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Editor : Samar Sen

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

WAR ON RAILMEN

THOSE who may be shocked at the perfidious arrest of over 3,000 railway workers and their leaders, including Mr George Fernandes, convener of the National Coordination Committee for Railwaymen's Struggle by May 4, will give Mrs Gandhi and her colleagues undeserved credit for originality of thinking and action. The daughter is merely emulating the example set by her father in July 1960 when railwaymen last went on strike. The Gentle Colossus had an ordinance promulgated to declare the strike illegal; more than 16,000 people were arrested, 10,000 were suspended and served with dismissal notices, and 400 were dismissed. When the strike was unconditionally withdrawn on the sixth day, Nehru boasted in Parliament that the strike-leaders were trying to ride a tiger when they could not ride a donkey. He sought to justify the massive repression on the ground that a general strike by its very nature could not be anything other than a political strike and if the strike had gone on, it was doubtful if Government or institutions like Parliament would have survived. "If actions towards war are taken then war will follow". He was ably assisted by Home Minister Pant, who was all sympathy for the striking workers but was inhibited by the egalitarian realisation that it was not right to "take away from Peter even his loin cloth so that Paul may have a tie". The present Government has merely clothed the old policy and arguments in the language of 1974; the contents are unchanged.

The rail strike of 1960 was part of a countrywide strike by Central Government employees; this time railwaymen have decided to strike on their own, though on the third day of the strike it may acquire an additional dimension as class III and class IV staff of the Central Government launch a strike of their own to realise their demands. Over the latter not much concern is being expressed for if the Government succeeds in smashing the rail strike, it will have dealt a body blow to the working class as a whole. The railway authorities are reported to be of the view that if they can break the rail strike, the railways will have "industrial peace" at least for a decade. That is why the Government has thrown in all its wiles and devices. The so-called negotiations were a feint, a move in one direction while action was being planned in the opposite. That the left parties were prepared

for a negotiated settlement is evident from all their statements—from the joint declaration of eight left parties last month to Mr Fernandes's letter from jail to the Prime Minister. In simulating to respond to this approach the Government has played a confidence-trick. It first said that to talk about averting a strike when no strike-notice had been given would be unreal; and when the strike-notice was served it imputed political motive to the leaders of railwaymen and laid down that the notice must be withdrawn before negotiations can resume. What importance the Government attaches to negotiations should be evident from the fact that though the Government was predicting chaos in the event of an all-India rail strike, it thought the Railway Board was competent enough to negotiate on its behalf. Later, negotiations remained suspended for several days owing to the Deputy Rail Minister's bereavement, as if the issue was too inconsequential to be handled by the redoubtable full Minister.

The negotiations were a farce, and it is amazing that the left parties allowed themselves to be duped by the Government's deceitful gesture. Having succeeded in humbling the employees of Indian Airlines and Life Insurance Corporation, the Government is now determined to break the back of the railmen's movement. Reports have appeared that the next target is bankmen. The Government has launched a war on the working class which will be half-won if the agitation of two million railmen based on legitimate demands can be suppressed. Repression is one prong of the Government's attack; the other is to sow disunity in the leadership and drive a wedge between the strikers and the public. The cancellation of some 200 trains even when negotiations were on was designed to bring home to the people the kind of hardship that railmen were about to inflict on them; the cancellation was meant to pre-

pare the background for indiscriminate arrest and detention of railmen's leaders. The device seems to have succeeded to an extent for no questions have been asked about the circumstances in which Mr Malgi, general secretary of the National Railway Mazdoor Union, died in police custody. The INTUC-controlled federation has lined up with the Government, though its leadership has been forced by the members to

support the demand for minimum bonus. The Government has been banking on the CPI also, but the stage seems to be past when the party could oblige. The Government's main weapon is, however, repression and terrorisation of which railmen have been given a foretaste. It is now possible for even the gullible to fathom why the Emergency and the Defence of India Act and Rules have been kept in force.

A Cruel Month

Last month the police opened fire on food demonstrators at as many as 30 places in Maharashtra alone, the latest being in the Marathwada region. Six people—all poor peasants—were killed and over 5,000 were arrested. The Marathwada rally was organised by students and unemployed youths against intolerable poverty, unemployment, backwardness, administrative corruption and high prices. Some meagre concessions to students and a plethora of hollow promises by the State Government failed to satisfy the people of that region. A coordination committee of all students' action committees was formed to press the demands. The agitation reached such a stage that 23 legislators cooled their heels in Bombay, terrified to return to their constituencies in the Marathwada region for fear of being "killed". Those who fail to see the writing on the wall and instead imagine CIA agents or para-military organisations behind every slogan and demand of the students are ignoring the fact that the party in power is thoroughly incapable of providing the minimum requirement of food to the subdued, hungry people, getting desperate because of starvation.

Marathwada is spread over five of the 26 districts of Maharashtra and is one of the poorest and most backward areas of the State. During monsoon, some district or the other of the region suffers from

severe drought once in three years. Almost the entire area went through a cruel famine from 1970 to 1973. This recurring calamity could have been averted, even partially, if the State Government had implemented the various irrigation projects planned years ago to provide perennial water for at least 20 per cent of the land in the region; not even six per cent of the agricultural land is irrigated.

The simmering discontent exploded first in the small town of Vasumut when over 2000 educated young men were sent by the employment exchanges for recruitment to 130 posts of trainees in the Irrigation Department. It was later discovered that the appointments had already been made on the recommendations of influential men of the ruling party. When the crowd of 2000 job-seekers came to know, after waiting for hours in the sun and no drinking water, that there was to be no interview, they got furious and began hurling stones. The Chief Minister of Maharashtra and his Cabinet colleagues found the hand of the CIA behind this "act of violence" and termed whoever came in support of this action as a reactionary. But the people of this country are gradually realising that movements of this type are the only answer to the policies of the corrupt ruling party.

