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ROUTE MARCH IN DELHI

FROM the Red Fort to Parliament House is not a long march, but from Patna to New Delhi it is. Mr Jayaprakash Narayan had to travel this distance, because in the vast empire over which Mrs Gandhi presides, nothing happens unless something happens in New Delhi. The people's march in New Delhi under his leadership has succeeded in tearing through the sedulously organised campaign of the ruling party that the one-year-old movement in Bihar has fizzled out and Mr Narayan has lost public support of which, in any event, he never had much. He has demonstrated that Congress claims are as untrustworthy as Congress pledges. It may not have been exactly a people's march especially with the Rajmata of Gwalior, Mr Piloo Mody, and miscellaneous others travelling in style and waving leaderlike to bystanders many of whom must have been police informers, agents provocateurs, and sundry government agents waiting for a pretext or a signal. Yet the procession has proved beyond doubt that Mr Narayan has been able to muster considerable support even in States other than Bihar, which in the current context of polarised politics means a substantial mobilisation against the ruling party. Many more might have swelled the procession had not the Congress governments of the States bordering on Delhi resorted to the familiar tricks to curb efflux from their regions.

It is not difficult to pick holes in the charter of demands presented to the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha by Mr Narayan on behalf of the marchers. The demands may not even be good enough as far as they go, and the measures proposed may not be adequate for bringing about the reforms sought. But the Congress cannot consent to even partial reforms without risking its monopoly of power; this is farthest from the party's and Mrs Gandhi's intention. There is no indication of what Mr Narayan will do in that event. He is facing this problem in Bihar also. He has demonstrated that the people of the State have lost faith in the Congress Ministry and the Assembly, if not in parliamentary democracy itself. The Government in New Delhi and the leadership of the ruling party are not only impervious to the majority will in the State; they continue to prop up a Ministry which would have otherwise collapsed under the weight of its own contradictions. Mrs. Gandhi's response to the charter of demands will be no different; she will pay as much heed to it as she had paid to the demands of the people of Bihar.

Mr Narayan's movement has been forced to stand still in the face of this stubbornness on the part of the Prime Minister in Bihar; he will have to face it in New Delhi also. The Prime Minister has challenged him to get the verdict of the people on the issues raised by him in the coming election. She knows that Mr Narayan will be greatly handicapped, for the election game will be played in the Congress court. Already Mr Narayan is surrounded by parties and men who are no less discredited than the ruling party and its leaders. As the election draws near, Mr Narayan's dependence on them may increase for the simple reason that he has no organisation, no determined cadres of his own; he will have to fight on borrowed organisational strength from parties which are interested only in the overthrow of the Congress and none of his other aims, whatever these may be. To Mr Narayan removal of the Congress is a means to an end, to them it is the end. If Mr Narayan is aware of it, he seems helpless. The limitation that he has set upon his movement from the beginning has landed it in this predicament. He has proved his mobilising capability; he has not yet shown how he proposes to make use of this aroused public opinion to overthrow the Congress Government and bring about the so-called total revolution — without class struggle—that he is fond of and promises.

Battle for Phnom Penh

The noose around Phnom Penh is tightening and what Mr Ford does to thwart this act of 'strangulation' remains to be seen. He and his Secretary of State have been urging Congress, so far in vain, to grant the Lon Nol Government \$222 million in military aid, to preserve it as well as American credibility. Foreigners have started leaving the Cambodian capital, while the influx of starving and dying refugees continues unabated. With the Mekong river route blocked for good, the U.S. air lift is the only lifeline that the Lon Nol Government relies upon. But this is costly and risky, with the Pochentong airport

under frequent rocket attack. Besides, air supply cannot replace the 80 per cent intake which used to flow along the river route. The ferry town of Neak Luong is under heavy pressure, battered by 105-mm artillery fire. The Red Khmers have blocked the waterway with mines suspended beneath bamboo rafts.

In view of the desperate situation, American Marines are said to have been alerted and can go into action on the pretext of evacuating Americans from the beleaguered capital. Prince Norodom Sihanouk suspects that this is a ruse for U.S. intervention. Paratroops can occupy the airport in the 'interest of evacuation' and prevent the Red Khmers from scoring a long-awaited and dramatic victory. This victory, of course, can be delayed but not prevented in the long run. Even if renewed U.S. aid props up the corrupt, inefficient regime, the Red Khmers will not negotiate with it. Aid will only prolong the Cambodian agony, but the Nobel Peace Prize winner is not known for sensitivity to Asian suffering.

The Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam in a statement points out that the airlift between Saigon and Phnom Penh is a serious violation of Articles 1, 4, 7 and 20 of the Paris Agreement on Vietnam, which prohibit reintroduction of military advisers and personnel, armament, munition and war material into South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

It was for the Paris Agreement that Mr Kissinger was awarded the Nobel prize, and it is this agreement that the U.S. has been breaking almost from the day it was signed.

A point also to be made about the U.S. action is that Thailand has been a big cancer spot in the great Indo-China war, besides Japan. But things are changing even in this American-corrupted country. One of the reasons why the Prime Minister designate, Seni Pramoj, fell was that he had set an 18-month deadline for U.S. withdrawal, while the opposition wanted it to take place much earlier. It may be that some of these groups were just not sincere in their anti-Americanism, but the fact that they had to feign it shows which way the wind is blowing.

Rice at Any Price?

When the West Bengal Government reduced by half the weekly rice ration of 93 lakh card-holders of Calcutta and its industrial belt as well as of the Durgapur-Asansol industrial area in October, people were assured that the cut was a very temporary one and would be restored as soon as the new rice crop came into the market. Nearly six months have elapsed; not only is there no sign of restoration of the cut, even maintaining the weekly supply of 500 gms of rice per adult appears very uncertain. The modest procurement target of five lakh tonnes of rice remains as chimerical as it looked when the target was announced in November with much fanfare and quotas were fixed for the districts—as levy on producers, rice mills and husking machines. With the Government unable to procure more than 150,000 tonnes of rice till the deadline—February 28—it would be a miracle if even what had been procured last year comes into the Government's hands within the extended period, March 15.

Last year, landholders owning less than six "wet" and ten "dry" acres were exempted from the levy. This year this limit has been lowered to four and six acres respectively—bringing 2,464,074 acres more under levy than in 1973-74 and making a total of 4,498,891 acres. Levy notices were supposed to have been served on 225,929 landholders in 15 districts for a total of 298,272 tonnes of paddy. Two hundred and seventy out of a total of 750 rice-mills were levied 60 per cent of their purchases in 1973-74, which was to yield 360,000 tonnes of rice. In the event, the quantity from the mills fell far short of the target—a meagre 47,202 tonnes. This time mills have been allowed to sell 50 per cent of their purchases on the open market and hand over only the other half to the Government at the rates fixed by it.

The rice that the Government has procured so far has been mostly from the distress sales of poor and lower middle peasants. The jotedars and big landholders who form the prop of the Congress in rural areas

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are not only not paying their levies, but are using their political influence to get the levies reduced to fantastically low levels. They are also exploiting the distress sales and delivering the grain thus purchased as part of their levies. In addition they are going to court for injunctions which are readily available to them. One instance will be enough to show the farce of the whole procurement programme. In 24-Parganas district, a total of 1,483,200 acres are under aman crops this year and the Government estimates the yield at no less than 718,651 tonnes of rice. But the procurement target for this district is a mere 25,000 tonnes out of which only 12,00 tonnes were procured till February 28. As for the rice-mills, it is widely reported that they have been buying paddy even at Rs. 120 a quintal, and not showing most of their purchases in their books. They have been allowed freedom to sell 50 per cent of their purchases on the open market without any control on the price. So, what matters if the fringe areas are given only an occasional kg of wheat or milo under the so-called modified rationing scheme, what matters if the frozen-wage workers and employees have to buy rice on the open market, which at this easy time of the year sells at between Rs. 3.20 and Rs. 3.50? The interests of the Congress party's rural patrons will once again be served. This is the sinister face of the food policy of the West Bengal Congress Government.

