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TOPPLING IN NAGALAND

TRIBAL rivalry and personal ambitions have been cynically exploited by the Congress to bring down the one-year-old United Democratic Front Ministry in Nagaland. In the last general election in the State, neither the UDF nor the Nagaland Nationalist Organisation, whose leader Mr John Bosco Jasokie is the new Chief Minister, could secure an absolute majority in the 60-member Assembly. The UDF had won 25 seats—three less than the NNO—but it was able to form the Ministry with the support of seven independents, ending thus the NNO's monopoly of power since the creation of the State more than a decade ago. There could be only one reason for New Delhi's great tolerance; the NNO is an extension of the Congress and it carries out faithfully the Congress policy towards Nagaland which is in conflict with Naga aspirations. To many in Nagaland NNO stands for Non Naga Organisation because of its lack of sympathy for the Nagas and its rapport with traders and businessmen from other States who are the NNO's accomplices in a regime of dishonesty and corruption. Maybe for different reasons New Delhi and the NNO accomplices were alarmed at the assumption of power by the UDF. They set to work at once and have now realised their objective.

Like the NNO, the UDF also is pledged to work within the framework of the Indian Constitution which means that it regards Nagaland as a State of the Indian Union and is opposed to the demand of the rebels for an independent, sovereign State. But unlike the NNO, it does not like the task of "pacification" to be entrusted to the security forces. It is pledged to wean the rebels from the path of insurgency and settle the Naga problem through a policy of reconciliation. Instead of helping the UDF Ministry, which had lost no time in starting a dialogue with the rebels, New Delhi decided on a policy of throwing a spanner into the Ministry's works. This only provoked a section of the UDF to insist on a policy of confrontation with the Centre as that was the only language understood by New Delhi. But Chief Minister Vizol of the UDF remained steadfast in the course he had already chosen. His engineered exit shows that New Delhi wants his policy of reconciliation to end the old infructuous policy of suppression to resume. The reported interception of some rebel Nagas who were on their way to China is said to have convinced New Delhi of the futility of Mr Vizol's policy: as if during the long reign of the NNO there had been no such traffic.

Mr Vizol had to go because a reconciliation with the rebels would have

been possible only on the basis of a larger measure of autonomy for Nagaland. This the Centre is not prepared to concede. It realises that the understanding with Sheikh Abdullah has set up a precedent which will come handy to all non-Congress ministries that are chafing at New Delhi's overbearingness on the pretext of ensuring the country's unity, security and what not. Mr Karunanidhi is being spared possibly because Tamil Nadu goes to the polls early next year. There should be no doubt that the Congress will press into service all its resource and devices to defeat the DMK in the coming election. In Naga-

land, the composition of the Assembly made Mr Vizol's ouster easy. That New Delhi was ready to pay any price to get the Ministry of its choice installed in Kohima is evident from the inclusion of seven of the 11 defectors in the new Ministry. Helped by the new Ministry, New Delhi may now go full steam to "resolve" the Naga problem. The experience of nearly two decades does not seem to have taught it that every encounter with the security forces and every act of interference by New Delhi, of which the toppling of the Vizol Ministry is the latest and a grossest instance, make the rebels more resolute.

A New Wrapper

One of the most curious decisions taken by New Delhi in recent weeks is to reimpose a ban on wholesale private trade in wheat. The curious part of it does not lie in the fact that it virtually reverses the decision taken last year when the ban was lifted after a trial of one year. Such inconsistency in vital policy matters has become too much a part of New Delhi's style to deserve special mention. It is only a typical example of the stop-go approach that the government always likes to follow. In the absence of any long-term planning and of economic rationale of much of what it does, such annual somersaults are but natural. What makes the decision rather curious is its timing. If the country goes to the polls early next year, the ruling party ought to keep the powerful farm lobby in good humour.

Was then the Union Food Minister, Mr Jagjivan Ram, taking a calculated risk when he took the decision? Far from it. The wheat trade was given an opportunity to make fabulous profits when the takeover of the trade was scrapped last year. The

traders were supposed to have agreed to hand over 50 per cent of their purchase to the Government at a fixed price for meeting the commitments of the public distribution system, and the balance they were at liberty to sell at any price. The arrangement suited them admirably and how many crores of rupees they have made from all this is anybody's guess. It would be wrong to imagine that the new arrangement will really make much of a difference to them. They will still be able to keep their profit the same by indulging in large-scale cornering and hoarding of stocks, as they indeed did in the year before the last. The Ministers can always make the administration the scapegoat for failing to plug such loopholes and the ordinary consumers can always be made to believe that it is only a handful of obnoxious businessmen who have rigged prices and made the situation so difficult for them. The entire exercise thus has a make-believe look. It safeguards the interest of everybody concerned except the poor consumer's, for whom, so it appears, one arrangement is as good or as bad as another. The basic premise underlying the policies remains the same: that the food traders are too powerful for the capitalist government to tame them and there is no question of antagonising them. So all that remains to be done is only to change the wrapper of the policy from time to time. And this is precisely what is being done now.

The Police in M.P.

The Inspector General of Police in Madhya Pradesh has asked policemen not to commit any crime during the Assembly session since it tarnishes the image of the police force and will have bad repercussions in the House. When some nosy newsmen flash the news there is a wave of anger and amusement in the State. The inevitable question arises: Does the IG's circular mean that the police are free to do anything when the Assembly is not in session? A noted Hindi satirist pleads that the period of Assembly session is too long and this is rather hard on the policemen. The members of the police force in MP are bloodthirsty; it is simply impossible for them to suspend their criminal activities even for a brief period during the Assembly session, taking note of the IG's circular. Last month when the State Assembly met for the budget session a series of violent incidents took place in different parts of MP, at Raipur, Balaghat and Sheopor—all at the instigation of the police. The violence claimed more than half-a-dozen lives—four of them victims of police firing, and one allegedly tortured to death in the lock-up. Reports of police atrocities are still coming in from the district towns. Rape is the forte of the MP police. Though they have also a taste for dacoities, hold-ups and a few other pastimes, they specialise in this art. The budget session of the State Assembly in 1974 was described as a "rape session" after it was rocked by scores of rape cases involving police personnel, a number of them taking place inside the police stations. According to the Government, during 1972-73, the MP policemen were involved in 15 cases of rape, two cases of kidnapping, 23 cases of theft, three cases of dacoity, and 10 cases of corruption. These are known figures, believed to be only a fraction of the total volume and they do not include the crimes of the Central Reserve Police and State Armed Police.

Harijans, Adivasis and other weaker sections are the special target of these criminals in uniform. The special police cell set up to safeguard the interest of Harijans has failed miserably, and inci-

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dents of atrocity continue to mount. A majority of policemen belong to upper castes themselves and inherit contempt for the weaker sections. No wonder the police are either silent spectators or a party to such incidents.

In the recent incident at Raipur, the police acted against unarmed people taking out processions in connection with an anti-levy agitation. At Sheopur, the violence was sparked by an indiscriminate lathi-charge on a demonstrating crowd demanding a separate district. The police opened fire in which four people were killed. As at Sheopur, the police, CRP and SAF ran amuck when Raipur was placed under curfew following violence during a bandh organised to protest against the levy policy of the Government and for declaration of Chhatisgarh as a famine-hit area. Three days of curfew proved a nightmare for the Raipur residents. The police thrashed anyone who came their way and, in some localities, broke into houses and beat up the inmates.