The initiative taken by the students roused peasants in Marath-

wada who are now determined to get their share of what they have produced. Hundreds of quintals of wheat, jawar, bajra have been recovered from secret godowns. Corrupt Congressmen and officials are being forced to leave the region and stocks of food brought under people's possession. The Maharashtra Government, however, has woken

up to the "seriousness" of the situation. One will soon see the ugliest form of police rampage in the whole of the region in the name of restoring law and order for which the Naik Government is now preparing. This is the method by which the ruling party is trying to establish "democratic socialism" in India.

Who Is Afraid Of Aid ?

India has again opened its womb, to quote a famous expression used by a former Planning Minister who, to his lasting credit, has been largely responsible for putting Indian planning off the rails. Mr Asoka Mehta, true to the style of India's "intellectual" politicians, is now safely ensconced in decadent politics, but the economy he left behind is in a shambles. The oil crisis has come handy as an explanation, but even without it, the economy would not have been in a much improved position. A substantial resources gap would have appeared even otherwise; costlier crude oil imports have only widened it. The projected foreign figure of Rs. 2,431 crores would have been just grossly inadequate to meet the requirements, for the rate of inflation and a rise in consumption expenditure would have turned the savings estimate all wrong. Anyway, the oil crisis has now pushed these issues to the background, as it has fortuitously provided the Government with licence to seek foreign aid with gusto and without scruples. Whoever else might be afraid of foreign

aid, India certainly is not. After a brief interregnum during and after the Bangladesh war when New Delhi made a lot of noise of going without aid, of spurning aid with strings, and even of autarky, the same familiar scene of begging for help has reappeared.

The policy suits both the leaders and interested foreign parties who in their heart of hearts could not possibly be unhappy at India's predicament. Since aid without political leverage is a myth that has seldom worked, the Government of India can hardly expect to convince anybody that the aid it is going to accept will be strictly on its own terms. The country will have to pay a heavy political price one way or the other. But the worst part is the economic implication. Already three-fourths of the gross aid disbursements is eaten up by repayment dues, and with the latest aid-taking spree, the amount will go up further. And this is a wonderful legacy to leave for the future generation. But could not something else be done? Could not the Government for once make bold to soak the rich who are piling up vast foreign exchange accumulations overseas? Could not the Government dig some of the vast cache of unaccounted gold that is there in the hands of the rich and foot with it its burgeoning import bill? Presumably this is asking one to go against one's own nature. So, take as much aid as you can now, and think about its consequences later.

Bihar

Fear, Flutter, Confusion And Hope

From A Correspondent

TWO years ago, the Bihar Government launched an action to reform the universities. They were 'nationalized'. The old vice-chancellors and registrars were dispensed with, and IAS officers of the rank of Commissioner and Collector respectively were appointed in their place. The make-believe of university autonomy was totally shattered. At that time, a commentator had suggested (*Frontier*, 3 June 1972) that in order to complete the drama, police sub-inspectors should be appointed principals and constables should be made teachers in the colleges of which they were the principal occupants for the greater part of the year in any case. The Government seems to have taken the suggestion seriously, though the typically bureaucratic implementation is two years too late.

Today, all colleges in Bihar are closed. The CRP stands guard at the gates of the institutions of learning. And, anyone who wishes to be educated may approach them—only at the risk of having some learning bayoneted into himself.

Life in Bihar enacts cliches. The semi-feudal politico-economic set-up allows for no unpredictables. What started with a bang—from the rifles of policemen guarding the seat of democracy, the Vidhan Sabha, on the 18th of March—is ending with a whimper of Sarvodayaites, students and sucklings.

Yes, sucklings. For today, after brutal police killings in various towns, in which, according to *The Searchlight*, some fifty people were shot or bayoneted to death in Gaya alone, the brunt of the agitation seems to be borne by children whose age composition seems to be get-

For Frontier contact

NAVODYA PUBLISHERS,

Eluru Road,

Vijayawada-2,

Andhra Pradesh.

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ting lower and lower. It is remarkable what brutality can do. The various youth organizations, the numerous political parties, the valiant Sarvodayaites who screamed when a few landlords were allegedly killed in Musahari by 'Naxalites' and who tied saffron badges on their mouths and took out a silent procession when scores of students were shot to death by the police, the opposition legislators who have safely deposited their resignation letters not with the Speaker but with the leaders of their parties, have all been driven by the fear of bullets to hiding behind saris. Yes, saris. For today, it is housewives who are leading demonstrations.

The middle class is an arrogant class. Its small income does not prevent it from living on big 'ideals'. It weaves about its miserable existence delusions of greatness, make-believe of glory, pipe-dreams of power. It pretends it can, on its own steam, wreck governments, destroy corruption, and misery. This is especially true in a situation as in Bihar, where the mass of the population, somnambulates in rural idiocy. Where life is one long semi-feudal nightmare, where neither an enterprising bourgeoisie nor a militant proletariat exists significantly. In such a situation, the students—scions of the rich peasantry and of the owner-cultivator-consumer middle peasantry—become particularly vocal. Their rural nexus prevents them from seeing the brutal reality of the State; their urban existence makes them restless. The result is chaos. As long as things go on at their normal one step forward-one step back pace, they dote on Sharughna Sinha; when prices, unemployment, corruption really go beyond control, they run amok. Other sections of the petty-bourgeoisie join them: clerks, teachers, housewives. A ready-made Messiah, Jaya Prakash Narayan, hero of the anti-British campaign of '42 and the anti-Naxalite campaign of '70, stands waiting. He is picked up. The Socialists, Jana Sangh, Anand Marg, CPM, dis-

sident Congressmen, all come along for their shares. The coolie proletariat, rickshaw-pullers, porters, tea-stall waiters—the only proletariat in most of the towns—is persuaded, cajoled, coerced into joining. The industrial proletariat in Ranchi, Jamshedpur, Dhanbad, and the railway workers are ignored. The CPI dithers: the Bihar unit makes sympathetic noises, Comrade Brezhnev catches a cold at the Chile-feeling that Comrade Indira Gandhi is getting, Comrade Rajeshwar Rao sneezes in disapproval and the Bihar CPI discovers a sinister plot against, of all things, the Constitution in the agitation of housewives and school children. The countryside generally slumbers through.