After Ping-Pong

Many speculative, unsubstantiated assertions filled valuable newspaper space during the days the Chinese table tennis team played in Calcutta. In particular, the change of tone in the normally jingoist, anti-Chinese papers was complete. From being stridently aggressive, their tone became wheedling, as they reported—quite wrongly; it turned out—the Chinese support for India at one of

the two sessions of the International Table Tennis Federation, and almost every casual remark, every look and gesture of the Chinese. Newsmen in Calcutta were perplexed by the unusual spectacle of at least one leading political correspondent in town turning up daily at the games. At least one paper gleefully reported that the Chinese stayed away deliberately from a reception organised for them by a number of "extremists".

Now that the Chinese are out of town, the truth, or at least part of it, can be revealed. It does not need reminding that the visit by the TT team did not herald any significant improvement in India-China relationship. To begin with no senior party luminary from Peking accompanied the players. As for the comments of players, their coach and the junior Vice Minister for Sports, well, who would be boorish enough to tell newsmen of a country that had invited them, on being questioned, that good relations were not desirable? Nothing to set the Ganga on fire here. Of far more interest was what the Chinese newsmen and officials told other newsmen and their friends, who must remain anonymous.

At the local Press Club reception, at least one Chinese newsman, probably bored at the inanity of the questions put to him, held the Government of India responsible for the slow progress in normalising relations since 1962. In any case, "How can relations between our two countries improve, unless the USSR settled its border problems with the People's Republic?", he asked.

At the Lake Club reception, a Chinese delegate was interviewed by a Naxalite who had managed to elude the security personnel—and other watchdogs. The delegate told him in halting Bengali. "We hope that relations will improve; but we apprehend that they won't". On learning the political identity of his interviewer, he said, "India is a vast, noble land. Why are you so dependent on foreign support for your revolution?" The Naxalite requested more hoverage of Indian affairs in the official media of Peking. The delegate assured him that it would be conveyed to the authorities.

As for the hotel reception planned by the leftist elements that did not come

off because of the absence of the Chinese, an official on duty let the skeleton out of the cupboard. He told the former that someone had earlier telephoned the hotel authorities that the reception was off. It was a ghost call. The painted amazon of the Foreign Affairs Ministry on duty at the hotel informed the Chinese, who then went off to the Botanical Gardens.

However desirable, there will be no immediate, dramatic improvement in relations between the two countries. If anybody still has any illusions, he can refer to the Chinese stand on the latest accord between the Prime Minister and Sheikh Abdullah on Kashmir.

Delhi reports also make it clear that Sino-Indian relationship will not improve in the near future. During the brief stay of the Chinese team in the capital, the External Affairs Ministry remained perceptibly cool, if not indifferent, towards the visitors. The meeting of the Chinese with the Prime Minister did not come off. Nobody took any initiative, neither the Chinese, nor the Indians.

However, the Department of Chinese Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University hesitantly suggested an official reception for the visitors. There was no official response. Something, probably the Chinese statement on the Kashmir accord and the earlier statement from Mr Swaran Singh on the supply of Chinese arms to Pakistan had soured the atmosphere once more. The ice remained as cold and hard as ever.

All that emerged from the Calcutta table tennis episode is that both the Chinese and the Indian people are genuinely interested in improving relations, but they do not know how. The role of other powers, especially the USSR, is important in this connexion. During the stay of the Chinese in Delhi, *Pravda* let out a shrill propaganda blast against the Chinese for their behaviour against India in the 1962 border war. Big Brother was watching India. It should be a matter of national shame that disputes between Delhi and Peking can no longer be settled without reference to Moscow. New Delhi seems to have no more option in the matter than any country under direct Soviet control, as in East Europe.

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Planned Policy for Creating Divisions Among The Masses

ASHOK RUDRA

IN an article on November 30 we argued that measurement of inequality in terms of total consumer expenditure by people measured in money units—the only type of statistical exercise economic statisticians interested in the question of inequality in the country have carried out—is inadequate on various counts. In particular, we argued that the individual is not the best unit for many purposes. To appreciate the social and political significance of inequality one might have to consider as units the different socio-economic classes and categories that make up the population. In a number of articles that followed we have tried to argue how the Government's price, investment, production and labour policies have been such as to favour the rich at the cost of the poor. But the rich-poor division is not an analytically useful framework for assessing any policy. A close and detailed look would reveal, we believe, that the policies have been expressly made to create and further aggravate conflicts of interest among different sections of the population. We should further hasten to emphasise that the class conflicts we are talking about at the moment are not those that constitute the principal contradiction between the interests of the ruling classes (monopoly capitalists, landlords etc) and the toiling masses. We are talking about the conflicts of interests as between the classes and subclasses that constitute the population **other than** the ruling classes. The importance of studying these conflicts lies in the fact that they constitute barriers and hurdles for the formation of any strategic alliance of these classes and subclasses against the ruling class. It is our understanding that while a lot of attention has been focussed, quite rightly, on the principal contradiction that exists between the interests of the ruling classes and those of the toiling masses, not enough attention has been paid to these subsidiary conflicts of interests between the remaining (non-ruling) classes and subclasses.

It is our understanding that it has been a tactic of the ruling classes to make the Government formulate and execute economic policy measures in such a fashion as to create and aggravate divisions among classes and subclasses which have to be allies in any revolutionary programmes; and that these classes and subclasses and their representative organisations, whether trade unions or left parties, have not been sufficiently alert about this divisive tactic of the ruling classes and so have readily played into their hands.

In order to substantiate and illustrate our argument we shall now require a framework of class divisions for the Indian society. The framework we shall use would be one in common usage in Indian Marxist literature and which is very similar to but not quite the same as the one adopted by Mao Tse-tung for the Chinese society. Mao recognised the following classes and subclasses in the Chinese society: (a) landlords (b) rich peasants (c) middle peasants (d) poor peasants (e) agricultural labourers (f) middle bourgeoisie (which is also called the national bourgeoisie) (g) the petty bourgeoisie (h) the industrial proletariat and (i) the lumpen proletariat. In one of his earlier writings on the subject ("Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society" 1926), the rich peasants are treated as a part of the middle bourgeoisie and the middle peasants as a part of the middle bourgeoisie; the poor peasants are grouped together with a few categories like handicraftsmen, shop assistants and pedlars in a class which he called the semi-proletariat; agricultural labourers are included in the proletariat as are the lumpen proletariat.

Such minor variations occur in different periods. The above classes, in particular the petty bourgeoisie and the middle (or national) bourgeoisie, have been the subject of further differentiation and characterisation by him. Mao's characterisation of these classes in terms of their objective production relations and their subjective attitudes and reactions

towards revolution are extremely helpful in understanding the class structure of India but they are not without ambiguities and are not all readily applicable to their Indian counterparts. We shall encounter these ambiguities when we look for the coalitions and conflicts of interests as between the different classes and subclasses of the Indian society. The standard class division of the Indian society that one encounters in our Marxist literature is as follows: (a) Monopoly capitalists (b) the national bourgeoisie (c) the petty bourgeoisie (d) the industrial proletariat (e) landlords (f) rich peasants (g) middle peasants (h) poor peasants and (i) agricultural labourers. The objective and subjective characterisations of these classes that one comes across in Indian Marxist literature also give rise to various problems which we shall encounter when we try to work with this framework. Thus one debates a great deal on how far the landlords and rich peasants are feudal and how far they are capitalistic. The 'national' character of what is called the national bourgeoisie is mostly taken for granted though it does require to be examined. The alliance between "feudalism" and "imperialism" is simply assumed, but its form, content and nature hardly ever examined. However, class differentiation of Indian society as such is not the subject matter of our study at present. Our interest is at the moment focussed on the subsidiary conflicts of interests between classes and subclasses other than the ruling classes. This study we shall carry out

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in articles to follow in terms of the following particular conflicts: (a) conflicts of interests within the peasantry (rich, middle and poor peasants) and the peasantry and agricultural labourers; (b) conflicts of interests between different sections of the petty bourgeoisie and the rest of the toiling masses and the unemployed; (c) conflicts of interests between the industrial proletariat and the rest of the toiling masses and the unemployed; (d) conflicts of interests be-

tween the so-called national bourgeoisie and the toiling masses.