Meanwhile, the compound walls of the State Assembly building were recently raised and now it looks like a jail instead of a Vidhan Sabha. Inside the House, the visitors' gallery has been closed despite opposition members' protest.

চীনের সাংস্কৃতিক বিপ্লবের ৬৫০ :

সম্পাদনা : জয়ন্ত জোয়ারদার

সমাজতান্ত্রিক বিপ্লব ও গঠন কার্যে জনগণের মাফিয়া ও ভাবমানসের পরিবর্তনের জীবন্ত ছবি—স্বপ্নের দশকের চীনের দুটি গল্পের সংগ্রহ।

মাও সে তুং ও নর্মান বেখানের রচনার সংকলন—ডঃ বেখান, আমাদের কমরেড ৫০। আফ্রিকা ও আমেরিকার কালো মানুষের কবিতা—নিগ্রো কবিতা ৫০০। চীনের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টির স্থালিন-মূল্যায়ন ৭৫। বিপ্লবী কবি স্বক্বারাও পানিগ্রাহীর সংগীত সংগ্রহ ১০০।

স্বদেশ ও সাহিত্য ১০০০

শরৎচন্দ্রের সাহিত্য ও রাজনীতি স্বপ্নে প্রবন্ধের একমাত্র সংকলন।

একমাত্র পরিবেশক : বুক মার্ক

১/০ অগ্রণী বুক শ্রাব

এ-১, কলেজ স্ট্রিট মার্কেট, কলকাতা-১২

From An Illusion To A Lie

BY AN OBSERVER

BIHAR has been hitting the headlines. Thanks to the characteristic style of newspaper reporting an euphoria has been created that a total revolution is round the corner. People outside the State are either enthusiastic about or hostile to the movement spearheaded by J. P., according to their own ideas. But their enthusiasm or hostility has always lacked depth and clarity; which only a concrete analysis of the character and aims of the movement in the context of the existing situation can provide. The confusion created by almost all political parties has contributed greatly to the former and strange though it may sound, communist parties of all brands have always lacked clarity in relation to the latter, and they have helped blur the edges of the movement.

Besides, as time passes and as the frequency of the morchas either in support of the movement or in opposition to it diminishes and also as the intensity of the movement decreases, one is gripped by the question: "What after all is it about? J. P. and his supporters are having their heyday for at least ten months but, why isn't there any change? Things are going on in the way they used to".

Before one could think in terms of answering the question, it is obligatory to understand the situation in the world and in the country in general and the situation in Bihar in particular and the special circumstances that prevailed in Bihar in the recent past. Also, the characteristics that J. P. has developed after the birth of Naxalite politics should be understood. Unless all these factors are adequately taken into account the movement in Bihar will continue to be a riddle for the people and it will help only those who organise our miseries.

The situation in the country today presents a picture of a society which has no room for any kind of development unless the production relations are qualitatively changed. Many studies are available which establish that the most important limiting factor in relation to

either industrial or agricultural development is the system itself. The prevailing stagnation, widespread famine conditions even in years of good harvests, under-utilisation of industrial capacity even when the product is urgently needed, mounting unemployment even when there are plenty of natural resources which can be tapped for the benefit of the people, the official policy to debase the people through liquor, lottery and pornography even when there is an objective need to raise their cultural level, all these symptoms suggest the disease the society is suffering from. The disease is semi-feudal, semi-colonial production relations which have long outlived their relevance and become a deadweight on social development.

People do realise it, howsoever unconsciously. Therefore their longing for a qualitative change has been expressing itself through a series of militant mass movements dating back to the First World War. These mass movements and people's uprisings resulting, even in the seizure of towns (Solapur commune), armoury (Chittagong armoury etc.), building up of liberated areas, instruments of people's political power and people's army to defend it (Telengana 1949-1951, Naxalbari and Srikakulam to some extent) mutiny in the armed forces (R.I.N mutiny, the rebellion in the PAC in U.P. etc.), all these events reflect people's desire to bring about a qualitative change in the social system. The fact that this desire could never consolidate and could never take a leap to become a theory without which the change can never be brought about is a different matter. The ruling classes also see to it that this never happens. So they plant their agents amongst the people to "lead" them, their apologists in the ranks of revolutionaries to confuse them and their "theoreticians" to churn out any number of fairy tales in the garb of theories to create a mirage in which the people spend their lifetime in search of water and die of thirst and exhaustion.

Also, J. P. has had a checkered his-

tory to his credit. Once a national hero and a great pillar of Bhoodan, he had time and again claimed to have given up politics to bring about a deeper change in the body politic of the country. But he has never been away from politics so far as any national or international issue is concerned, especially the ones involving people's revolutionary activities, his claim of having given up politics notwithstanding. Long before he accepted the leadership of what is called the movement in Bihar, he had devoted enough energy to counter Naxalite politics. In 1971, he wrote a lengthy article entitled "Genesis of rural violence" and "Face to face with Naxalism", indicating what he thought about the prevailing rural situation in Eastern India. Also, wherever peasant masses rebelled against the crushing deadweight of the social set-up, he visited these areas to pacify the masses. There is strong evidence to suggest that his efforts were used by the landlords and moneylenders to shore up their sinking position. His lamentations over the worsening condition of the masses notwithstanding, he has all along resisted any efforts by the people to change the social set-up by countering and defeating the violence the whole system is based on.

Keeping all these things in mind, let us see what the Bihar situation is like.

Bihar has been reduced to a vihara of corrupt officials, politicians and landlord-moneylender combine. There are any number of examples to elaborate this point but only two from Palamau district alone should suffice. The one is of Sachhidanand Prasad, a social worker at Ranka, and the other is of the late Theodore Kujur (Uraon). The former took up the tribals' cases against eviction by influential people in 1969, when the State was having a non-Congress Government and those who were influential during the Congress regime were somewhat isolated. All his endeavours for almost three years resulted in nothing, he could not get even a hearing from the officials concerned despite dozens of applications that he had been writing to the authorities including the Chief Ministers and the Prime Minister. In the meantime, most of the evicted tribals were intimidated, he himself was beaten up and implicated in a theft and a

rape case, but later on acquitted by the court. The second case, Mr Kujur, was the only person who could read and write in his village, Humia. He used to help people fight their cases against the moneylenders. He was murdered. The circumstances of his murder are not mysterious, the only mystery one can find in the whole case is that the name of the suspect mentioned in the first information report is dropped in the chargesheet submitted by the police (Case no. 189 of 1971).

Hundreds of examples of moneylenders' and landlords' rapaciousness can be cited. This rapacious pack of hunting dogs are not only in Ranka, they are everywhere. That they get all the official patronage and encouragement in their brute oppression of the poor peasants, harijans and tribals is widely known.