The Government, rotten to the core, trembles at the slight gust. Announcements follow announcements. The Ministry will resign. No, it will be reconstituted. The corrupt ministers will be dropped and drafted for party work. No, only the honest will be dropped. The new Ministry will have 36 members. No, 25. Perhaps 13? Better make it 318!

Thus the drama unfolds. Sometimes it rises to the sublime—no caste or communal differentiation among those who were shot by the police. Sometimes it reaches the ridiculous—the frustrated ambitions of would-be and would-have-been deputy collectors show itself in the declaration of 'Janta Curfews', complete with road-blocks, whistles, and even 'jails', where errant rickshaw-pullers, who in their necessity to earn the rent which they have to pay to the *maliks* every evening, break the 'curfew', are imprisoned. Sometimes it goes beyond the ridiculous and an element of pathos enters: the agitators declare that they will show their anger by donating blood to the Medical College Blood Bank.

Blood, Blood

Only one theme is constant—that of blood. The agitators may not know what they are agitating

about. They may not have any specific demands. The conflict itself might have several layers: between the haves, between the haves and have-nots, between the intermediate (and lumpen) segments. But one thing is known today in Bihar: blood has been spilled—blood of the governed has been spilled by the Government. People have been killed because they dared to protest, albeit in a disorganised, haphazard manner. The colour of the blood is still pink, sometimes even saffron. But blood has been spilled not only of the Socialists and Sarvodayaites, but also of the militant students. Blood has been spilled not only in Patna near the Secretariat and the University, but also in the mofussil hamlets—near the toiling peasantry—and blood has been spilled in Ranchi—near the industrial proletariat. Perhaps the students are learning. The huddled conversations, the approach to the other sections of society, the expectancy about the railwaymen's strike, the demands going beyond a mere change in the Ministry or in the Vidhan Sabha, are probably indications of this.

In the meanwhile, business is as usual—for agitation is now part of the usual business of life.

The Messiah has departed for surgical treatment, leaving behind a string of apostles, very much like the Congress system in '42 against which he had himself rebelled. History is being remembered. The Ministry is crumbling, the administration is tottering, the working class, the middle class and the peasantry are getting tense. Everyone is waiting for the railwaymen's strike. Perhaps the railwaymen will not have forgotten that it was J.P. who subverted their movement immediately after independence!

It is becoming increasingly clear that the movement today is at four levels: the loyalist CPI movement to "Protect the Constitution", the over-publicised rightist JP movement which has the limited objective of

checking the growth of the Russian influence in the government and the dissolution of the Assembly, and the gradually growing movement of militant leftist students and a lately emerged militant morcha of non-CPI Marxist groups which want to bring about basic changes in society. It is not very well known that when a convention of all the student wings of Bihar was held in the last week of February, the three left-wing students organisations, AISF, SFI and BSA (the Marxist-Leninist student wing) walked out of it as they did not agree with the nature of the demands made by others. Thereafter, two Action Committees were formed to organise the struggle. The left wing constituted the Chhatra Naujawan Sangharsha Morcha with a long-term programme for struggle starting from 16th March 1974. The others formed a Chhatra Sangharsha Samiti which started agitating from 18th March, and whose leadership was subsequently taken by the 73-year-old student leader, Jaya Prakash Narayan. On the 16th itself, there was agitation in various parts of the State and several people were shot down by the police in Bettiah. Other-

wise the day passed off peacefully. The Government and the press largely hushed it up. On the 18th the Samiti took out another demonstration in Patna. In face of this gathering, the entire law and order machinery—the army standing by included—collapsed. The entire force of the Government was concentrated to protect the Assembly, the Secretariat and Raj Bhavan. In the meanwhile, Patna witnessed large-scale looting and arson. The various levels of the struggle got united by the police attitude towards the masses.

Today the struggle, having continued for more than a month and a half, is again acquiring its various colours. The CPI has come out as the strongest defender of the Establishment and of the Constitution. The Samiti, under the leadership of J.P. and his lieutenants, is prevaricating and setting limits on the struggle. The leftist students are getting more and more militant and the police are coming down brutally on them and on the masses. The State is desperately trying to suppress both the militant students and the non-CPI, leftist morcha, while continuing its underhand support to JP's faction and to the CPI.

In this situation of flux, tactics change, forms of struggle change. Only the struggle goes on. Even while this is being written, the Patna Action Committee has been de-recognized by J.P. In Darbhanga, Muzaffarpur, Bhagalpur and many other areas the peasantry has started deliberate attempts to get close to the workers and the toiling peasants. In the towns, dehoarding campaigns are on. Grain and vegetable fair price shops have been set up by students. The passive sympathy of the broad masses is there. The question is whether the conscious elements will take the lead or the leading elements will acquire a new consciousness. Either of these eventualities will transform Bihar. Whoever can give a correct programme and direction to the mass movement will succeed.

W. Germany Is No Exception

HERBERT RHEINDORF

THE article by Peter Nielson (March '9) represents exactly the position against which my first article was written. This makes it necessary not only to correct the wrong picture he gives, but also to make clear the political idea behind my first article and the role of political positions, such as P. N.'s.

First, facts: P. N. lies more about the economic situation of the majority of the West German working class than even bourgeois propaganda in Germany nowadays dares to. He talks about their ever-rising standard of living while even the West German press has to talk of "tightening the belt" and "voluntary decrease in mass consumption". Since about the mid-sixties the real wages of the majority of the workers have decreased in general. Besides, part of the wage increase is taken away by rising taxes. In 1969 49% of all working class families could afford a car, but the number of cars differs very much according to whether the family has a higher or lower income, a certain number of children and whether both parents work, etc. A great number of these cars are not paid in cash and therefore are a source of growing indebtedness. Those who don't have a car or the family members who cannot use it have to rely on a miserable and expensive system of public transport.

The problem of average data can also be seen when P. N. says that only 65% of the workers' income is spent for some basic needs. But he does not give the data for all the basic needs, nor does he write anything about the fact that only in the past few years the average savings rate of the workers has approached 10%, nor does he say that the differences between various levels within the working class are great.