CORRECTION

In a previous article — "Production Policy for Promoting Inequality" — it was written in the Table that the production of electric fans has increased three-fold between 1950-57 and 1970-71. The increase has been actually eight fold.

The U. P. Question

R. P. MULLICK

U. P. is the uppermost quiz now in the mind of the ruling elite of India. Will this premier State follow Bihar's line of unrest and fermentation of youth power?

The Chief Minister, Mr Bahuguna is worried. There are pre-budget speculations of expansion of his team, of challenge to his position. He has been forced to make recurrent visits to New Delhi. He is looking for men who could be entrusted with the task of unobtrusively removing the ebullient "progressives" and bringing back tested horses of the old guard, the helmsmen of pre-revolt 1973.

Mr Kamalapati Tripathi had never had it so good. The Salig Ram Jaiswals and the Rajendra Kumari Bajpayees, together with the whole host of "socialists" who still pretend to carry forward the tradition of the late Acharya Narendra Dev, have dismal prospects before them. The U. P. Land Development Tax and Land Revenue (Amendment) Bill was the "tofa" (i.e. offering) of the Bahuguna regime to the agriculturist sections of U.P., who constitute not less than 75% of the total, on New Year's Day. In vain did the new-found allies of the ruling party, the CPI plead for a revocation of the ruling party's attitude: incontrovertible data that land holdings smaller than and up to 6-25 acres (Rs. 21 crores annually), yield less land revenue and development tax than those above this limit (Rs. 23.5 crores annually), failed to modify the

Chief Minister's determination to make agriculture a paying profession, since it and allied sectors of the economy contributed as much as between 56.4% and 66.2% of the total domestic product of the State between 1960/61 and 1972-73. The comparatively high yield of the industrial sector, as well as its untapped capacity, was deliberately omitted by him, since induced recession has become a feature of the sector, with an average 25000 workers laid off per day. In vain, also, did the ex-socialist, neo-Congress Minister for Health tender his resignation in October last year, making the imposition of land revenue on holdings up to 2.5 hectares an issue of principle. The other "progressives" have learnt to conform with the many-faceted splendour of pragmatism as practised by Mr Bahuguna. Mrs Rajendra Kumari Bajpayee, for instance, has modified her original progressive stance. Following opposition charges of profiteering from exports of bajra and wheat from the State to Gujarat, she has managed to live down much of her previous concern for an integrated procurement-cum distribution policy for food. She has been saved from getting singed by sparks from the bajra and wheat scandals by the diversionary move of the U.P. Cabinet of entrusting the enquiry to the bureaucratic machinery. The Central Government, too, rushed to the aid of U.P. by referring the matter to the CBI, its handmaid, instead of to a body of parliamentarians.

Echoes from last year's famine deaths in the eastern parts of U.P. are no more heard, but storm clouds have started gathering. The students are supporting the small peasant's demands (for water, fertiliser, seeds and for writing-off debts and unrealised revenues), the industrial workers and the vast army of lower-middle class unemployed. In Ballia, in Gorakhpur and in Allahabad — the "Poorbi" areas — and in Bareilly, Moradabad districts as well as the hill regions the students and the youth are lining up in favour of these suffering and insecure sections. Interestingly, the Congress in U.P. has now chosen to ally with the industrial-commercial complex of the province. Tycoons of the sugar industry have been assured that there is now no question of its being nationalised, thus giving a lie to all the glorious professions of party radicals from Mr Genda Singh (ex-socialist, who is too ill, always, to press his fine points to political ideology in intra-party conclaves), to Mr Virendra Verma (Congress MLA and chairman of the three-member committee for sugar take-over appointed in 1970 by the then Chief Minister and now the B.L.D. chief, Charan Singh). The interests of the cane-growers, sugar-workers, and of course, the consumers will be henceforward sacrificed to please the proprietors of the industry, and for the vicarious satisfaction of earning foreign exchange through export.

The students are fast becoming the obsession of the U.P. Government. Frequent closure of universities and colleges by the authorities is the order of the day. The University of Gorakhpur, for instance, has received unholy attention for the last one year and a half, since the time the student community of Deoria and Gorakhpur made common cause with the poor cane-growers who would often find their dues (because of sales at factory gates of cane at rock-bottom prices) held up by defalcating sugar-mill owners. The spill-over of the student movement from Bihar and the chronic under-developed state of the eastern districts are other causes of disquiet. The spread of higher education has helped to politicise the intelligentsia, teachers, non-teaching staff and the students. Gorakhpur University and all educational institutions were closed

peremptorily in October last year, just to prevent the "Bihar Bandh" from succeeding. But despite massive arrests of students and youth cadres, the anti-establishment movement has been spreading all over the State. After these incidents, came the blatant lathi-charge on students at Gonda; one of the students died of injuries, and another had to be treated by a neuro-surgical expert from Lucknow because of savage and sadistic beatings received at the hands of the police. It is not entirely fortuitous that the government is interfering in the educational sphere; the meddling is pre-planned. At Etawah, Banda, Moradabad, Bareilly, Allahabad, Varanasi and Jhansi the usual procedure is followed. First there are some incidents, maybe even a road accident or a fracas with some local groups. If the provocation of the youth is not sufficient, it is made so by the intrusive interference of Intelligence men in plainclothes, so that forces of law and order may find an alibi for entering the stage. This pattern has been followed in the capital. Students of the Jai Narain Degree College, Lucknow, were mercilessly beaten up, pursued and beaten again during fabricated incidents in the middle of December 1974; the purpose of the authorities was to scotch an anti-Indira Gandhi demonstration, which some of their over-busy sniffing dogs had earlier reported would be held during her visit the following day. A student died in mysterious circumstances away from Lucknow, and the local authorities found it easy to salve their ailing conscience.

Efforts to manipulate the elections to the Lucknow University Students' Union have been repeatedly made by the ruling party through their agents since December. The students went on strike early that month in order to move for re-admission of those who had been put under a ban. The non-teaching staff, too, had their demands, including equitable pay scales, service conditions and security. To make matters ever more complicated you have the divisive administrative policy, the forte of the present Vice-Chancellor, whose removal—since he is no educationist but is adorning the chair only because of his functional capacity as a former Home Secretary of the U. P. Government—has

been demanded by students as well as by a majority of the teaching staff. However, rigged-up incidents of "violence" notwithstanding, student leaders with a political inclination opposed to that of the Congress have been elected. The Vice-Chancellor had to withdraw his orders of expulsion on students who were deprived of the opportunity for study. On February 8, he announced the constitution of an advisory committee with representatives of both the students and teachers to consider the

various problems of students and teachers and suggest measures to solve them. What this delightfully vague wording conveys is but known to him and his supporters. The student community is not amused by such antics, as was obvious from the tone and intensity of their protest against the Vice-Chancellor's press conference. Even a large section of the teachers are quite convinced by now of the need to emancipate education from the clutches of the political establishment.

Document

Reunite The Party

A statement issued by the Eastern India Zonal Consolidation of the CPI(ML) states, in part:

We the comrades representing various CPI(ML) organisations of Eastern India met at a conference between February 17 and 22. The delegates represented the Assam-Tripura Zonal Committee (which includes the two State committees of Assam and Tripura) and various groups from West Bengal. After prolonged discussion and exchange of opinion, the conference achieved unity on many important questions and in view of this basic and necessary unity of opinion, the delegates regarded it as incorrect to continue the separate group existence of their organisations. It was decided that these should unite under one party committee and work within one organisation according to the principles of democratic centralism. Accordingly, an organisation, named the "Eastern India Zonal Consolidation", was formed. We believe this step to be not only important and helpful in the Party's work among the masses, but also, within the context of the move towards overall unity, a positive fight against groupism.