This is very vividly highlighted in the Rev. Father Saupin's survey of Doho village in the same area. Bond slavery known as the Saunkia system is widely prevalent there. He writes in *New Republic*, an English weekly published from Ranchi, dated Feb. 17, 1973: "In the Saunkia system as practised here, if a man takes a loan of any amount, he will have to work for the moneylender as and when required till the loan is paid back. He gets a morning breakfast 'lukma', a midday meal and 2 'kachhi' seers (2½ lbs) of paddy, maize or dal. With this 'one seer' he will have to feed his family and pay back the loan. Salt, oil and other things are not considered. To further intimidate these poor people, if they absent themselves from work for any reason, be it sickness, marriage or visiting a relative, they incur a debt of Rs 2 for every day they are absent. They just cannot fight back and so bow under the inevitable and keep working. The only respite they might get is when there is no work with the man they are bonded to, then they can go out to work on contract labour, and even then, very often, a portion of their hard won earnings are taken from them to pay back an ever increasing loan over which they have no check".

He further writes: "Let us take one village Daho (thana no. 122) where almost the entire village is bonded to about fourteen moneylenders of Rakshi

village (thana no. 123).

1. For a loan of Rs 175/- a man has been working for 12 years
2. For a loan of Rs 105/- a man has been working for 16 years
3. For a loan of 3 'pasari' (i.e. 22½ lbs) of jau (barley) a man has been working for 35 years. His son is also working for some four years now.

"Like this, 14 people in Rakshi hold in bondage some 90 people from Rakshi and Daho. Some are set free when there is no work and they have to fend for themselves. Yes, they have to hunt in the jungles for edible roots, leaves and fruits or work in contract labour. And all of them are scheduled castes and tribals whose lands have been lost to those who have exploited their ignorance and natural simplicity. The loss of tribal lands is a sad story that blots our history after independence, for after independence, the poor are being exploited with impunity, with little hope of redress because of the nature of the process of law".—(Emphasis added).

What goes in the name of Saunkia system is not confined to Ranka or Palamau district alone, it is all over Bihar. Only the brutality is less severe in plain areas and in areas where people are organised.

The word "saunkia" comes from "sevakia" which is derived from a Hindi word "sevak". It stands for the one "who serves without expecting any return": Hanumana is the ideal sevak of Lord Rama. And the circumstances which give rise to systems like saunkia, sewakia are identical, under which "kamias" emerge. The entire agricultural activity of the big farmers and the landlords depends on the brute exploitation of these kamias.

Bhowani Sen in *Evolution of Agrarian relation in India* says (page 136): "In the wake of the general advance of money-economy or commercialisation in agriculture, land becomes a full-fledged commodity. But the advanced economic trend was interwoven with the backward mode of exploitation which was more intensified. In plain language, the feudal rent burden continued to rise as land became an article of commerce. Ultimately land was snatched away from

the peasants, but instead of being liberated as a free labourer, he was again tied to the land, in the economic sense under "worst condition". This is truer of Bihar than of many other States in the country.

Ownership and Production

Coupled with all this is the fact that too much land is concentrated in too few hands. Mr Kedar Pandey, an ex-Chief Minister, regretted that 48% of the rural population was landless (The Indian Nation, 23.12.1972). Of the total cultivating households, 72% are uneconomic holdings below two hectares. Further, these holdings are highly fragmented and the number of marginal and sub-marginal farmers is very large.

According to the 1971 Census, Bihar has 6.806 million agricultural labourers, more than in any other State. The total number of cultivators is 7.579 million. Thus the agricultural sector absorbs four-fifths of the total working force. Hence the low productivity of agricultural workers.

Also, during the period 1952-1953 to 1969-1970, the growth rate in agricultural production was only 0.57% as compared to 3.1% for the country. When this "growth" is judged in relation to the growth rate of the population, the decline becomes apparent. Moreover, between 1964-1965 and 1969-1970, agricultural production declined by 1.8% against an increase of 1.4% for the country. (Source: Commerce Annual Number, 1972).

Industrial Stagnation

The Chhotanagpur plateau in south Bihar is full of mineral wealth. The high concentration of minerals found in this region is almost rare in the world. Besides, it has one of the richest forests in the country. Despite the possibility of tremendous development, mineral production has been declining and even where growth is noticeable, it is only marginal. The table below illustrates the point.

Similar is the condition in most other industries. This stagnation and decline has resulted in retrenchment and layoffs and consequently, workers' unrest is increasing. After a very long spell of demoralisation because of reformism in the working class struggles and the offensive of managements and the Government, it is gradually regaining its old militancy and organisational strength.

The declining agricultural production, stagnation in industry coupled with intensification of exploitation and oppression of the poor resulted in radicalisation of the rural masses. In the north Bihar plains, where the land concentration is very high, numerous mass movements and extremist activities started gaining ground. Although the musical chair of Ministries that followed the 1967 general election had dominated State politics, the vested interests in agriculture and hence in the State politics, were not passive. The Government, respondent to their class needs, created more districts in order to check the growing radicalisation of the masses by tightening up the administration.

Previously there were 17 districts and four divisions in the State; now there are 29 and five respectively and more are to be created. If one goes through the list of the new districts, one finds that old Gaya, Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga districts have been divided into three parts and each part has been made a district. Similarly, old Patna, Shahabad, Saran, Champaran, Bhagalpur and Hazaribagh districts are divided into two districts. Barring the area in the old Hazaribagh district, almost all other districts listed above have seen extremist activities in the past. Many hold this factor responsible for the creation of new districts. For example, The Indian Nation wrote in an editorial about the newly created Madhubani district: "It has gained notoriety as a problem sub-division of Darbhanga district, now it becomes a problem district of the state so far as the question of law and order is concerned... the situation started deteriorating just after the '62 general election and by '65 a general looting of property, dacoity and plunder started. Later, it went under ultra-left influence."

"The land problem is very acute. To fight the opposition on the land prob-

OUT-TURN OF SELECTED MINERALS IN BIHAR

Minerals	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970
Coal	3,11.77	3,05.59	3,21.90	3,52.19	3,44.26
Iron-ore	53.70	55.15	57.75	53.51	56.87
Manganese ore	34	10	24	25	22
Mica	13	10	9	9	9
Dolomite	23	15	16	13	5
Stone	11.22	11.66	9.18	12.68	11.29

The same trend is seen in industry also:

Industry	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968
Sugar	2.39	3.92	3.71	2.11	1.47
Iron and steel:					
(a) Pig iron	18.65	19.56	11.71	12.29	11.12
(b) Steel ingots and metal for casting	19.31	19.59	18.36	12.99	12.29
(c) Semi-finished steel	4.61	4.58	4.64	3.50	2.88
(d) Finished steel	12.03	12.93	11.15	7.87	8.52

Note: 1. Production in '000 tonnes
2. Source: Bihar through figures, 1971.

MARCH 22, 1975

lem the Krishak Congress was formed on the lines suggested by Mrs. Indira Gandhi at the last party workers' camp held in Delhi. The organisation would give training at a party workers' camp where 1500 volunteers would get training in lathi, bow and arrow besides other weapons to face violent enemies". (December 5, 1972).

