rich resources within the country and, on the other, emphasis on the importance of better relations between Mozambique and the white governments in South Africa and Rhodesia. The aim of neo-colonialism is to open Mozambique for foreign investments and exploitation. The international consortium is rapidly completing the £200m. Cabora Bassa dam, with some assurance of no obstacles from Frelimo in supply of power to South Africa. According to Dr Kereira Leite, one of the most prominent democrats of Mozam-

bique, the new government will not cancel the agreement to supply Cabora Bassa power to South Africa and will allow the Mozambique Africans to continue working for South African mines. He said that Frelimo had devised an ingenious solution to the question of supplying the power which will replace the previous arrangement. Likewise, he did not believe that migrant labour would be stopped completely, but instead of direct recruitment in Mozambique by the South African mine labour organisation, the workers would probably be allowed to "emigrate" to work on the mines.

On the political changes in the metropolitan Portugal, there was no comment whatsoever from the Frelimo members in the transitional government in Mozambique. This low-profile attitude has been in evidence since these leaders arrived in Lourenço Marques.

Rhodesia

The massacre of 13 African women and children by Rhodesian troops operating in Mozambique was disclosed by a Rhodesian doctor, now in Britain, in a sworn affidavit to the Commission for Justice and Peace, established in Salisbury by five Roman Catholic bishops. They are pressing for an independent enquiry into allegations of brutality by the Rhodesian security forces. The massacre occurred in an operation in Mozambique in August-September 1971, a period of public denial of Rhodesian troops operating across the border. The doctor, an eye-witness, was serving as a medical officer with the Rhodesian Light Infantry during his call-up period. He also alleges that he was ordered to stop treatment on a critically injured African because the security men wanted to question him. According to the doctor, an incident in the camp suggested that Rhodesian planes had been dropping napalm in Mozambique. An African child was brought to the camp hospital with severe burns after a napalm canister he had picked up at the nearby landing strip had exploded in his hand. (*Guardian Weekly, Br.*, 21 Aug.). A dossier containing 10 documented cases of alleged brutality against African civilians by Rhodesian security

forces has been compiled and circulated by 11 Rhodesian church leaders. (*Guardian*, Br., 21 Aug.).

Meanwhile the South African lifeline for Rhodesia is getting ready. The Rutenga to Beitbridge railway line was officially opened by Mr Smith on 19 September. An additional rail link to Beitbridge would not solve the capacity problem already facing the two governments at that end. A suggestion for another entirely new rail route from Bulawayo to the South African border has been made by the Rhodesian Transport Minister.

Defence spending in the coming financial year shows a sharp rise in cost of fighting Rhodesia's guerilla war, as is reflected in increases in direct spending and in related areas, such as building of aerodromes and roads, and the establishment of "protected villages" for Africans. (AFP Interafrican News Survey, 22 Aug.).

South Africa

Mercenaries, former members of Number Five Commando of Congo 1960 fame, have gathered in Johannes-

burg to see what the Mozambique situation offers to them. Claims have been made of 1500 men in operation, 2,000 more available if required, and large sums of money in donation. The large Portuguese community in South Africa held rallies in different towns and collected money. An undisclosed number have left by road or air for Mozambique passing other Portuguese on their way to South Africa. (*Guardian*, Br., 10 Sept.).

Most of the 200 DGS members, freed by the white rebels in the abortive coup in Lourenco Marques, have fled to South Africa. Allegedly they will be re-educated to serve as security agents among the many Mozambique workers in the South African mines. (*Diario de Noticias*, Port., 13 Sep). The uncertainty of the Mozambique situation has promoted the white farmers and other civilians in northern Zulu land to organise themselves into a civil defence to prepare for any terrorist activity. (*Star Weekly*, S.A. 14 Sep).

Defence expenditure in South Africa is geared to counter increased terrorist attacks. The Defence forces' 10-year budget plan is now proposed to be completed in 5 years. Expenditure for "landward defence", the section most directly responsible for dealing with increased terrorism, has almost doubled, as also that on maritime defence, with that on air defence up by 50 per cent. (*Star Weekly*, S.A., 17 Aug.). The British-South African joint naval exercise, as in 1972, took place under the Simonstown agreement, with the Labour Government in power in U.K. To Vorster, this joint manoeuvre served two purposes. While calming the nervous and jittery white population, the gunboat diplomacy was intended to warn the national liberation movements and other independent black African States to keep clear of the Indian Ocean sea lanes. Secondly, this exercise re-activated the Simonstown Agreement of 1955 in defence of the South Africa and West Asian gateways of Africa. (*Economic Times*, India, 3 Oct.).