We think that this organisation is only one of the organisations of the Party, not only at the all-India level but even at the eastern India level. For that reason, our committee will continue sincerely to try to unite with the

other organisations of our Party in Eastern India.

After discussing the problem of reuniting the Party at an all-India level, the conference came to the following decision:

The Central Committee of the CPI (ML) was in a divided state for a long time. Our appeal and effort to unify the Party by unifying the members of the Central Committee has failed due to the opposition of a section of the CC members elected at the 8th Congress, who do not want to unify the Party and are obstinately claiming unique genuineness for themselves. Therefore the Central Committee of the CPI(ML), has ceased to exist. There is today no central leadership which is attempting to reunify the whole Party. Therefore it has become the duty of all comrades and organisations within the Party to shoulder the whole responsibility and initiative of re-unifying the Party, by building, as a preparation for the Ninth Congress the "Congress Organising Committee" and then electing the Central Committee at the Ninth Congress and unifying the party under it.

We consider this to be the only process of unifying the Party. But we want at the same time to make it clear that we shall accept any other process which will enable us to re-unify the party on the basis of a correct line, more swiftly. We are convinced that the opportunism, sectarianism and

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the politics of disunity of a section of CC members are the causes of the splits in the CC and an obstacle to re-unifying the Party. Accordingly, an alternative process is inevitable today. If the CC members can prove that we are mistaken in our analysis of them, or that they have changed themselves and are 'in fact' unifying the whole Party, then we will not be averse to accepting that unity.

We must build two types of organisation in the process of re-unifying the Party. With those, with whom we are not only at one on the question of how to unify the whole Party, but also share a deep unity on important questions of ideology and politics, we will consolidate ourselves under one committee run on democratic centralist principles. With those, with whom our unity is not at this level, but with whom we are basically in agreement on the issue of re-unifying the Party, we will unite at the "Congress Organising Committee" level. This organisation will be principally or wholly of a democratic character.

On this question our Committee will exert all possible efforts.

It will not be possible to unify the Party as a whole unless it is united centrally. But within this process it is best to unify as many groups as are willing to come under a single Party Committee System. This will greatly help to carry forward the Party's work among the masses, and at the same time it will advance the work of creating the foundation and the atmosphere for overall unity and specially become a positive fight against groupism.

It should be mentioned in this connection that certain comrades want to make the question of evaluation of Comrade Charu Mazumdar the precondition for unity. We consider the question of evaluating Comrade Charu

Mazumdar an undoubtedly political question, but we think that settlement of this issue can never be a precondition for unity. The real questions are the Party's political-organisational line and the stand on the Party's unity. Incidentally, it is necessary to state that all ideas of a "pure unity" are entirely wrong and unrealistic. Given a basic unity, all outstanding questions can be solved within the framework of unity and indeed that is precisely what will have to be done.

To the non-Party revolutionary groups, our appeal is that they should consider the work of re-unifying the CPI (ML) as their own work. This is the most urgent work in the task of unifying all Marxist-Leninists under the banner of a single party. Like our stand on other mistakes of the CPI (ML), we recognise the mistakes in our attitude and the deficiency in our sense of responsibility towards these groups. We sincerely desire unity with them and will continue all efforts to that end. But it is clear that the denial of the positive achievements of the Party and the 8th Congress, the abandonment of the task of re-unifying the Party and the demand for liquidating the Party cannot be the basis of unity.

Our committee will submit to the "Congress Organising Committee" the draft political organisational report adopted at the conference for consideration as a draft for the Ninth Congress. Later we will submit a draft programme and a draft constitution. Our committee feels that the present draft reflects our basic evaluation of the Party's old line and our thinking on what ought to be the present line and as such accepts it as the foundation of our work up to the 9th Congress. Of course the possibility of necessary changes and additions always remains. Accordingly the Committee submits the draft to all comrades for their opinion.

The Committee has resolved to publish a journal named "Communist Review" in order to publicise our opinion on the problems of unity and other necessary questions. The Committee will try to send it to all comrades.

For Frontier contact

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Andhra Pradesh.

MARCH 15, 1975

Voices In Bronze

I. K. SHUKLA

You are not a country, Africa,
You are a concept...
Fashioned in our minds, each to
each,
To hide our separate fears,
To dream our separate dreams.

—Abioseh Nicol.

AFRICA is astir with freedom and fulfilment. It is a sad commentary on our ways that this sister continent of immense dimensions, next door to us, should have remained unknown, most regrettably, in the domains of culture and literature, to a vast majority of our people. The many voices that make up the African scene must be understood because of the increasingly important role that Africa is now playing in world affairs. A most useful introduction to the mind of the modern African can be found in the literature which has been greatly stimulated by the surge of national independence sweeping over the continent. This column will from time to time bring in view some nuggets and some diamonds from the massively rich African writing which first prompted another caption for his feature: The Vault of Ebony. As for Bronze, both a colour and a sound, I am indebted for the idea to Camara Laye, whom I have slightly adapted.

It would be quite apt to start with Camara himself, a native of Guinea, an engineer by training, who blossomed into a literary artist of some reckoning. His autobiographical books, *The African Child* and *A Dream of Africa*, shot him onto the pedestal of first-rate writers. The former, written in French, 1954, is now in its twentieth impression, and the latter in fifth. The two encompass his experiences in his own Malinke tribe and his twelve-year-long European sojourn. The first relates to his infancy and adolescence in an atmosphere of ritual magic, superstitions, and ceremonial observances, all helping his emergence into manhood and independence. The second touches on an Africa await-

ing freedom. Camara is visited by a dream of terrific violence and unrest to come. In his dignified prose a continent in turmoil surfaces in minatory majesty. "The affection, honesty and intimacy that touch an African people into living warmth", the theme of *The African Child*, made BBC exclaim about Laye: "The first writer of genius to come out of Africa."* *A Dream of Africa*, "a proud, poetic, visionary story", relates touchingly "what it feels like to be an inexperienced young African newly arrived in Paris, the big, cold city". In Laye's hands the "language becomes as malleable as clay in the hands of a gifted sculptor, and the finished product is a work of literary perfection."

The dedication to the first book, "To My Mother", bears quotation: "Woman of the fields, woman of the rivers, woman of the great river-banks, O you my mother. Woman of great simplicity, woman of great resignation, O my mother I am thinking of you..." It is an epic invocation worthy of an African having a whole continent for his home.

The society delineated by Laye is a formal, mystery-permeated one, a coherent community, free from vulgarity. The sense of community in such a society is inherent. "Tradition and long usage have created politeness, correctness, mutual respect, and simple dignity, but the ceremoniousness of life is not rigid or a matter of empty or elaborate forms". Camara combines French lucidity with African warmth, a very choosy memory with an impeccable taste. The portraits of his parents at the time of his departure for Argentina will most touch the readers. His etchings of emotions and events, deceptively simple, are of a rare order. Who can forget Fanta, Marie, Françoise—the three girls so subtly interwoven in the pattern of his life's narrative?

*The books under review are all from Fontana/Collins, London.

Camara is lucky to have had a loving and able translator in James Kirkup, the English poet. The guardian snake of the family and the rogue horse tamed by his mother's pleadings remain the most unforgettable episodes characterising a whole way of life.

Aunts called "little mothers", an aircraft designated "a great metal bird", a moonlit night called "a field of stars", are just a few random examples of the vividness of life and language filling the pages of these two books.