The same is the case for sub-divisions. A certain Swatantra leader was "shocked that Dallaingh Sarai was not made a sub-division since it is on the borders of three districts and was a Naxalite zone. . . hence it deserved to be a sub-division to have a tighter control on the situation". (ibid)

There are reports that the people in some rural areas are up again, demanding redressal of their grievances. True, the Government has consolidated the class position of the combine of landlords, moneylenders, the new rich and politicians but these are the classes the people have begun to fight with renewed vigour. The incidents of Selibeli and Ghorbanki villages establish the point. **The Indian Nation** editorial (July 7, 1973) pointed out, while the Selibeli clash occurred in the small hours of the day resulting in seven deaths, the Ghorbanki incident took place at 11 a.m. when "a mob" of 5,000 carrying CPI banners, bombs, crackers, besides other lethal weapons, attacked the house of a kisan and took away all that he had in cash and kind. The estimated loss was worth about Rs 50,000. His 70 bighas of land was grabbed by the "armed mob" and his ploughs and oxen were also taken away. It further said: "Ghorbanki is only one in hundreds of such cases. In all, about 15,000 cases arising out of agrarian troubles are pending disposal in the district".

What it does not write, for obvious reasons, is that the seven murdered at Selibeli were all adivasi tenants who dared to fight a landlord and also that the incident of Ghorbanki was in retaliation against the former.

People in towns were no less restive. Almost everywhere they were agitating for grain at cheaper price, and declaration of famine. In many places the agitations had gone beyond "accepted" forms and culminated in forced seizure of hoarded grains etc.

In short, long before Gujarat was aflame, Bihar presented a picture of the entire established order breaking down under the weight of the very values of loot and plunder by which it lives. On the one side the exploiting sections were fighting each other to increase their gains from the blood and sweat of the people, and on the other an oppressed but restless people were raising their heads, debating all matters under the sun and learning to resist force by force. The lines were slowly but surely being drawn between the people and their enemies at least in some rural areas. And the day was not very far off when they would begin to know how to keep together all the friends so that the enemy could be isolated and attacked. Alarmed, the oligarchs in Bihar, while fighting each other, sent their s.o.s. to J. P. and he was there with his familiar Eureka to keep the movement within manageable limits and also to subvert it from within. This point becomes clear when one sees the happenings in Gujarat.

Gujarat symbolises a milestone in relation to the people's movement in the post-independence era. For, politics in India has always been stagemanaged; like a puppet show which the people keep watching, sometimes with interest, sometimes with indifference and sometimes with disgust. But they never adequately tried to see beyond the puppets; nor there had been an organisation competent enough to take revolutionary theory to the masses so that they could see beyond the puppets. It has been going on for a pretty long time; barring a few examples the so-called main current of the entire freedom movement led by Gandhi was of this nature. For the first time in Gujarat, people, disgusted with what goes on in the name of a welfare State and democratic opposition parties, although without a revolutionary theory, came out openly in the streets and forced their will on the oligarchy. It is no coincidence that the CPI, Congress (M) and Morarji Desai, all are remarkably identical in their assessment of Gujarat which is a phenomenon shaking them to their bones.

Internationally, the balance of forces struck between the imperialist countries of the West on the one hand and the undeveloped colonies and neo-colon-

ies on the other after the Second World War is being questioned today. This can be seen in the collapse of a series of longstanding conventions, including the international monetary code, and the terms on which the imperialist West has in the past been able to exchange its manufactured goods for essential primary products, most conspicuously oil. This has made the fundamental contradictions of our time worse and aggravated the crisis which the system of imperialism cannot resolve. Also, rampant inflation is threatening the very survival of imperialism. For, the predicament in which the capitalists and the governments find themselves today is different from any situation they had known previously. In an inflation-led crisis, the financial structure gets out of phase with production and disaster strikes first, in the garb of illiquidity—lack of funds—instead in the garb of unsaleable production.

In this situation, U. S. imperialism, the chieftain of the imperialist West, has three main objectives: To retain domination of Western Europe; to prevent the USSR from taking advantage of the weaknesses of the West by moving in to replace the U.S.; to intimidate both the developed and developing countries in an attempt to pass some of its burdens to them.

Every current proposal made by the U.S. on issues like oil prices, recycling of OPEC funds, energy, arms race, détente is aimed at strengthening her-self at the expense of Western Europe, the USSR and Japan.

Western Europe is paralysed by its own timidity and contradictions. It also does not have many choices and these are beginning to narrow. Also, all these countries have different intensities of internal contradictions and therefore the situation becomes very complex.

As the contradiction between the ruling classes of the imperialist West and between different imperialist groupings grows sharper, the balance of power within the imperialist West is bound to shift in an uncertain way. Also, there is evidence to suggest that the USSR is moving very fast and as contradictions sharpen, it will try to make the most out of them. This is what has given rise to hectic diplomatic activities resulting

even in changes in the political set-up in many countries.

Viewed in this perspective, the movement being spearheaded by J. P. is the result of growing contradictions among the Indian ruling classes on the basis of their loyalty to either of the superpowers. But both these sections are essentially the same vis-a-vis the Indian masses. Also, India occupies a unique position in the scheme of imperialism: it had been the most trusted base for British and French colonialism even during the days of their intense rivalry, by providing manpower and trustworthy personnel to man their colonies in Asia and Africa. Even now she provides all sorts of facilities for conducting research in biological warfare and espionage to both the superpowers. Moreover, it provides a basis for the Russian utopia of peaceful transition to socialism.

Therefore both the superpowers and their native agents do not want the contradiction between them to develop to the extent that it becomes apparent to the Indian masses and also they want to control her as well. Hence a gradual building up of a situation resembling the one when Gandhi used to lead the freedom struggle. Gandhi succeeded in saving the foreign and compradorial capital in India from people's wrath; J. P.

is trying to do the same. If there is a tactical difference between the two then it is mainly due to the changed national and international situation.

J.P. himself claims that "all classes" support him. It only means that he does not have any class programme nor does he have any organisational structure to bring about his "total revolution". His recent utterances in Bombay and Poona and particularly his advice to the students (*The Times of India*, January 25, 1975) establish beyond doubt that the movement being spear-headed by him is much more fake than Gandhi's.

When people see this movement they (communists of all sorts included) face the same dilemma they had to face when Gandhi was leading the so-called movement. Their dilemma stems from their class outlook and class aspirations which have never been truly proletarian. As far as the characterisation of Indian society, character of the Government etc. are concerned, the old statements etc. of the old CPI were correct enough as can be seen in the greetings a communist "revolutionary" of yester years, B. T. Ranadive, sent to Mao Tse-tung on October 12, 1949. They have nevertheless thoroughly betrayed the Indian revolution. They followed a utopian line to radicalise Gandhi's movement and joined it after abandoning their initiative. Then the world situation and the Indian situation too was not as favourable for revolution as it is today; and there was some basis for their utopia. Now even that basis does not have any existence any more. People are enduring a hard life; they will surely forge ahead. And the task of a revolutionary is to give people a revolutionary theory and lead them resolutely to victory and let them not succumb to what J.P. says or does, on the basis of revolutionary class struggle.