Namibia: South Africa is establishing a new security corridor on the frontier between Namibia and Angola, according to a spokesman in Dakar of the South West African People's Organisa-

tion (SWAPO). The new corridor was an extension of the Caprivi Strip, sealing Namibia from Zambia, to stop refugees going into Angola. After the April coup in Lisbon, 600 people had fled repression in Namibia and gone to Angola. (AFP Interafrican News Survey, 25 Aug). A Namibian delegate, SWAPO Vice-President, protested at a press conference in Paris that NATO countries, and France in particular, were supplying weapons used by South African forces in Namibia, and that France was investing in Namibia, despite the World Court's restraint on UN members. He gave details of French actions, (AFP Interafrican News Survey, 13 Sep).

A Group Of Young Artists

SANDIP SARKAR

THE West Bengal Young Artists' Federation's fifth group exhibition of paintings and sculptures, at the Academy of Fine Arts, was much better than the one they had earlier this year.

In the sculpture section, Satyen Mazumdar, Kunal Saha and Anil Sen competed for a place in the sun. The stylisation of Mazumdar's "Head" was imaginative, while Saha's "Torso" had a tactile quality and sustained power which reminded one of Sarbari Raychoudhury, and Sen's "At Rest" was austere and simple. Along with Manick Talukdar, they are possibly the most promising sculptors of the younger generation in Calcutta today.

In the painting section Ujjal Das seemed very weak and immature. Nandita Guha's "Circle", although not very original, had some basic good qualities. She has judiciously handled space and her yellow glows against the dark brown of the figures. Her drawing was a wee bit weak. Kajal Dasgupta may become a very serious painter in the near future. His handling of mixed media on paper is forceful. His "Hunter" and "Old Sentinel" stood out for their graceful linear movement, but his "Rain, Rain, Rain" was pretty bad. Tapan Kumar has attacked

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QUARTERLY REVIEW

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Contributors:

Kalipada Baksi	..	S. P. Banerjee
D. N. Banerjee	..	Sydney Wintraub
Amiya Bagchi	..	Sanat Biswas
Amiya Bagchi	..	Sanat Biswas
D. J. Gosh	..	Eric Patterson

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a large painting if not with competence, at least with confidence and daring. His construction is weak and he is undecided whether to stylise his figures or make them realistic. His use of Bengali calligraphy reminds one of Nirode Mazumdar. Mrinmoy Mukherjee is not too bad in his "Man with a Chair". He has been able to create an illusion in spite of his very European approach, with his subtle organisation, quaint drawing and the strangeness of an everyday situation. Bipul Guha has done his "transparency I & II" on large pieces of tracing paper. He has drawn a coloured circle to one side of the middle and has left the rest of the wide sheet empty, except for a square paper pasted in the middle of one and a transparent scotch tape on the top of another. He has skills of sorts, but would mind being called avant-garde. Ajit Paul has made a heady cocktail with tantra and fantasy and his bright colours go to show that he is rather competent but not free from immoderation. Samir Ghosh's tempera has charm, but as he wavers between a Ganesh Pyne type of fantasy and Bikash Bhattacharjee type of surrealism, he cannot get very far. This is true to some extent about Asit Mandal also. Paritosh Das is trying to find a way out, but as his construction is a bit weak, he tends to illustrate rather than paint.

However, one must encourage the artists for making a sincere effort. They have all worked very hard to master the technicalities of art. It is time they tried to make their work relevant to the contemporary situation.

Four Other Exhibitions

Salil Bhattacharya's exhibition at the Academy of Fine Arts, 2nd-8th November, proved beyond doubt that he can become a very important painter if he can find ways to refrain from the excesses and mannerisms he has picked up. He wanders in the land of abstractions and searches for formal purity. The intensity of his colours, condensing or splintering, blossoming forth or crumbling down into colourlessness, have a poetic quality. But his zeal leads him astray, and beside a first-rate canvas one finds a fourth-rate one. Bhattacharya does not know where he is drifting or his

destination.

Shanu Lahiry

The exhibition of paintings by Shanu Lahiry at the Academy of Fine Arts, 9-16 November, made it evident that she had changed a little since her last exhibition. She has a lyrical charm and can describe individuals when alone and preoccupied in some leisurely pursuit. Her women are an ideal of women in Plato's sense. They seem to live in a world of their own, self-sufficient, accepting their role, resigned to their fate. There is a maturity in them that her men seem to lack. They seem to be tender, aloof and even motherly but bereft of any emotion. Her stylisation reminds one of Grecian vase painting of yore. She has tried to punch these with certain elements of Indian folk art especially their flowing hair. There is a kind of pagan charm in her graceful lines and simplicity of composition. Her women seem to be made of such stuff that could accept tragedy without a quiver.

In her simple compositions figures are placed in the middle, but in the complex ones there are two or more figures, not always human—a horse, a pet cat, dog, or a bird. All her paintings have been draped elaborately, and have appropriate furniture, candlestand, pillows, curtains and foliage. The whole space around the figures is well integrated. There is some luminosity—white or grey tinged with some colours—against which the brighter hues which are sometimes opaque, mingle. Their contrast becomes complementary. The treatment is poetic and has classic grace.

Shanu Lahiry's only fault is that she lives in a world which is unreal, an almost ivory-tower world. But one cannot doubt her power to make us forget our pecuniary difficulties, our tensions, our anger. One cannot help but admire her.