Gabriel Okara, a Nigerian poet and novelist, is best known for his slim book *The Voice*, "one of the most memorable novels to have come out of Nigeria". For its linguistic sleight alone it is worth reading. He produces the rhythms and idioms of his native tongue Ijwa very successfully. As for its theme, it can well be given an alternate title: *The Wages of Dissent*. Some of the idioms are pleasantly enough similar to those in our languages (Why does he want me again? What he has done to me has not filled his belly?). Okolo, the hero, is tried by the Chief Izongo for having questioned his life of luxury and, to Okolo, immorality (privileges, parasitism. Okolo dies. But Tuere, the so-called witch, has joined him in death. Ukule, the cripple, remains to tell "the story", a role not unlike that of Horatio.

"Men of Dance"

Voices of Africa and More Voices of Africa, edited by Barbara Nolen Strong are very judiciously compiled anthologies representative of the African psyche as revealed in its lore and writing. There is a sizable body of written literature in African languages—Yoruba, Zulu, Hausa, Swahili—to name but a few. Besides, the writers are bilingual in many cases and French, English, Portuguese come handy to them as English came to Konrad or Kafka who were not original English-speaking writers. The African experience distilled in its literature has a multiple flavour of richness and exoticism. It attracts and educates, and in a more significant way than the books of history or anthropology can do. The anthologies have four sub-divisions: The World of Spirits, The Village Voices, The African Person-

ality, and People of the City, two in each. As Nicol says in his introduction: "The African personality is many-sided, and this anthology shows the response of the African to the challenge of independence, to that of grappling successfully with a new world, and to that of fighting the prejudices of race, sex, and colour." There are Muslims, Christians, and pagans among them, there are urban slums and rural routines. There are demons, witches, the world of mystery and magic, supernatural and weird. But they all are "the men of dance, whose feet draw new strength pounding the hardened earth."

The two Hausa tales are parables on human folly, one ending happily but the other tragically. The language of the largest ethnic group in north Nigeria, Hausa is the second largest on the continent. In fact it is the lingua franca of Nigeria and other neighbouring countries. It is used by nearly twenty million people—traders, farmers, and radio stations. "How A Devil Danced to Death" is a little tale of the wisdom of twins who conquered the devil. It is a Liberian legend. A Kuba tribe song says: "When I die, Bury me under the great shade trees in the market, I want to hear the drums beating, I want to hear the dancers' feet." "The Old Man of Usumbra and His Misery" by Taban Lo Liyong, a Ugandan, is a treat both content-wise and style-wise. With a keen sense of humour and tragedy he takes to story-telling in the manner of the Luo and Masai tribes. Grace Ogot, an extremely sensitive woman writer, is a Kenyan. Her "Tekayo" is the grandfather who had been strangling his own grandchildren. He was given condign punishment when the discovery was made. But where did he pick up the taste for the liver of the kids? From an eagle whom he had forced to drop from its beak the lump it was carrying aloft on an accursed day. "The Geography Lesson" by Mongo Beti, born in the French Cameroons, is a humorous piece which puts the narrator in place who is at a loss to answer the innumerable questions of his fellow villagers testing his knowledge. "The Winner" by Barbara Kimenye, a Ugandan journalist, is a hilarious account of Pius Ndwula winning a lottery,

but losing his freedom at 60 to Sarah who appeared from nowhere to take charge of his house. They end by marrying. "The Epic of Liyongo" by Muhammed Kijuma, a Swahili poet, is something like Arthurian romance—a complex of history and legend. The theme is a family feud, a struggle between Liyongo and his cousin for the Sultanate of Shaka in the 13th century. Swahili, the lingua franca of East Africa, is rich in proverbs, homilies, serenades, and legends. The first anthology concludes aptly with a poem of Roland Tombekai Dempster: "God made me me, He made you you, Let me be me, For God's sake". This me is the African entity.

"The Parable of the Eagle" by James E. K. Aggrey opens the second one. Eagles will remain eagles howsoever long fed on chickenfeed. Of Ghana, Aggrey was among the educators who dispelled the sense of black inferiority from the minds of his students and associates. D. T. Niane recounts with skill the heroic adventures of Sundiata, the hero-king of old Mali, 13th century. Griots (minstrels) of West Africa have carried the oral tradition of Sundiata from generation to generation. Nobody can read Jomo Kenyatta's classic fable, "The Man Who Shared His Hut", about the occupation of Africa by whites without being moved. The way new fables are added to the old store is richly shown here. The hoax that the so-called Enquiry Commissions are could not have been better exposed by his Kikuyu genius. "Call to the People" by Peter Abrahams, born in Johannesburg, is taken from his stirring novel "A Wreath of Udomo" in which young educated Africans plotted to free their country from foreign rule. Appearing in 1956 it proved a prophetic work. His characters are real and lifesize. In "A Day Off", Anthony M. Hukororo, from Tanzania, narrates sensitively Zale's adventure prompted by an American magazine, only more lovingly to be united with her husband, Abioseh Nicol, of Sierra Leone, in the hilarious story, "The Truly Married Woman", shows the subtle difference between a lawfully wedded wife and a mistress. On having been legally wedded (and what elegant

formalities) Ayo slept her soundest sleep ordering husband Ajayi to prepare the morning cup of tea which she had done as a mistress for years! "The Suitcase" by Ezekiel Mphahlele, born in a Pretoria ghetto, shows how human greed can be stupid and frustrating when the stolen suitcase reveals beneath the rags—a dead infant. "Coin Diver" by Cyprian Ekwensi, of Nigeria, is a poignant tale of jealousy and panacea. The canary bird killed by Diamond Joe showed Nasty the hotel songstress how mean he could be. This in turn made her marry Charlie a coin-diver. "The Apprentices" is a tragic tale of young blood shed from misunderstanding which leads to the victory of the strikers. You ask wondering—victory—at whose expense? And, these young were the most neglected! Its author, Sembene Ousmane, is a Senegalese. It relates the Dakar-Niger railway strike of 1947-48. In "The Guest of Chief Nanga", Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian writer of eminence, shows how after the British departed "a handful of us—the smart and the lucky and hardly ever the best—had scrambled for the one shelter our former rulers left, and had taken over it and barricaded themselves in, And from within they sought to persuade the rest through numerous loud-speakers, that the first phase of the struggle had been won and that the next phase—the extension of our houses—was even more important and called for new and original tactics; it required that all argument should cease and the whole people speak with one voice and that any more dissent and argument outside the door of the shelter would subvert and bring down the whole house." How neatly it describes so many governments in Asia and Africa where populism has swept away all else.

Alex La Guma, a South African writer, contributes one of the most moving short stories in the collection, "Butcher-boy". It highlights the inside of a South African prison and the violence and crime filling the four walls of these hell holes. Himself a prisoner for long, he draws on his bitter personal experiences and transmutes them into artifacts of universal appeal and authenticity.

Let Bernard Dadie, of West Africa,

whose poem begins the anthology, conclude with the following:

Dry your tears Africa.
Your children come back to you
Out of the storm and squalls of
fruitless journeys.

We have drunk
From all the springs
of ill fortune
and of glory

Madhya Pradesh

Theatre Festival

N. K. SINGH

STUPID, dull, shallow—are some of the terms that come to mind as one sits out through Surendra Verma's hundred minutes of unrelieved boredom: **Surya Ki Antim Kiran Se Surya Ki Pahl** **Kiran Tak** (Hindi), presented by the National School of Drama Repertory Company, New Delhi at the 1975 National Theatre Festival held at Bhopal.

Though there are patches of directional brilliance here and there, on the whole they fail to counterbalance the defects of the jejune, mediocre and ignorant script.

The plot reminds one of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

Surendra Verma has tried to portray the anguish of an impotent king who has to allow his wife to choose a husband for one night, in order to provide the throne with an heir, according to the traditional 'niyog' rite. After tasting the forbidden fruit, the queen delivers the permissive message that one single human relationship is not enough for the fulfilment of "all the facets of one's personality". She tells the king that she respects him, even loves him, but what she needs is something that neither he nor her sense of morality or dignity can give her.