প্রচুতি

বেরোলো

এ সংখ্যার আছে : সাংস্কৃতিক সাময়িকী /
'ভিয়েতনামের আগস্ট বিপ্লব' /
লেখক : 'আমি কি ভারতীয়?' আরো চারটি
প্রবন্ধ : হিন্দী, ওড়িয়া, উর্দু সাহিত্যের
প্রগতিবাহী ধারা ও দিল্লীর নাটক সম্পর্কে /
প্রেমচন্দ্রের পর ও কিছু হিন্দী কবিতা

কার্যালয় : ৩২, বাগী হর্ষমুখী রোড

কলিকাতা-৭০০০০২

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In practice if you talk to a West German worker you will see that nothing is left at the end of the month; even bourgeois economists admit that the mass of the people in an imperialist country are not able to accumulate any relevant wealth.

The same about the health care facilities. There is hardly any institution in West Germany where you can see the social polarisation so clearly as in the health administration, hospitals etc. There are research results that show that the majority of the German people are ill and do not have the necessary medical care. This kind of medical care is paid by insurance companies which are financed from deduction from the wages. These companies are under the control of the capitalists and the doctors. Especially in times of crisis many German workers hesitate to admit their own illness out of fear of losing their jobs.

The decrease in real wages means a tendency towards absolute impoverishment, and this has definitely been the cause of the great increase in the number of strikes in West Germany since 1969. But the struggle of the masses does not completely depend on absolute impoverishment. The role of the proletariat is more specifically characterized by the existing relative impoverishment. Productivity in West German industries is high and the share that the working class gets from this increasing wealth is decreasing. This means that the exploitation—in the politico-economic sense—is rising. The struggle against this exploitation is the main characteristic of the proletarian economic struggle. For example it can be seen that the strikes of '69 and '73 did not happen in periods of economic crisis but in phases of relative boom; the workers saw that they were producing more and went on strike for higher wages.

In these strikes, which were organised without the consent of the trade union leadership, foreign workers played an important role. They

went ahead for their interests, but it was shown that their isolation from the German workers could be prevented or overcome in most places where the class organisations of the different nationalities applied a correct policy. Of course the bourgeois press tried to create hatred between the different nationality groups of workers, but the strikes of 1973 have shown that the front is not between German and foreign workers but between class struggle and class collaboration and this front divided each nationality group. P.N. scorns German workers for reading *Bild*, but he himself reproduces the *Bild* version of the strike at Ford in Cologne: even some bourgeois news media had to admit that the strike was smashed not by "German workers", but by some social-democratic trade-union bosses, factory police and police in worker's dress. The strike could be smashed in this way because the majority of the German workers did not actively support the strike—which was the result of some political mistakes and the general weakness of the communists in that factory.

Whether you read the *Peking Review* with its reports on West Europe or you read the bourgeois press, you see that the unrest in the world is intensifying and that West Germany is not at all excluded from that ten-

The spontaneous struggles of different sections of the people of West Germany are relatively weak in comparison to other European countries. But nowhere and never will they lead automatically to a revolutionary movement, and they will not even do this in an economic catastrophe, with the prospect of which P.N. wants to put us off. But the spontaneous struggles constitute the groundwork for the communists' work; there they can root in the masses, unfold their general propaganda and establish themselves as the vanguard. And these struggles are especially important in West Germany, where the tradition of struggle was weakened and the revolution-

ary tradition has been destroyed.

In these struggles it becomes obvious that the bourgeoisie is not ready to fulfil the demands of the workers; that the Social Democrats have to be very open and active in their effort to sabotage the struggles. It is the task of the communists to show that the interests of the masses are opposed to capitalism and in consequence to show the necessity of the rule of the working class.

Communists are about to do that in West Germany. Of course there could be more examples than the Hoechst plant near Frankfurt to show that they do make mistakes and that they have not yet accomplished very big results. But the tendency is towards correcting these mistakes.

It is a fact that the movement of the students is rather strong and that sometimes it goes in for rather far-reaching political slogans. But besides this we must see that the unrest has spread to all sections of the people. This is reflected also in the social composition of the communist organisations. The Communist League, for example, consists of a majority of workers and the number of workers in Germany at all levels of leadership is growing; the readers of its fortnightly paper (47,000) consist only of a small minority of students.

In my first article I tried to show the various movements in which communists unite with the masses in the struggle. Of course the people of West Germany is not yet united in struggle—and this unity could only be a revolutionary one; but one who does not see the progressive developments and the work in that direction must have a special interest that leads one to such a "lack of perception".

P.N.'s article raises some questions, such as, whether his claim that the German proletariat has "more to lose than its chains" is in the tradition of Bernstein, whether his hope for an economic breakdown has

AN APPEAL

In view of the acute shortage of newsprint and the rising cost of everything under the sun, we reduced the number of pages and increased the price of 'Frontier'. But it is difficult to keep pace with the run-away inflation.

We are therefore compelled to appeal to our readers and well-wishers for donations to 'Frontier'. We do so reluctantly, for we are aware of the general hardship.

FRONTIER

some connection with Rosa Luxemburg, or whether his understanding of the relation of the movements of the "East" and the "West" is that of M. N. Roy.

In West Germany itself, the ideas proclaimed by P.N. are peddled only by the Social Democrats, who know that the struggles are fatal to them. To say that the people in West Germany is living in utter comfort is bourgeois propaganda, sponsored for two reasons: Firstly, the picture of paradise-like conditions in the imperialist countries strengthens the ideological positions of those who say that capitalism will lead India to a bright future if only the people is ready to suffer and sacrifice now. Secondly, the idea of the "peoples in the imperialist countries sucking the blood of the peoples in the suppressed countries" is an instrument against the solidarity of the peoples against imperialism.

These ideas must be counterposed with correct information about the contradictions between the peoples in the imperialist countries and the imperialist bourgeoisie. The workers in the imperialist countries are exploited and the peoples are oppressed. Knowledge of the mutual conditions and the respective struggles can be the basis of international solidarity.

But there are more specific reasons why P.N.'s approach must be pointed out as being a dangerous, bourgeois approach. His article is full of contempt for the masses of the German workers: they are bribed, have a racist and anti-communist ideology, and only their final

absolute impoverishment will finally make them understand their situation as workers.