J. P., Indira and My Village

N. K. SINGH

LATE-RUNNING of train is a common feature on the North Eastern Railway. So no one was least concerned when the Gauhati Express steamed in six hours late at Khagaria. Except the passengers. The reason was something special that day. Someone had removed the fishplates near Barauni and the train was detained there.

The 'miscreants' were J.P. supporters who intended to prevent Congressmen from travelling to Patna for attending the anti-J.P. rally. They wanted to stop the 'Congress Special' but could not afford to be selective—the 'specials' were too heavily guarded—hence they adopted the 'safe course' to detain all the trains. (I mean, they certainly didn't want to kill us. Did they? Or, to be more sophisticated, it might have been the work of agents provocateurs; by killing a full trainload of people they wanted to defame *Sampurna Kranti*.)

Everything was peaceful when the train had left Lucknow. By the time it moved in the eastern region of the province I began to feel something in the air; it was the J.P. wave.

So, after the Indira wave comes the J.P. wave. You cannot dismiss it as a vote-catching device. J.P. aims at something higher. *Sampurna Kranti*, total revolution. You can be sure, it would not be one of those half-baked revolutions, like the one in Russia, or China. At least that is what the elderly gentleman, the real village schoolmaster, was telling me at Ballia, Change the government, purge the system, it is too corrupt; bring a 'clean' administration—and all your sorrows are gone.

This revolution, we are told, will be non-violent. Though, as J.P. said the other day—in a lighter vein, as he clarified later—different people have different connotations about his total revolution: The students and the youth who chant the name of *Loknayak* are not so particular about non-violence. For them a little violence is necessary now

For Frontier contact

People's Book House

Cawasji Patel Street,

Meher House,

Fort, Bombay

Notice

Because of three consecutive holidays it may not be possible to bring out *Frontier* next week. But we will try our best.

Business Manager

MARCH 22, 1975

and then. The end justifies the means. Then, didn't J.P. say that a little force, e.g. slapping the MLAs, was unavoidable? (J.P., we are told again, was misquoted; he didn't mean it. As we know, the Sarvodaya leader is blessed with a sense of humour, so rare in Indian politicians. The Sarvodaya itself survives one feels, because of our sense of humour.)

Whatever J.P.'s revolution may be, it is certainly not non-violent. It is as much violent as our freedom struggle was. A comparison is unavoidable here, for even if J.P. succeeds it would result in the same thing, i.e. transfer of power from one set of elite to another.

There would have been, in fact, greater violence had J.P. not been grateful. [The Government should be grateful to him on this count. J.P.'s role has been that of a diverter of anger. However, it is also to be admitted at the same time that in his absence the aimless agitation would have died soon. He has turned it into a protracted one by providing it with a goal, *Sampurna Kranti*, which means now, for most of the people, dissolution of the Bihar Assembly and fresh elections. Though, J.P. assures us, he does not believe in the corrupt system and would not contest the election himself.

So, that is where the 'revolution' is today; dissolution of the Assembly and fresh elections.

A Village

Khagaria is a pretty big sub-divisional town in north Monghyr. Nothing has changed. The *kuli* seems more than satisfied with one-fourth of what his counterparts at bigger stations would have demanded. The town had gone to sleep at seven, as usual, save the pan and tea shops. The bus was over-

crowded, as we had expected. Fares had gone up, again, without protest from any quarter. Protests would have been futile, of course; rural folks have an accurate sense of judgment.

The bus service belongs to a landlord of our village, who also happens to be the biggest tough of the area. In fact he owes his newly-acquired wealth to the latter quality. Dear readers, you might have read about theories on property in volumes of Marx and Engels. But we, in this village of north Bihar, have seen it; this gentleman never bought any land but his farmlands kept mysteriously expanding every year. So much so, the family of an ex-zamindar was reduced to poverty and this man emerged as the richest man. He is now in the process of turning into a businessman; he started with one bus and now owns a fleet of five.

We are all, naturally, proud of him; he is, after all, from the same caste. And who can dare touch him? The people in the area are a little afraid of our village, consisting of about 500 Rajput families.

Ours is a warrior caste and we have proved it in the not too recent past. Once, in the late sixties, the 'enemies' had injured our village *pehalwan*. [We were a bit proud of him. It didn't matter that he was a bad character, a dacoit, a smuggler (not of the sophisticated variety; he used to bring ganja from Nepal) but we were safe because of him. As soon as he died dacoits began to invade our village as well.

We suspected the 'enemies' of belonging to a nearby village, incidentally a Muslim-dominated one. For reasons of our own safety we could not invade the village, so we adopted the safer course of revenge--and what a revenge it was! Harun Mian (I still remember his name) was a landless labourer of the 'enemy' village. [Some youths caught hold of him outside the village, brought him to our village, beat him black and blue then carried him to the cremation place on the river side, and put him afire at midday. People were more than generous. Someone provided a bundle of wood and another a tin of kerosene for this purpose. The poor fellow tried to struggle at first, jumped from the *chita* and fell into the river

water. But he could not flee. Some kindhearted warrior lifted him with the help of a spear--like a fish-- and put him on the *chita* again. Harun's nephew, a teenager, had come along. He started grumbling, and then weeping. He, too, was burnt alive.

Hundreds of people--including women and kids--watched this scene. Later the police came, the collector came, the politicians came. Most of them stayed and enjoyed the hospitality of the village *mukhia*, who was a party to all this. They discovered that Harun Mian and his nephew were not killed, in most probability they had fled to Pakistan. The traitors!

There was yet another incident. The Government had allotted housing sites to some Harijan families on the outskirts of the village. The Rajputs were, naturally, jealous and angry. They were waiting for a chance. It arrived: One of the Harijans was suspected of having stolen some grain from his master's field. The Rajput youths attacked the colony. Since the men had fled from the bustee, they attacked the womenfolk and kids. Girls were raped, women assaulted and kids beaten. When they went to the police station, 12 km from the village, the sub-inspector did not file their complaints.

This, in short, is my village. A typical village of north Bihar. A typical feudal village; its boundary starts from toddy and liquor shops and ends with half-a-dozen houses of ill-fame. And it is here that the J.P.-movement is taking root.

I arrived in the village on Kali puja day. The mela was in full swing. The boys, as usual, staged two plays, one religious and the other social. They had also got a *nautch* girl to provide fillers between the various scenes. So, as soon as lord Shiva would finish his *tandava* dance, the *nautch* girl would appear on the stage to regale the audience with the latest numbers from *Bobby*. The social drama, also as usual, was a revolutionary one: the hero is a terrorist, the party colleagues misunderstand him because of his relation with the rich heroine (played by a boy). In between there are sermons on capitalism and revolution.

We have a few professional leaders,

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Madras - 17.

in the village. Basically, they are goodhearted men. But they have been changing parties like underwears and no one is sure about their political affiliations now.

One afternoon Naga baba—he used to be in the RSP—roamed about the entire village with a Chamar boy beating the drum: a meeting of “youths” was to be held in the evening at the Kaliasthan (sort of village common-place where Kali’s idol is kept).

When I arrived there in the evening only Naga baba and three other boys were there. We didn’t discuss J.P. They were more curious about a town in Madhya Pradesh, from where our ancestors had migrated. I informed them, to their dismay, that I had not visited the place.