However, Verma is no Lawrence. His script is the weakest that any troupe could have chosen. The play is supposed to be set in the distant past but the historical context is totally missing; even the director has not been able to

And our senses are now opened
to the splendour of your beauty
to the smell of your forests
to the charm of your waters
to the clearness of your skies
to the caress of your sun
And to the charm of your foliage
pearled by the dew.
They return to clothe you
In their dreams and their hopes.

set straight this folly. The language is such that one feels like having a hearty laugh. The people used to take Sunday-offs in those days too—if we believe the playwright!

Director Ram Gopal Bajaj has been able to present a study-in-contrast and he may be complimented for that. The stage and the scene remain untouched from the austere but suggestively luxurious bed chamber of the king to the supposedly decorative, though perhaps less expensive, bed chamber of the queen and her associate husband. But the directional study-in-contrast of the mental and physical anguish of the king and the ecstasy of the queen creates the illusion of two entirely different bed chambers.

The production is, however, on the whole lopsided. Poor lighting fails to convey anything. The music is totally out of context. And hackneyed too. The 'khayals' not only do not suit the mood of the play, they also do not fit into the historical context. However, the costumes are fine. The mauve and green costumes of the chambermaid who plays the role of a satisfied woman, is a fitting background to the red and gold costume of the unsatisfied queen.

Bijay Mohanty as the king is a little uncertain in the beginning but starts growing soon after. Uttara Baorkar in the role of the queen is totally unconvincing; she can portray neither an unsatisfied woman nor a fulfilled one.

If this is the standard of a National

School of Drama production, it is high time it closed down. It is a sheer waste of taxpayer's money to run the school and churn out mediocre plays like this one.

Trishanku

In *Trishanku* (Hindi) presented by Kala Mandir, Gwalior, in the same Festival, director-playwright B. M. Shah has portrayed the predicament of an average educated Indian youth who faces the problem of a neither-here-nor-there existence like the mythical king Trishanku. Hanging between the university and the (un)employed exchange and faced with an unjust establishment, a self-concentrated middle class, a lumpen lower class and a confused intelligentsia, he is fighting for his very existence.

The two-hour-long enthralling drama culminates in the useless degree of the youth being torn by the intellectual. Some message!

But the message is not explicit—perhaps because Mr Shah himself is confused. Like the intellectual in his play he knows that there is "something wrong somewhere" but like the educated youth he does not know how to bring about a remedy.

The production is superb. The rhythmic lines provide the sound of music which is a delight. The colourful costume—especially in the beginning the appearance of Ragla and Rangli in the folk style—produces a charming effect. Blockings and compositions are sizzling. Deft direction, brilliant production and satisfactory acting.

However the style of involving the audience through hurling of abuses and throwing of stones, rotten tomatoes and shoes on the stage seems superfluous on a second look. The shock treatment loses its charm once you know what is in store.

Though the entire cast did justice to their roles, Ramesh Upadhyaya (theatre-walla) deserves special mention.

Lighting was satisfactory. But there was no sense in using a mike in this highly musical delight.

Langdi Taang

In this drama, based on the noted Hindi satirist Harishankar Parsai's novel

of the same name, every line tickles. But soon one begins to realise that it bites too—because you are a part of the game. The fantasy depicts you.

An exam-torn prince—he may be the son of a chief minister as well—desires to end his life. Despite the protests of his father, who would like him to get married and bring a fat dowry, he goes to a 'government-owned suicide spot'. There, he meets a princess who has also come with the same purpose—having been eluded by her sixth love. Both fall in love at first sight. The prince's father is only too happy to let them get married.

As the story develops we enter, with Parsai, a world of power-hungry politicians, corrupt leaders and block-headed bureaucrats. And one is subtly made to realise that it is not a story of the feudal past but of the so-called democratic India—every character being symbolic. We are shown the rot that is the Indian socio-political system today. Society is moving on 'langdi taang' (limping feet). The contemporary value of the fantasy is more than underlined by the imaginative use of dress of daily wear for the cast.

Director Bhau Khirwadkar has been successful in fully utilising the local talent available in Bhopal. The stage was so simple—yet impressive—that it suited fully the requirements of a street-corner play. Rangayana sought to go out on the streets—among the masses—with this play.



Academy of Fine Arts
14th to 20th March

The Third Triennale— New Delhi—II

SANDIP SARKAR

ONE comes away with mixed feelings about the works of the Dutch sculptor, D. Van de Kop, which consisted of photographs of his sculpture and drawings. His drawings, which are shorthand for a major project, attract for their simplicity. His work seemed to be architecture without function primarily done for enlivening landscape. There is logic in his inspired madness but in the end it is sterile and cold. Among the four Finnish artists P. Lumikangas drew attention for his graphics which uses houses, rooms, columns to talk of death and decay. A strange morbidity overwhelms the viewer.

There is nothing new or innovative in the Eastern European countries, not excluding Russia. One feels that the artists are concerned about their tradition but are confused because of the world trends. An artist from the GDR or Czechoslovakia or Poland shows an awareness of what is happening abroad. In an artist like Jerzy Stajuda one can feel this. His Polish compatriot, W. Winiecki can, through his very competent handling of lithographs, show us the rich tradition of graphic arts in the East European countries. On the other hand, artists like Otto Niemeyer-Holstein of the GDR show that they are imitating badly what the impressionists had done in the last century so well. However, no country of this group is as bad as the USSR. There is nothing provocative whether the artists are from Asian or European Russia. The so-called socialist realism for its faulty execution becomes insipid. Works like D. Kosmin's "Krasnoyarsk Hydropower Construction Project" does not have even the evocative power of a photograph, and V. Stozharov's 'Old Wine Bottle' is the worst kind of still-life. What is surprising is that much of the modern movement in art was a Russian product. Kandinsky or Kasimir Malevich do not seem to inspire any-

body now. Unlike her cinema, theatre and ballet—which are also visual—Russia had nothing significant to offer. There was neither any skill nor imagination, only a kind of sentimental romanticism.

The Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and even Bangladesh had nothing very interesting.

In the Indian section there were too many artists with one or two works each. It would have been better if there were twenty artists with at least four of their works. As a rule an artist who participates in one triennale will not be allowed to do so in the next, unless he proves to be above average. I have spoken at length of Shanti Dave and Gujral and the commercialisation of Indian art earlier. On the whole this art reflects the tastes of the lumpen bourgeoisie and their degenerate lumpen development. I admire G. R. Santosh for his skill in handling oils but there is something very hypocritical in his work—tantra—as this does not have anything to do with his life. This is also true of Biren Dey who like many artists in Delhi want to make their work pretty by using oils as a stain rather than pigment. Each colour stays confined to its demarcated areas and the brushwork is subdued to the extent of not being evident. This superficial pseudo-Indianness is frightening. Artists from the south seem to be too ornamental which even an artist like Paniker cannot avoid. In K. Ramanujam's 'My Dream World I' this ornamental technique looks almost congruous because of the intensity where a railway train becomes a dragon. In an artist like Ishwar Sagara this becomes nauseating because of the unimaginative enlargement of the miniature subject. Never has an artist named something so aptly—'Spiritual Cocktail'.

The best have not surpassed themselves nor have the worst risen to the occasion. A Ramchandran, trained by Kala Bhavan, is an unusual artist with social concern. If Bikash Bhattacharya's paintings recede into a canvas, his come out and the figures look weightless. His drawing based on baroque painting (214×488 cm) called 'the End of the Yadavas' lacks vigour and his use of oils is inadequate. Some people like repeating themselves—Paramjit Singh with

his mountains and stone and J. Swaminathan with his single birds. Tyeb Mehta's quaint sense of composition and jumbled-up colours vaguely remind of Francis Bacon, and Jatin Das shows that he cannot shake Tyeb Mehta off his shoulders. P. Khemraj has hearts as bait which the fish come to eat—irrelevant and silly. Bhupen Khakhar uses the stylisation of bad calendar artwork in two paintings in a dry satirical vein and gets away with it.