This petty-bourgeois position of contempt for the workers as the passive and dull object of bourgeois propaganda can only lead to either resignation or pseudo-left adventurism. Both of these are histori-

cally located close to each other and are essentially of a common nature.

Therefore the anti-people and counter-revolutionary ideas of P.N. deserve not just unconcern or indifference on the part of our Indian friends and comrades, they need to be forcefully rejected.

How Has China Done It?

MAUDE PICKETT SMITH

A QUESTION India might well study, plagued as she is by seemingly insurmountable difficulties in every area of her national life, is how China has solved her problems in the 25 years of her independence from foreign domination.

Attested to by countless visitors from any number of countries, without the support of a strong police state, terrorism or massive coercion or repression, China finds herself today with practically no unemployment, no population explosion, no strikes or unjust labour practices to provoke them, and almost no crime. In addition she has virtually no juvenile delinquency, no drug traffic or addiction, no prostitution or venereal disease.

How has she done it? To solve even one of those problems can be considered a major achievement. By what magic has China in so short a time solved them all? By what methods has she won the enthusiastic support of her whole populace in nation building? Such unity is usually found only in the face of a common enemy or external threat. What is the enemy against which her people are united? They call themselves socialist; they do not claim to have achieved yet their goal of communism. Whatever may be the secret of their unity, their whole-hearted co-operation, their happiness, honesty, and almost complete lack of corruption, it would be well

worth investigating: India could do with a bit of it.

Perhaps the most important element is that the people feel they have a stake in the future. They are convinced that the nation's progress will mean their own, will mean a better life for themselves and their children, because it has already done so. From the beginning, during the war of liberation they were made to feel, not alone by high-sounding phrases but by facts, that the struggle was their struggle. The People's Liberation Army actually freed the people from the centuries-old oppression of the landlords; the first move of the new government as it spread across the country was to give the peasants control of the land on which they worked, and it bought their produce at fair prices to sell at just as fair prices to the hungry urban population. The common enemy has been ignorance, poverty, disease, injustice and corruption, and at every step the people have been able to see the results of their labour, the advantages to be gained by cooperation and the use of new methods.

The second important element is the faith the leaders have in the people—in their judgment, their cooperation and their capacities, and the extent to which all day-to-day decisions and development are in the hands of the common man.

The third factor is "Mao's thought", what he sees as the laws

For Frontier contact

MANITHAN,

No. 2, Mangesh Street,

T. Nagar,

Madras - 17.

of life applied to an evolving society. Everyone is expected to be self-reliant, to serve the people, to be humble, unselfish, willing to admit mistakes and to work and think and feel in new ways, to change what needs changing in the collectivity not by force but by changing people's attitudes (beginning with one's own) through education and persuasion, and never to let the practice of socialistic ideals fall behind the profession of them. These are no mere slogans to be mouthed, shouted, or stuck on the walls. They have become the guiding principles of everyday individual and collective life and decision making. And it is because of the validity of his teachings and their effective application to life that "Mao's thought" and not just his charisma is acclaimed throughout the country as responsible for its success.

After liberation there was a tendency in many quarters to distrust the masses, to slide back into the old assumption that power should be in the hands of an elite—so much so that in the Cultural Revolution Mao invited enthusiastic youth to seek out in every establishment, even the government and the party, all vestiges of anti-people sentiment and practice, of self-interest and corruption. That is why, now, representatives of the People's Liberation Army along with those of the Party combine with workers, experts and students in the management of every factory, agricultural commune and educational institution, to see that its work is directed towards the good of the whole, to be sure that the people's hard-earned gains are not allowed to seep away in a slow internal hemorrhage.

In what ways can India profit from China's experience? Our background, our philosophy and our experience are very different from hers, but the problems—the enemy against which we must fight—are the same. Any political aspirant, and political party that sets out to alleviate the lot of the common man, would do well to study what has happened and is happening in

U.S. Marines For Cambodia

NAHA—Approximately 1200 U.S. Marines boarded Seventh Fleet ships here bound for Southeast Asian waters, with orders to stand by for a landing in Cambodia (in the first week of April). Such a landing would directly contravene the U.S. Congress' guidelines for American involvement in that country. The action occurs at a major juncture in the Indochina war as a new coalition government forms in Laos, and Cambodia alone remains outside the structure of a negotiated settlement.

The urgency of the situation was highlighted by a week-long unannounced visit to Okinawa by Lt. Gen. Wilson, Commander of the Fleet Marine Force, in the third week of March. Amidst rumours that Wilson's visit was designed to check emergency mobilization capability, military observers recalled the 1964 visit of the Fleet Commander prior to the U.S. escalation in Vietnam.

Plans for sending Marines to Cambodia were first tested last summer. In a large-scale alert, Marines stationed on Okinawa assembled in battle gear at Kadens Air Base to await airlift to Cambodia by transport planes arriving from the United States. The alert was cancelled just before the Marines boarded the planes. This past January, units of the 18,000 Marines stationed here were again placed on alert for a move into Cambodia. Again the planes arrived, and again the alert was cancelled.

The early March deployment indicates that the Pentagon wants troops within closer range of Cambodia than the long air flight from Okinawa. According to unofficial sources, the orders given the troops are to land in Cambodia from their amphibious ships in a show of force.

On March 31 another 1200 Marines departed from White Beach, Okinawa, aboard three amphibious

vessels including the USS Juneau. This group, composed of the 1st Battalion, 4th Regiment, plus supporting units, is also on its way to Cambodia, but it is not yet known whether they will augment or relieve the original force (2nd Battalion, Fourth Regiment and support units).

(New Asia News, Tokyo)

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The wheels are moving, say AIR and Government spokesmen — liars all. The wheels are moving indeed to rush more Central Reserve Police, Border Security Force, Provincial Armed Constabulary personnel and paid Congress mastans to intimidate the railway workers at railway stations, in the bigger railway yards and colonies. That the workers are not cracking up despite this brutal use of force is remarkable, the more so when some of their leaders are whining from jail for an audience with the Empress and her mini-stars.