The time of the meeting was four. It was six, but no one had turned up; the boys had gone for their regular football matches and we’ll have to wait for some more time. After some time the football players came and the meeting started—the first ever meeting to be held in connection with the J.P. movement. There were about 50 youths; a few of them students and the rest semi-educated unemployed, who kept playing cards all day long for they were educated up to matriculation or I.A. or B.A. and could not go to work on the fields along with their fathers. Some of them had participated in all our ‘wars’ (including the two referred to earlier) perhaps because they had nothing better to do.

Naga baba started his brief but pointed speech. He remembered the glorious past of the village and urged that as always our boys should be in the vanguard of the movement in the area. “Only we are capable of providing the leadership”, he said.

For Frontier contact

BANI PRAKASH,

Panbazar,

Gauhati-1,

Assam.

MARCH 22, 1975

Then he started to speak in a matter-of-fact tone. He revealed that the Bhumihars—who are supposed to be the arch enemies of Rajputs in the State were opposing the movement and it was the bounden duty of Rajput youths to support it. The meeting concluded and the youths took out a procession shouting ‘Loknayak Jaya-prakash Zindabad’.

Who will support the J.P. movement in our village? The unemployed youths and students will. But who else? The landlord-turned-businessman may—for tactical reasons. He supports a socialist leader of the area. The friendship developed when the latter was an MLA. It is a mutual understanding. The landlord provided him with money and manpower during elections and the MLA reciprocated by extending political patronage, including bus permits etc.

For, the people—the middle-class farmers, small peasants, landless workers etc—they are passive. At the most, some of them may extend silent support, but that is all. They’ve far more important things to do: the fields have to be ploughed, sown, harvested. The sarpanch has to be approached for fertiliser, diesel and sugar permits. Everything comes by permits nowadays. And where is the bloody mahajan! Money has to be borrowed for providing the evening meal to the family.

Nobody discussed J.P. in my village. Down at Patna, they are doing it. The celebrated Hindi poet—Nagarjun—we call him affectionately, baba—is appearing at street-corner meetings with his poems; almost all of them make personal attacks on “Dilli Ki Devi”. But as ‘baba’ himself says, he is sentimental. “I was wrong to attack China in 1962. It was sheer sentimentalism”. Earlier in 1974 ‘baba’ broke away from the CPI. Now in 1974-75 he is with J.P. Sentimentalism?

Book Review

THE COMMUNIST PARTIES OF WEST BENGAL

By John Osgood Field and Marcus F. Franda
Manohar Book Service, Delhi,
Rs. 50.00

THE title of the book is somewhat misleading, for Field and Franda have not dealt with all communist parties of West Bengal. Parties which profess to believe in the theory and practice of communism but do not call themselves communist have been excluded, possibly because any attempt to include them in this study would have landed the authors into a theoretical discussion on the criteria of a communist party which they wanted to avoid. They have confined their research to those parties which describe themselves as communist.

As the book is about the electoral performance of communist parties, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), which has made boycott of elections a corner-stone of its strategy, does not qualify. The exclusion of the Revolutionary Communist Party of India is however difficult to explain away. Though this party started its career as a non-believer in parliamentary democracy and embarked on an insurrectionist programme immediately after independence almost all factions that have sprung from its ashes are participating in elections. Some of them have not discarded their old party labels. The RCPI was a constituent of the 14-party united front that took office in West Bengal in 1969: one of its nominees was a Minister. Office led to another split in the party, but there is still a party called the RCPI in the six-party alliance led by the CPI(M).

Field and Franda have dealt with the CPI and the CPI(M) only. In making this selection, they were perhaps guided by the membership and influence of the parties. The communist parties of West Bengal dealt with in their book are the two biggest communist parties not only of this State but also of India which have taken to the parliamentary path: in the words of the authors, the

radicalism of these two communist parties has been harnessed to the democratic process. This careful selection of premises has led them to the reassuring conclusion that Indian communism has been absorbed into the democratic system and made them marvel at the socialising potential of electoral politics generally and the vitality of the Indian political process in particular. This may be a polite way of saying that the two communist parties dealt with in the book have ceased to be revolutionary.

The book under review is the first of a series of four studies in electoral politics in Indian States, undertaken by the Center for International Studies of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. As the undivided CPI split in 1964, the story of the two communist parties could not begin before the fourth general election in 1967 in which the CPI and the CPI(M) first matched their strengths in this State. This computer-based study analyses the performance of the two parties in all four Assembly elections in the State held in five years between 1967 and 1972. The electoral scores of the undivided CPI in the three Assembly elections before 1967 have been included in the tables to facilitate comparison and to substantiate the main thesis of the authors that despite the schism in the international communist movement, the Sino-Indian border war, and the "internecine warfare" among the three major communist groups (this is not a fact for the CPI was, by and large, uninvolved) the two election-oriented communist parties have succeeded in not only retaining their influence but also adding to it.

The most startling revelation by the computer is that with some few exceptions, primarily in Burdwan district, the CPI(M), CPI and Congress vote totals — as well as the vote totals of other parties — exhibit a remarkable continuity between previous elections and the 1972 contest. Even though the CPI(M) won only 14 out of the 208 seats it contested in 1972, the party secured an average vote of 38.9 per cent in its 94 core constituencies (where it has contested in all four elections since 1967), 36.7 per cent in its 32 consti-

tuencies of substantial concern (where it has contested three times), 33.7 per cent in the 68 constituencies where it was contesting for the second time, and an average of 27.4 per cent of the vote in the 14 constituencies it entered for the first time in 1972. An average vote of 36.1 per cent was polled by the party in the 208 constituencies in which it had set up candidates — "a very high average for Indian political parties, comparable only to the average vote of the Congress and the major state parties". The party lost only 10 of its security deposits and finished second in 185 constituencies. In 1971 which marked the high tide of the CPI(M)'s electoral success, the party had won an average vote of 37 per cent in the constituencies contested by it; in 1972 the percentage had gone down to 36 — a fall of a mere one per cent. All these data from the basis of the authors' conclusion that the CPI(M) charge of total rigging of the 1972 poll was untenable and if there had been any rigging it was of marginal significance.

This is only one of the many conclusions reached by the authors which will be resented by the CPI(M). Another is that having suffered in jail for their several attempts to maintain insurrectionist movements in the subcontinent, the present leadership of Bengal's radical parties has now taken to elections in its attempt to win political power. The authors have quoted unnamed observers to proclaim that electoral politics has increasingly captured the attention of more and more leaders of the State's radical parties to such an extent that these parties are considered little more than participants in electoral contests.

No specific reason for the CPI(M)'s insignificant tally of seats in the 1972 elections has been cited in the book. There is a suggestion, though, that it may be due to an inexplicable feature of West Bengal elections that the number of seats won by a political party does not correspond in any regular manner with the percentage of votes that the party attracts in an election. The combination of variables was in favour of the CPI(M), in 1969 when the Congress with a solid 40.4 per cent of the votes polled could garner only 55 seats while the CPI(M) gained 80 seats with only

19.6 per cent of the total vote. "Similarly, in 1972 the CPI(M) could gain only 14 seats with 27.5 per cent of the total vote, while the Congress secured a whopping 216 seats with 49.1 per cent of the vote".