Arpita Singh seemed to have left the fantasy world behind. G. M. Sheikh and Jeram are competent stylists even though they have hardly anything to communicate. Bimal Dasgupta's lush colours attract while Viswanathan's squares within squares act as a repellent. One also met certain Calcutta artists. Ganesh Pyne with his sensitive visual poetry, Bijan Chaudhury relating with tragic grandeur the sad fate of the landless peasants migrating to India, Rabin Mandal's pathetic woman with her woes and Bikash Bhattacharya's lonely girl facing the suicide of her beloved. Why Asit Paul got into this august company while Prakash Karmakar was left out is anybody's guess. Jogen Choudhury also attracted attention for his 'Ganesh' whose lewdness was hysterical satire.

On the whole the sculpture section seemed much better. There was Pillo Poochkanwala with her massive construction. Kewal Soni has powerful imagination but I think Balbir Singh Katt stole the show. Done in stone the work had singleminded purpose, only the wood at the base disturbed. Why there was no work of Meera Mukherjee, Sarbari Raychoudhury and Bipin Goswami might be a pertinent question to ask. It is not possible for some touring commissioners to choose. A local committee consisting of people who know would be better.

Two Iraqi sculptors deserve respect—I. Karim and I. Fattah. Karim's sculpture is called 'Heavy Weight' where a taut figure is being pulled down by the weight of two figures who cling on to him mercilessly. The situation is dramatic and the imagery is very personal but there seems to be no communication gap. Fattah's 'Bravery' has a single gigantic figure who has a ruthless face with followers who seem to be like Lilliputs huddled together at his feet. The mes-

sage is very simple, the treatment very direct and the impact tremendous.

(Concluded)

EXHIBITIONS

Z. Moolchala's exhibition at the USIS auditorium at the end of February was rather good. She knows how to use oils effectively. Originally from Bombay, she now lives in Calcutta. She paints torn and scattered parts of the human body with a reasonable sense of composition but lacks the intensity of feeling that her content demands. However, her drawings made up for what her paintings lacked.

Jatin Das exhibited some Calcutta street curs which he had studied meticulously some time or the other. They remind one of the studies Sunil Das made of horses; but dogs are rather tiresome animals.

Last month there was a very successful exhibition of Nikhil Biswas's monochrome paintings and drawings in the Jehangir Gallery, Bombay. Messrs K. Gandhi, Paritosh Sen, M. F. Hussain, Pillo Poochkanwala and others helped in their various capacities to organise the exhibition. Fortunately the selling was brisk as the widowed Mrs Bina Biswas needed the money. It is good to see Nikhil's talent being recognised at last on an all-India scale. He was not just a painter but also a great organiser; along with Rabin Mondal, Prakash Karmakar and Bijon Chaudhury he founded the "Calcutta Painters".

Subha Prasanna has returned from a brief tour of Europe and after a very successful exhibition at Geneva. He also got a small contract to paint a fresco in a restaurant in Aix du Provence. He is billed for an exhibition in Paris in January 1977.

Calcutta Painters had a marvellous exhibition at Delhi at about the same time as the triennale. There were twelve artists—Bipin Goswami was the lone sculptor—and each sold one of his works. Two paintings and one sculpture were sold on the spot. When the group returned to Calcutta they found a telegram waiting for them asking them to send nine paintings back immediately. This has inspired the artists to buy material and work once more.

Letters

Gandhi and A Grain of Truth

A pictorial diary issued in 1969 by the Indian Tourism Development Corporation concludes the opening introduction with a remarkable statement: "India may already be the last adventure that lives on as civilization and riddle". Nothing could be truer. Let me add: India is a lost adventure and more a racket than a riddle. As if to highlight this patent fact half a dozen buildings dedicated to Gandhian propaganda stand cheek by jowl with the historical ruins on Rajghat (Imperial Bank), the most ironical name for Delhi's crematorium ground. How political and social radicalisation of India was hampered by Nehru and Gandhi does not require much scholarly jargon and pontification. Gandhi's duplicity and cynicism surfaced in the Bhagat Singh episode. History is scarred by reincarnations. If Charu Mazumdar was murdered in the police lock-up, for the greater glory of the Congress, through denial of an oxygen cylinder on which he had been living for years, the yesteryear's "Naxal", Bhagat Singh, was hanged for having committed—no murder, again, towards the greater glory of the Karachi Congress, 1931.

It is no coincidence that Irwin's and Gandhi's assessments of Bhagat Singh were similar. Only Irwin articulated it, Gandhi cleverly kept mute. They both were equally scared by the radical alternative being offered by Bhagat Singh. This British connection, and convergence did Gandhi and the Congress, a world of good. And, falsifying the facts, Gandhi told a public meeting that he had got Irwin's assurance of reprieve for Bhagat Singh. These facts must be borne in mind to appreciate the details that follow. Meanwhile enjoy, if you can, the recent revelation by Vinoba that Mao had accepted Gandhi whereas, alas, Congress has not. Sounds funny, foolish, original, another howler, another enigma, another obscene joke?

About the hastily concluded Gandhi-Irwin Pact, the Mahatma had written in *Young India*, his own paper: "I could have made the commutation of death sentence a condition. This could not

be done. The Working Committee had only agreed on this with me that this was not to be a pre-condition of the Pact. Therefore, I could just mention it". That is, in passing. This makes it clear that if Gandhi had so decided he could have insisted on the demand of reprieve for Bhagat Singh and got it acceded to by the Viceroy. But, this was too much to expect from one who had told the Viceroy that if these young men were to be hanged they be better hanged after the Karachi session of the Congress. (Pattabhi Sitaramaiah: **History of The Indian National Congress**, Part I). Of a piece with this conduct of Gandhi was his subsequent refusal to cooperate with the All-India Committee set up in Lahore for raising a memorial for Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev. His letter of June 20, 1931, purporting to express his disapproval of such a move must have endearingly established his bona fides with the Britons. Compromises by the Congress in a series brought concessions from the British for a certain class of natives.

General Mohan Singh of the Indian National Army reasonably averred, with pain: "Gandhi could have saved Bhagat Singh from execution, but he did not do so deliberately. He could have made it a national question—the release of a national hero. The whole nation was ready for the sacrifice... But he could not rise above the false philosophy of his non-violence. For in that case the release of Bhagat Singh would have strengthened the revolutionaries, and Gandhi could not countenance this."

A paper commented: "Congress should be charged with surrender and betrayal."

As for Bhagat Singh he had no illusions about the reformist character and constitutional obsession of the movement led by Gandhi. In a way he understood Gandhi as fully as the latter did him. Compliments, though unspoken, were mutual. The lucidity of the following statement of the young martyr is breathtaking read at this distance of time when quite a few are still befuddled with Gandhian aims and techniques:

"Gandhi-Irwin talks are on. Whatever the outcome of these parleys, we will not be benefitted by them in any way. We three will not be released, we'll be

hanged. Congress policies are feeble, reformist, legalistic. Constitutions and laws have always been useless and meaningless for the revolutionaries. They strengthen the hands of the enemy. The opportunist enemy, to save his skin, enters a compromise with some concessions". Gandhi by his stand in the matter had ranged himself on the side of the enemy. The reaction of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, consequently, burst on the Karachi Congress in the form of angry demonstrations, black flags and slogans like "Down with Gandhism", "Gandhi got Bhagat Singh Hanged".