The strike has pushed up prices and created uncertainties, but this is inevitable and unavoidable. Fight the men and the woman who are misruling the country, not the railwaymen in their hour of trial. Fight the people who, in alliance with industrialists and kulaks have imposed an intolerable burden on the masses. They are the enemies of the people.

(Space donated by
supporters of fighting railwaymen)

Shadows Of 1984

PATRAKAR

THE recent wave of AIR propaganda against blackmarketeers, hoarders and 'anti-social elements' highlighting the evils of strike, bandhs, violence and what you have, reminds one of George Orwell's 1984. Every five minutes one is bombarded with a scream, a death, a forecast for disaster, fear and a pledge. Vulgar, crude, systematic brain-washing indeed.

Though like Eursania (Orwell's dreamland) we are not under compulsion to be under the constant vigil of TV, nevertheless the Big Brothers have taken pains to include Vividh Bharati in their propaganda network. People, who were till now able to castigate the Government hold over the radio in their own unsophisticated way—Vividh Bharati and Radio Ceylon are the biggest draws in India—have been beaten with their own weapon.

In a country with the percentage of illiteracy as high as 80 per cent and where only two per cent of the population reads any sort of newspaper, radio and TV can be the most important form of media. The Government knows it, and utilises it fully.

To be fair to the Indian powers that be, one should not have much objection to the use of AIR and TV as propaganda machinery for the government—after all this is just one of the many 'universal phenomena'—but the crude way in which this is done here makes one sick. Often the Government sway crosses the limits of absurdity.

Over the past few years there has been a marked tendency to turn All India Radio into All Indira Radio. Any AIR official will vouch for the increasing pile of directives they receive daily from the high-ups in New Delhi. Written instructions are sent to different stations to play

up or play down a certain topic.

Where no written directives are issued, the AIR authorities themselves look to it that nothing unpalatable to the ruling party goes on the air. Anyone with even a slight experience of AIR must have had a taste of their unofficial censorship and obscurantism. Recently the Bhopal AIR has deleted the price of wheat from its foodgrain price bulletin. The reason: the wheat prices as supplied by the Economics and Statistics Department far exceed the price-line imposed by the State Government. So AIR decided to ignore the bitter truth.

A senior official at the Delhi station was pulled up last year for inviting a well-known leftist commentator to give a spotlight on Chile. In another incident, the programme of a reputed but outspoken commentator was cut down abruptly. Later they tried to make an excuse of 'lack of time'. These are mini-scandals that occur daily. In fact choosing newspapermen for doing 'news analysis' and 'spotlight' for AIR has long been a racket through which the Government has been rewarding hand-picked journalists.

Recently an employee of the Delhi AIR Hindi news section, Mr Anand Swarup Verma, was sacked even though he had topped the list of an all-India competition for the post in 1970 and his performance report was excellent. When there was a stir by the trade unions, a top AIR official told an employees' delegation that Mr Verma's services were terminated at the instance of the Home Ministry; he was an extremist.

The over-sensitivity to any sort of criticism is prevalent on a wider scale in TV.

Mr Darryl D'Monte, assistant editor, the *Times of India*, was approached by the Bombay TV authorities to do a programme on "the threat to open spaces". The then Station Director, Mr P. V. Krishnamurthy, also expressed his keenness on such a programme because of the public interest caused at the time

by protests over the Maharashtra Government's land reclamation policy.

Mr D'Monte was eventually assigned and work on the half-hour programme started in December 1972, and took three laborious months to complete. Mr D'Monte accompanied the TV crew to sites such as Nariman Point, Chowpatty, Nepean Sea Road and Bandra and painstakingly recorded the views of a cross-section of citizens on the reckless reclamation work and the skyscraper racket.

According to Mr D'Monte, when the programme was completed, "we agreed to let the Maharashtra Urban Development Minister, Dr Rafiq Zakaria, see the film and then be interviewed by me in the last five minutes, so he could rebut anything that had been said against the State Government's policies".

Dr Zakaria refused to participate in the programme and told the Bombay TV officials that if they screened the programme in that form it would have serious repercussions for everyone concerned because it was too "anti-government".

The authorities went through the pretence of stating that they would revise the programme to include some comments of people who favoured reclamation. However, not a single State Minister or government official was willing to publicly come out in favour of it. It is now a year that the film has been lying unused.

All this because the authorities have no answer to the criticism of the real estate racket. It is no secret that the Maharashtra Government—with the open blessing of Mrs Indira Gandhi—has been making money while selling plots of reclaimed land. At Nariman Point the figure is said to be Rs. 1,000 "on money" for each square metre of land which is sold at an average of Rs. 4,000.

As Mr D'Monte wrote to Patrakar: Apart from the specific issue raised by the ban on this programme it is also evident that TV is used as a

vehicle for each State's propaganda. It is certain that anything unpalatable to State Governments will be excluded from TV; in other words, each TV service is being used as a particular State's mouthpiece.

This is, indeed, an important issue, for it brings into play censorship which is quite different from that used by the Films Division or the one self-imposed by the national Press.

Society Of Contemporary Artists

SANDIP SARKAR

THE annual major show of the Society was on view at the Birla Academy of Art from 16th to 30th April. Generally group shows cannot satisfy entirely. Yet one always comes away enthralled from the hall after seeing an exhibition of the Society. It is good to see some artists maturing and at the same time it is also painful to see the powers of others gradually failing them—the sickening feeling of a gardener discovering a worm inside a beautiful rose.

The painters of the group live in their own realms—real, imaginary, make-believe and fantasy. On the face of it one cannot say that this is surrealistic. Because most artists do not want to be overpowered by their subconscious. Rather they want to use the language of dream and fantasy. They want to create their own personal world.

Manu Rathode has his own strange imagery and his use of gouache—the luminous colours beside darker hues, direct and flat contrast with binding lines—accentuates this. However, it may not be wrong to say that he has come to a dead end. The present writer has never liked his paintings, but admires his consistent audacity.