Despite their rejection of the CPI(M) allegation of total rigging of the 1972 election, the authors have refused to be impressed by the CPI's better electoral performance. They do not see any independent future of the party in West Bengal. The CPI requires electoral allies to gain access to the centres of power; therefore, the authors are inclined to cast the party permanently in the role of a swing group. They are less charitable to the CPI(M), "which is a more potent party than the CPI" and which "unlike the CPI can stand effectively on its own". The authors have noted that when the CPI(M) does so, it can be beaten by a well-consolidated vote against it. Perhaps they want to convey that something of this nature happened in 1972. They have not inquired into how this consolidation was achieved or how many of the 49.1 per cent of the vote polled by the Congress were cast out of fear or how many were cast in bulk by 'mastans' in khadi. This is something which computers fed with official election results cannot find out.

S.G.

SMALL TOWN STORIES

By Hamdi Bey

Barua Agency, Gauhati. Price Rs. 22 (India), \$5 (Foreign)

HAMDI Bey is sure to impress his readers with his ingenuity and assurance. His Small Town panorama reveals a world the reader would not soon forget. Especially for those who have spent their early years in mofussil towns it conjures up the dim vistas of childhood.

Small Town, for one, witnessed a struggle between a decadent feudalism and the first dawning of a capitalist civilisation. The latter won a doubtful and Pyrrhic victory. Small Town ethos is telltale of this dilemma. In the throes of spring-cleaning it smiles quizzically, and is curiously loyal in both its perfidies and fidelities. The discomfiture,

agony, exhilaration, lust and tenderness of Small Town have been finely captured by Mr Bey.

However, "Vishwamitra", the fourth story in the anthology, deserves criticism. Is it a reconstruction of mythology or an allegory concerning the creative writer's calling? Anyway it is neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring. Vishwamitra experiences a kind of epiphany and stakes his all on the creation of a new race of mankind. Confronted with a world apt to queer his pitch he gives up all hope of rectification. He accepts 'being consigned to that scrap heap which is adorned by all other men of knowledge who revolted against gods and the priests'. Just at this moment Rama offers gracefully to translate his ideas into reality. Homer sometimes represented the pagan gods behaving with unedifying levity. But that was hardly anything more than a humanisation of the pantheon. But Vishwamitra of Hindu mythology could not in all seriousness be so much of a heretic.

In the first story Mr Bey has paraded before his readers a motley crowd of Small Town folk. "The Litter" and "Modesty" make delightful reading and deal with the kind of theme Wodehouse often tried to exploit. "Lady Cardamom" depicts bucolic love. The leitmotif of "The Pies In Harvest" is a middle-class *bhadralok* embarrassment with his own libido, symbolised by a wild, mischievous pig. He quails at the idea of having to face it, let alone killing it. He is too irresolute to fight back the insurrection of his lust. Like others of his breed, he resorts to wish-fulfilment. "The Ugly Engineer" comes to build a bridge across a river. An inhabitant of the relatively developed right side of it, he wants the bridge to carry people to the left side, a citadel of antiquated beliefs and superstitions. His assistant a diehard left-sider, does not see eye to eye with him. While the bridge a building trouble brews. The bridge proves a grapple of wrath and takes its toll of the life of the man who built it. His assistant wrings his life out of him with the help of a crowbar. For "Tincowrie Dak-tar", a typical product of the nineteenth century renaissance, scepticism extended to marriage did not constitute religious heresy, but his passion for dissection did.

MARCH 22, 1975

Ritwik : A Retrospect

I. K. S.

BENGALI Club, Kali Bari, New Delhi, held from March 1 to 7 in Sapru House the Ritwik Ghatak Retrospective. Not only has this given a vivid view of his craft but also highlighted his limitations rather too markedly. That he has a deft hand and a certain message to convey are undeniable. It is another matter that the message appears fluffy, and a little fudged in the transmission. However, there is no mistaking the import: things have gone awfully wrong in Bengal, Bengal can realise itself through suffusing itself with the Shakti (Durga, Kali), women and rivers are two levels of tangible manifestation of Shakti, the Mother. The archetypal Mother image, cherished by the race, and incarnated in its women and rivers, will be the still centre and referent of the Bengali soul, the post-partition ruin of Bengal in particular should occasion a serious invocation of and assimilation with the Mother; the tribals are not mere peripheral adjuncts but positive and organic parts of the Bengali ethos which draws its sustenance from the ancient and the ambient and will remain incomplete without it.

No serious objection can be raised to these facts being established as determinants of a racial psyche or a social (nationality) milieu. This has been done impressively. But, if we leave aside the other pictures like *Ajantrik*, *Meghe Dhaka Tara*, *Komal Gandher* and *Subarnarekha*, (Bari Theke Palive would not be admissible in this class, especially of the latter three) and *Titas Ekti Nadir Nam* which in spirit and content is homogeneous with the trio above named, and to which most of the remarks made so far would apply, only *Jukti Takko Aar Gappo* remains for a detailed discussion. Even though in spirit it has much in common with the foursome Ritwik's creations. (MDT, KG, SR and TENN), it has another dimension—that of politics. This would entitle it to a serious discussion.

It is the explicit comments on the

political situation made by Nilakantha Bagchi, the tipsy intellectual and writer, that merit attention for their assertiveness. The tone of finality, and authority, assumed by the drunkard, renders his self-righteous egotism fairly noxious. His neat summing up is: "I am confused; you are wrong". (Needless to add that "you" is the Naxalite band of guerillas up against the criminal State and corrupt society). But what is odd, the viewpoint of "you" has been denied fair airing, let alone amplification or assertion. The wages of dissent, according to the exhortatory example of the drunkard should be dissipation in booze like his, or devotion to Kali-Durga, for India has a history of thousands of years. For, what Marx and Engels formulated was given a shape of sorts by Lenin. Stalin brought bureaucratic socialism. Mao organised the peasantry (deviation from Marx). Then Che Guevara and the New Left. Whom to follow? Who among them is right, or as the present jargon goes, "the viable model"? This is the confusion. The Naxalite path has already been condemned. The problem on the personal level is resolved by resort to booze and on the social level by exhortation to history and invocation of Durga-Kali motif. Mother's benign and fearful aspects will take care of the shame and equalor all around. Nothing could be simpler. Nilkantha says he has no politics, in the sense that he does not formally belong to any party. But if he propagates the line indicated above he will be drafted by the Establishment to perpetuate itself.

For Frontier contact

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Four Exhibitions

SANDIP SARKAR

Even though it has not been made explicit (perhaps intentionally) as to who kills whom, the Sanskrit teacher and Nilakantha die at the hands of insensate assassins—may be police, may be Naxalites. Vaguely it is felt that the jotedar killed, however foolishly, the former; and police bullets the latter. But one guess is as good as another. Why this Naro wa Kunjaro was technique? Why was so much celluloid wasted for Bagchi to deliver himself of the profound observation that Independence in 1947 was sham and it went, that is, the country, from the hands of the imperialists into those of the comprador class of native servitors. Bengalis knew it as well as many of us do. And long ago.