Not only did Irwin refuse the reprieve, he also extracted from Gandhi the promise that the latter would denounce terrorism in the Karachi Congress. Gandhi had desperately sought postponement of the execution until after the Karachi Congress. According to Irwin, Gandhi had not sought commutation of the death sentence. Gandhi made it clear that his talks had nothing to do with the case of Bhagat Singh. At a public meeting in Delhi on March 7, and in another in Bombay in the third week of the month, Gandhi told his audiences that not only will he see the death sentences annulled but also get them released, provided they helped him by keeping the atmosphere peaceful. He knew he was telling a lie—total and treacherous, lulling and misleading.

What is still more amazing, and consistent, is Bhagat Singh's contention that they having been accused of waging war did not deserve hanging but firing by a squad or blowing with dynamite. And, Gandhi had confided in Irwin the fact that Subhas was his "opponent" and "would stage a showdown with him"!

What is more significant, Bhagat Singh deeply read in Marxism when books were scarce and the idea of the Russian Revolution nebulous. Naujawan Bharat Sabha, his overground organisation, had celebrated an Indo-Soviet Friendship Week in 1928. In 1930 the revolutionaries had celebrated the Russian Revolution's anniversary, and in jail, Lenin Day. Bhagat Singh did not believe in terrorism, nor did he believe in

the "impractical non-violence", whose era, he declared, had ended.

It is time we studied closely the character of the Congress, its regular betrayal of the people, its authoritarian make-up (Pattabhi's defeat is my defeat—Gandhi), its sell-out to the imperialists, and knew it for its claws—the elephantine monster it has been, ravaging the land no less mercilessly than its history.

Leila
Delhi

Three points emerge from Mr Ramadhar's reference to Mr Shukla (February 1). First, Mr Shukla made use of certain excerpts from **The History Makers** in order to drive home certain "doubtful" conclusions about Gandhi and the so-called Gandhian influence (December 28). Agreed. But what, may one ask, prevented Mr Ramadhar from presenting his own appraisal of the book in question? Instead he simply pontificated that the whole thing was "a distortion of facts and values". But where? In which concrete instance? This outburst goes only to show that Mr Ramadhar simply did not bother to read the book lest its pagan conclusions should hurt his religious sensibilities.

Second, like the proverbial wolf he demanded to know why Mr Shukla, long back in Manipur, pleaded for the ouster of the non-Congress Ministry of that State. The implication is that whatever the misdeeds, one must not expose the Indian bourgeoisie operating now under the Congress trade-mark and now under the non-Congress trade-mark; and that Mr Shukla in having demanded the ouster of a non-Congress Ministry—that latest paragon of virtue—was being partial to Mrs Gandhi in that he preferred her rule—Congress misrule—to the grander spectacle of a non-Congress combination in Manipur.

If a non-Congress government chooses to go as fascist as the Congress government is, must one continue to suffer it religiously, its sole recommendation being that it is non-Congress? The design is clear; the old shop is coming down cracking, its goodwill touching a new low and so in its place a new shop in the seductive shades of anti-Con-

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gfeism alone must be launched, the business must be saved.

What happened in Manipur? There Alimuddin added one more contradiction—a purely fake antithesis—between locals and outsiders—to the several other contradictions of the class he was serving. Mr Shukla did no more than call attention to this additional nightmarish contradiction. When he wrote to ask for Central rule, he did so only insofar as it could help fight the specific contradiction. To read, however, in this plea a patent preference for Mrs Gandhi is almost melodramatic—for who does not know that the Alimuddins and Bal Thakares are as much a prop to her leadership as her own Chandrashekhars and Shashibhushans?

And yet asking for Central rule, I think, is the only rational option when the local tingods, non-Congress and Congress alike, were found whipping up such mass frenzy as actually drives out innumerable Shuklas not only from Manipur, but also from livelihood.

Third, Mr Ramadhar goes to the extent of impugning that Mr Shukla's attack on Gandhi was substantially an attack on JP and that Mr Shukla hit upon such denigration in order to serve Mrs Gandhi "in her hour of great difficulty". This is fantastic. If I call attention to the evil deeds and sinister designs of Biju Patnaik, Badal, Bal Thakare—all such as have ganged up now under the JP banner, Mr Ramadhar, I am sure, will seek to gag me on the plea that my criticism might help Mrs Gandhi. Until yesterday—and this is no moot point—Mr Ramadhar himself wrote in a Delhi weekly to certify that JP himself was no Gandhiite. Now that JP has joined the struggle Mr Ramadhar certifies that he unlike Vinoba Bhave is a Gandhiite. Why, there are many others who joined the struggle even earlier—Mahtab, Charan Singh, Piloo Mody. On the other hand Vinoba continues to certify that Mrs Gandhi is a Gandhiite. By the way, which JP is closer to Gandhi—the one who denounced Mao "as a votary of naked and unalloyed physical violence" (Ramadhar, *Gandhi and Mao*, 1970) or the one who recently embraced Mao as "my guru" and confessed that only "a revolutionary would recognise another revolutionary" (Patriot, 27 October 1974).

The recent emergence of JP as that of his mentor, Gandhi, some decades ago has been due to the crass bankruptcy of the undivided CPI and of the two parties issuing from this single source. A proletarian revolutionary will, at this stage, join the movement determined to divest it of its dross—that is Gandhism.

D. Prempati
New Delhi

Village Raid

One thousand policemen and PAP soldiers attacked a small village, Ralla, in Bhatinda district of Punjab in the second week of February. It was a dark night and they went prowling in the village, beating, humiliating and raping. More than 250 were arrested. A young child of five died, as the result of a lathi blow, on the lap of his grandfather. The police seemed to think that if this child grew up he too would be a Naxalite; so kill him.

The crime of the village was that an open mass organisation, Naujawan Bharat Sabha, was holding a meeting there. A CPI MLA of that area instigated the police and a vanload of policemen came to disperse the meeting because an anti-CPI organisation was using a loud-speaker without the permission of the authorities.

The police terror continues.

Nand Singh Mehta
Secretary Punjab Vahikar Union
Mansa

Acupuncture

The last three sentences of Hemanga Biswas's letter (March 1) on acu-centres appear to be a very feeble argument almost bordering on frivolity in defence of Dr Bose. Nobody in his proper senses would suggest that Dr Bose should treat his patients free of charge, thereby depriving him of his livelihood. But shouldn't Dr Bose remember that the country which has taught him acupuncture devotes its entire medical science to the service of the people? The report in *Frontier* only suggested

that had he charged a lesser fee, common people would have been benefited by this treatment.

As it is, it only serves the affluent and the entire purpose of serving the people is lost. Dr Bose should at least emulate partially the example set by Dr Norman Bethune.

R. S. G.
Calcutta

Distortion

Only the other day a leading Bengali leftist daily of Calcutta reported that a student-editor of the Economics Department of Presidency College had been stabbed by the college Chhatra Parishad members during a controversy over students' freedom of expression. This is distortion of facts.

The college Chhatra Parishad members took strong exception to some articles (on the JP-led Bihar movement) published in a recent issue of *Sphulingo*—a wall-magazine brought out by the Political Science students; the CP-people demanded its immediate removal. When the demand went unheeded, the CP-members first abused and then threatened one of the editors of *Sphulingo*. The students of the Economics Department put up a protest note condemning the "unwarranted interference in students' freedom of expression by the college Chhatra Parishad members". This also enraged the CP people, who now turned their wrath against a member of the Editorial Board of *Nexus*—Economics Department's wall-magazine. The entire Economics Department took up the challenge and unitedly fought the CP members who ultimately had to apologise for the whole incident. But there was certainly no act of stabbing.

It is necessary to expose each and every folly the ruling party and its allies commit and this is the task of the Opposition newspapers; but at the same time the fundamental norms of journalism should be maintained.

An Economics Student of
Presidency College
Calcutta

APPEAL FOR FUNDS

The newsprint exporters, it appears, have again substantially raised their prices.

And these prices, together with the service charges demanded by dealers these days, are crippling. Printing costs, postal rates, office rent etc. are all going up.

On the other hand, there is very little advertising,

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We are therefore asking those to donate who think that FRONTIER should continue.