Until very late, Bikash Bhattacharya was the Indian surrealist *par excellence*. His deliberate use of the nocturnal dreamworld had a kind of conviction that the paintings of this exhibition lacked. It seems that he cannot free himself from the self-created matrix and to an extent his drawing has deteriorated. All this makes his 'She' series quite unconvincing. Mainly the lack

of structure, the use of three-dimensions and pre-impressionist dark indoor tonality make his paintings rather disappointing. He is afraid to be a portrait painter and brings in dolls, or stylises too much (15). His drawing of the woman's feet in "She and the Morning" is incorrect.

With Shymal Dutta Roy's water-colours one enters a world that is different. Everyday objects find a place in the fragile pictorial construction and gain a certain illusion. 'Memoir II' arranges the scene well. "Street Cur" emphasises the deserted hour with a number of slightly stylised street dogs. When Shymal tries to repeat his performance in oil he does not really succeed. It seems that the surface tension has not been unified enough and painting has a tendency to split from the middle. Ganesh Haloi lives in a pretty poetical world. Dharma-narayan Dasgupta succeeds in building his fantasy world by mixing elements of Indian miniatures and the naive sensibility of Paul Klee. Sometimes he may fail to integrate space or over-stylises or simplifies too much, yet there is enough to indicate that he has potential and the stuff that our dreams are made of. Evidently Suhas Ray is trying hard to mix Bikash Bhattacharya and Ganesh Pyne together. One can hardly say anything about Anilbaran Saha and Sailen Mitra.

Ganesh Pyne this time has increased the size of his paintings and changed his palette as well. His precise drawings, sure at-kisat-ion controlled use of colours—under-using them and glazing them to

bring out the subdued hues in stages—a technical perfection—point to the fact that he is one of the most important artists of Calcutta to-day. The dark tones are enlivened by bringing in bright colours as a sort of contrast. Sometimes this is overworked as he green leaves in 'Crossing the Fountain'. I suppose it would have been better if he had subdued it down to harmonise with the total tonality. Yet 'Crossing the Fountain' is a little masterpiece of restrained artistry. A sort of balance between form and content has been struck. One almost misses the grim and morbid situation, because Ganesh brings in this bright foliage, deliberately, to suppress the vivid archaic imagery. He fights to control his emotions by force. His aggressiveness is not outward but inward looking, for he has an ascetic streak in him.

Graphics

The group seems obsessed with graphics. Some artists have totally given up painting for graphics. It has become a fetish, a toy, an obscure way of daydreaming. In Russia and Eastern Europe graphics has been an escape route from official norms of art. Picasso and Matisse did graphics with seriousness but as a sort artistic pastime. Moreover, they could engrave their character in graphics. Picasso had also done ceramics but that does not mean painters should become potters. We admire the graphics of Durer, Daumier and DeKooning and not Hayter. Publicity of course can turn non-art into art. It is within an individual's right to play with print-making but tall claims should be avoided. Highpowered American-type salesmanship can make it into anything but art. Besides, graphics has to depend on accidents and to make this accident work the craftsman has to deliberately work out a design to go with it. Somnath Hore has the artistry to make graphics somewhat interesting. His etchings of a goat and the one with a man and woman have the quality of good

drawing. In the former he uses a mass of black and in the later he uses lines and convincingly performs the magic. Sanat Kar's 'Waves' has a charm. This is because he has forced us to forget the technical side. Amitabha Banerjee is a master craftsman, always trying to perfect his technique and experiment. In his 'Etching 3' he divides the surface of the paper into two halves. On the upper half he uses a screen and exposes it to light to present the Kōnark wheel in the same way as a block is printed. Eventually this becomes a stopper. In the bottom half he employs a zinc plate as usual. He uses the roller only once to bring out the superficial and deep imprints. Laluprosad and Dipak Banerjee have been dominated by geometrical designs.

Sculpture

The sculpture section seemed the weakest. It was strange to see the middle-aged Ajit Chakravorty influenced by Henry Moore and others. He has worked hard and that is about all one could say. P. Chandravinod is working away to build an identity. His 'Spiral Theme' has an ethereal quality and some poetry too. Along with Manick Talukdar and Anil Sen he should be carefully nurtured.

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BANKURA NEWSPAPER

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MAY 11, 1974

A Maestro Felicitated

By A Music Critic

R Jamminath Ganguly, the veteran musician and music teacher, was recently felicitated by his students and admirers at Mahajati Sadan. In this connexion, a whole-night soiree of dance and music was presented by the members of Vardh Sangitalaya, a music school of North Calcutta. *Rajakrura*, a dance-drama composed in the Kathakali style by Mr Govindan Kutty, was enacted with much gusto by his ensemble which included himself in the leading male role. The dance-drama ended with the subjugation of Kaliya, the snake-king. Although the roles of the hero and his gopikas were fairly enacted by Mr Kutty and his students, it is a great pity that even in these days of social strife and turmoil our musicians and composers never bother to budge an inch from their habitual religio-erotic themes. As a traditional repetition it was of course all right, but, far removed from contemporary social reality, it seemed utterly pointless except in the repetitative flourishes of Mr Kutty's virtuoso dancing.

The khyal singing of Miss Shashwati Sengupta was not up to the standard. In the sitar recital Mr Subir Mitra contented himself with the role of the refrain-keeper while Mr Sanjoy Mukherjee, a capable disciple of Mr Jnanprakash Ghosh, carried the allotted time on the tabla. A comparatively competent grasp was displayed on the sarod by Mr Narendranath Dhar. Mrs Gouri Dey proved her ability in her slow and quick-tempo khyals, both in Rageshri. Mr Vijoy Chakravorty registered a bolder display of vocal quality and mode of singing in his two khyals in the nocturnal raga, Mianki-Mallar, although the mystery of the chromatic flat and natural sevenths cannot be said to have been entirely unveiled. He was supported by Mr Mahadev Chakravorty on the

tabla and Mr Bachalal Mishra on the sarengi.

The programme was satisfactorily concluded with the inimitable and scholarly interpretation of the dawn-raga, Lalit, by Mr Jamminath Ganguly, who was ably supported by Mr Anil Bhattacharjee on the tabla.