Gopinath Das

Gopinath Das held his one-man show at about the same time as Shanu Lahiry. His works in mixed medium are rather charming but not very convincing. Like all young artists he has been attracted by fantasy and uses hands, skull and butterfly as imageries—rather in the fa-

shion of Jogen Chaudhury. Sometimes he uses too much colour.

The Hues

This new group (consisting of Swapna Roychoudhury, Pratip Manna, Samir Banerjee, Ajoy Das, Tapan Mondal and Mritunjoy Mondal) exhibited at the Academy of Fine Arts, 9th-14th September. As yet they have not found themselves; their drawings, composition techniques are all very immature. They have been swayed by Bikash Bhattacharya or some other prominent figure of the Calcutta art world. Mritunjoy's horses are good copies of Sunil Das. They cannot handle oil with skill as yet. One can only advise them to paint more before exhibiting.

Pavement Dwellers

BY A DRAMA CRITIC

Natua staged *Ityadeer Itikatha* under the able stewardship of Himangshu Chatterjee at the Academy of Fine Arts last month. This one dealt with the lives of the hapless pavement dwellers of Calcutta who are permanently rooted to these plague spots and eke out a miserable existence amidst filth, squalor, noisy quarrels. Here was a play with a difference. It was not tendentious nor was there the least hint of any slogan mongering. It was an exercise in pathos and gave us an insight into the lives of the 'outsiders' who are supposedly beyond the pale of civilised society and

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সম্পাদকীয় দপ্তর

৬৬ বাস্তপ পাড়া

শান্তিপুর। নব্বীয়া।

therefore redemption. How such a typical society comes into being and becomes a part of our seamy landscape is more or less the theme of this hard-hitting play which pulls no punches and is a telling exposure of the sort of hypocrisy that is at work in our society at large to perpetuate such running sores. There is also a scathing indictment of the professional word-spinners masquerading as politicians who with revolution and liberation on their lips never open their eyes wide enough to take in these hopelessly impoverished people whose lives are one long stretch of waste.

Quite a few modern Bengali plays adopt the style of introducing a narrator before the opening of the scenes, who establishes the time, place and content of the play ever so subtly. Himangshu Chatterjee was pretty adept as a mastan-cum-pimp and every so often became the narrator with a sharp tongue and a sharper vision of the prevalent social injustices. His performance was distinguished by restraint rather than the usual histrionics so common on the Bengali stage. Manju Bhattacharya gave a convincing display of a shrewish and queru-

lous beggar's wife and was ably supported by the old beggar (her husband) and her fellow sufferers on the pavements.

The stage set which consisted of a wrought-iron railing found nearly everywhere in Calcutta with its accumulation of rags, baskets and dilapidated cooking utensils was unmistakably the scene at the crossing of Rash Behari Avenue and Gariahat Road. The end came rather abruptly with an indistinct song by a group of the dispossessed flotsam and jetsam of society roused to a pitch of fury, determined to rebel against the overweening arrogance and supreme indifference of the lucky few at the helm of affairs. Somehow the end could have been made more effective by eliminating the muffled song which almost sounded like a slogan and watered down the solemn impact of the authentic scenes that came before. On the whole, however, it was a very creditable and mature effort to depict life in the raw in the metropolis and make us aware of a deep-set problem that hardly gets an honourable mention in any of our speeches, pamphlets and books.

Letters

The Angolan Agony

I find "Angolan Agony" totally out of place in *Frontier* (5 Oct.). It is cynical towards the liberation struggles in Angola in general, and slandering one group leader, in particular. Such articles abound in the press of the industrial world. From professedly "objective analyses" and "know-all expert" attitudes, elitist judgments are made on backward parts of the world. Sensational disclosures on personal lives are included from the so-called unimpeachable sources, but never really and readily verifiable in practice by the common reader. This forms part of the broad ideological front to keep the reading public duped with fed information, focusing on allegedly authentic but negative aspects of the struggles and people engaged in them. Such articles serve the dual purpose of nurturing faith in the superiority of the system and life in the industrial world, and of sowing confusion about the present and potential liberation struggles in different parts of the world.

A Reader,
Karnataka

In *The Angolan Agony* (*Frontier*, October 5) there is an unexplained reference to FROLIZI. This is not a Mozambican group. It was formed in October 1971 by the former ZAPU Vice President, James Chikerema, and the Secretary-Genl, George Nyandoro.

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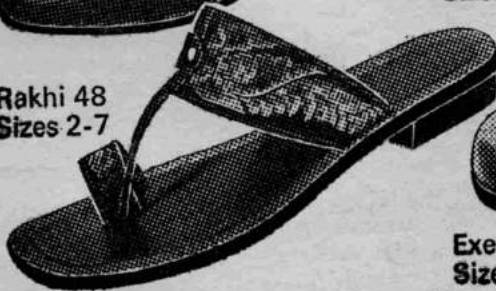
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