Letters

Illusion And Reality

As an Indian living in West Germany for the past few years and having some experience of the social reality here, I was pained of the situation of the working class in West Germany by Mr Nielsen (*Frontier*, 9. 3. 1974).

It is true that the working masses in West Germany are not starving and not having to live outdoors; but the fact that they must constantly struggle to maintain their existence-minimum (by Western standards) and remain physically and psychologically fit in order to be able to sell themselves, is the naked truth. This, in the first place, has nothing to do with the KBW (Communist League of West Germany) or any other organisation's political standpoint.

The writer, while speaking of a majority of German workers having cars, TV sets, other benefits and luxuries, forgets to speak of the miserable working situation, the ever increasing speed of the assembly line, the inhuman work pressure. Why does he not speak of the small and cramped houses in which the worker-families live and the localities they are situated in? Does he not deliberately forget to mention the third-rate transport, medical and education facilities for the workers and their families? And of the actually decreasing income of the workers compared to the rising prices?

It is true that an average German worker is still not sufficiently class conscious, but a part of the work-

ing class has already begun to realise its situation—that of being exploited by the capitalist class. There are examples of workers striking independently of the unions, thus causing the union leadership extreme displeasure and worries.

In his attempt to criticise the article "Development of Communist movement in West Germany" (*Frontier* 1. 12. 73), Mr Nielsen merely shows his contempt for the struggling masses in West Germany and other Western countries.

D. A.
Heidelberg, W. Germany.

Visiting China

At last a delegation from the Kottis Memorial Committee, invited by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, has been allowed by the Government of India to visit China.

It is good news. The Sinologists in Delhi have interpreted the invitation as another indirect sign that Peking is keen to improve relations with New Delhi. There is another point. The fact that the Russian diplomats in India are allowing one of their well-known Indian employees (in their publicity outfit) to visit China as a member of the delegation may be an indication that the Kremlin is no longer so antagonistic to the Chinese Government. This should be welcome to all lovers of international detente.

MINA GHOSH
Calcutta

Israel Day

May 14 is one of the blackest days in West Asian history because on that day, contrary to the Partition Resolution passed by the United Nations, the Zionist State of Israel was proclaimed on the Arab soil of Palestine. Since that dark day, which witnessed an unprecedented bloodbath of the innocent Palestinian people, peace has not returned to

this land, which was equally holy and sacred to its inhabitants—Muslims, Jews and Christians—who had been living there in perfect harmony.

The events in Palestine during 1918-1948 have served to unmask the real aggressive and imperialist character of Zionist intentions and designs. All the Afro-Asian countries, including India, saw the real expansionist designs of the Zionists and voted against the Palestine Partition Resolution. All Arab Attempts to get the verdict of the international Court of Justice on the competence of the UN to partition a country against the wishes of the majority of its inhabitants was defeated by 21 votes to 20 with 16 abstentions.

The Partition Resolution allotted 55 per cent of the area of the State to the Zionists while their actual land holdings then did not exceed 9 per cent. Britain fixed May 15 as the date for the ending of the Mandate. On May 14, the British High Commissioner left Palestine. Immediately afterwards, against the terms of the Partition Resolution, the Zionist leaders proclaimed the "state" of Israel. The USA extended its recognition to the State within fifteen minutes of the Zionist Declaration. Earlier the Zionists had begun forcible occupation of the territories not mentioned in the UN resolution.

For over twenty-six years, Israel has expanded itself by force of arms. After every stage in this expansion, Israel has appealed to "reason" and has suggested negotiations. Every new conquest becomes a new basis for proposed negotiations from a position of strength, which ignores the injustice of the previous aggression.

Since its formation, Israel has been condemned by the UN General Assembly, the Security Council, the Commission on Human Rights, and the International Conference of the Red Cross 116 times. It is the open military and political support of imperialist and Zionist sources which has sustained Israeli effrontery. The Israelis are in no mood to heed the voice of reason. Instead they pro-

pose to retain by force the territory their army has grabbed.

ATTAR CHAND
Delhi

Release Reddy

We, the writers and journalists of New Delhi, denounce with vehemence the vindictive action of the Andhra Pradesh Government in arresting Dr M. V. Ramana Reddy. A popular physician of Proddatur, editor of the literary journal *Prabhanjanam* and a revolutionary writer of standing, he was first arrested in connection with a conspiracy case. When he was on bail, he was taken into custody but was released by the High Court on a habeas corpus petition. This is the third time he has been arrested, this time on the flimsy charge of supporting a strike.

The A.P. Government has acquired a notoriety for proscribing creative writing on a scale no other State government has. In 1971 it detained three leading functionaries of the A.P. Revolutionary Writers' Association under the Preventive Detention Act. They were ordered to be released by the High Court. In 1973, it detained three writers under the MISA but the High Court held the detention illegal.

We demand the immediate release of Dr M. V. Ramana Reddy.

Raghuvir Sahay, Mohan Ram,
Hari Dutt Sharma, Mrityu-
bodh, Kavita Nagpal, Ram
Saran Joshi, Dipak B. R.
Chaudhuri, Hans Raj Rah-
bar, Mahmood Hussain and
others

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Defend Prisoners

The Legal Aid Committee has been organised to defend all those who are being victimised for holding political beliefs dissimilar to those of the party in power. Our object is to defend such cases irrespective of the political ideology of the victims.

There are thousands of detenus and undertrial prisoners in West Bengal only. Innumerable cases have been pending since 1968-69. Despite reminders the police are reluctant to submit chargesheets and bail is being opposed stubbornly. If one is granted bail he is tagged to some other cases. Thus the prisoners are virtually denied any defence. The overwhelming majority of those who had to be released after the Supreme Court struck down Section 17A of the MISA, were immediately re-arrested.

There is great need to expand our work and the task before us is huge. We can hope to tackle it adequately only if greater co-operation is forthcoming from all democratically-

minded people not only in this State but in the whole of India.

We appeal to all democratic people :

To contribute generously to this Committee ;

To communicate to us all cases of political victimization in need of legal aid.

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
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Calcutta-9.
2. Jayasree Rana
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