Unfortunately, we have too much of wrong history round our necks as millstone. During these forty years the leftists in India have had a theory for all their aberrations and inertia. But it was left to the grand imagination of Ghatak to bring into a fusion of golden haze the poetry of Rabindranath and the political variant of Devadas. Monologue, melancholy, masochism—these have been the celebrated ingredients of Romanticism. Ritwik on the screen has only attested to this fact. It hurts none, not at least the Czars of New Delhi. Wallowing in self-nity, through sympathy for the writer Bagchi, is at the root of the depression and drift and downright demoralisation that one is overwhelmed with at the end of this picture. One does not wake with a start into questioning, countering, and demolishing the system.

There can be no argument that **Jukti Takko Aar Gappo** achieves its purpose, and to the extent it does it is a signal success. It is a bitter irony and profound pity that it happens in 1975 in the hands of one so powerfully endowed as Ritwik.

For Frontier contact

CURRENT BOOK DEPOT,

The Mall,

Kanpur.

Sochi Sen

An exhibition of paintings by Sochi Sen was on at the Academy of Fine Arts from February 26 to March 4. This was really an exercise in futility. Vain and even perverse, Sen tried to meditate in tantric things through colour, but because of lack of pictorial discipline he could hardly communicate. Visually his colours evoke vague feelings but lack any direction to arouse the viewers. 'Mahakal' or 'Mahakali', 'Kundalini' or 'Para Bindu' are names that might mean something to professors of Indian philosophy, or even the initiated, but can hardly convey anything to one who enjoys the pleasures of visual art. Nirode Mazumdar is successful because he is able to translate into visual terms his intellectual and emotional experience. He knows how to load his religious imagery with contemporary things. Sochi Sen leaves one cold. He sells because people who buy are interested in tantra and not art.

A Nameless Group

Recent paintings by Nirmalva Nag, Arun Ghosh, Amar Dey and Sajal Ray were on view at the Academy of Fine Arts from February 26 to March 3. All these artists are socially conscious in a way, but as most do not have pictorial idioms at their command, they fail most of the time. Nirmalya Nag's paintings mostly had figures, singly or in a group, very muscular and in action, but his paints were dull and his men remind one of studies students used to do ten or fifteen years ago. Arun Ghosh calls his eight paintings 'Prisoners'—he might have called them posters. His imagery speaks of imagination but he does not have a draughtsman's fist. It is evident that he is feverishly excited but inexperienced. Amar Dey is sensitive, at times even incensed and angry but his brush fails him in most cases. Yet both Ghosh and Dey have promise.

Only Sajal Ray stands out with his maturity. His flirtations with Picasso and other post-impressionists are over.

Sedate and calm, he views society and denounces it with fury. In 'Dear Liberty', a mini-masterpiece, one sees a door tied up with a kerchief and a bewildered Dostoevskian face peeping through a little opening. The composition is simple, tight, and the blue and green build up a tense moment. 'Man-made Famine' has a sinister cityscape with a famished ill-clad mother and her hungry brats clinging on to her. 'Liberators' have figures huddled together. The horizontal and vertical lines meet and create zones of interest which spread to the edges of the canvas. The colours are intense and cast a spell of gloom. I do not think the people who organised the triennale know of him, but eventually they will not have the guts to ignore him.

Alliance Francais

The Alliance Francais organised a group show of four of the most promising artists of the younger generation (age group 32-42) at the Academy of Fine Arts, March 1 to 7. It was a change, for the French centre, as a rule, has shown artists who have gone to France on one pretext or other and therefore sometimes are not the best.

Bikash Bhattacharya had four almost black and white monochromes (there were other colours in one) which bordered on the realm of photography currently in vogue the world over. He violently creates an atmosphere that is frightening and has enough imagination to show that his paintings are not exsanguine. The nightmarish world is vivid. A file-stuffed clerks' table has a head of a primate hanging on a string, or a short pole has a disfigured woman's head, a man wears a mask of a monkey or a torso with children's head on the floor. In the last painting he has used spray, tempera and wash to build up tempo, but there is power and naivete in all four works. His way of visualising is strictly European and this is his weakness. His strength is his skill and one vaguely feels that he will leave his pro-

jective shell and fly out one day.

Rabin Mondal has archaic people done by the use of masses of bright colours—Indian red, blue, green—laid on really thick as orchestrated contrast. His composition is central and the faces are strictly frontal as usual. The iconography has pre-literate tribal overtones. He is like one who cannot find a way out from the winding corridors of his own castle. There is pathos in his figures which one seems to know already, knows, them all. Yet strangely enough, even by repetition, he can make his paintings haunt us.

Prakash Karmakar had at one time a ruggedness and a vehemence which he now substitutes with dreamlike bright hues. His composition is compact and his themes are relevant. His imageries are dismembered human bodies done as silhouettes and pulled-out deep roots with unseen blood on them. In one painting he shows a human figure like a painted cave and a Mustang rushing under the twilight sky. His paintings can powerfully evoke various nuances of a pessimistic mood.

Bijon Chaudhury has classic fervour in his exiled horsemen who return to possess the earth. They come back in the season of sunflowers. Sons of men returning to inherit the flowering of the suns of the earth. One rider plays an esraj on horseback. The canvas is large (8 ft x 4 ft) and used horizontally. The horse seems to move in a triangular area in the middle done in blue. The blossoming flowers are subdued and yet joyous. One feels the muffled tone of the happy wind as

these mighty warriors come trotting along. Bijon's "Woman" with the child and a man squatting with his head on his knees has rare discipline in arrangements of figures and space. One feels swiftly the inherent tragedy of the situation. In the third canvas he has a full-size bull's head done realistically with a small bull on the totem pole (brisokastha) inside which a man suffocates. The imagery is a bit overworked but has power.

The exhibition would have been better if a nicer gallery were chosen.

S. Manchanda

Paintings by Suneeta Manchanda were on view at the Academy of Fine Arts, March 5-11. She studied art in Delhi but is presently in Calcutta with her husband who works here. What attracts one to her quaint, even almost banal, themes is her peculiar composition and fresh colours. Her paintings have nude female figures in one unmodulated tone, lying down, standing up, kneeling on all fours, sometimes single but more often in pairs with superimposed colours demarcated by geometric shapes—circles, intersecting lines, triangles, squares are cast like a net over the nudes. These women do not have any features nor do their bodies have any character, except that they are all young and innocent. One notices that the content might be personal and noncommunicative. It is evident that she has led a shielded life and hardly knows about society except superficially. Yet there is something that makes one feel the paintings to be relevant to an extent. The single woman shows the loneliness of woman in a predominantly male society. All of them have a feeling of suppressed sex in their innocence and the duo figures particularly hint about latent lesbian traits. Her unconscious, almost effortless, commentary about Indian womanhood is interesting. One hopes that she will widen her horizon and take painting as not something easily accomplished by being trained in an art school for five years.

Letters

The Merger

The merger of the Communist Party of India (M-L) and the Andhra Pradesh Revolutionary Communist Party was hailed by leading cadres of revolutionary mass organisations in Andhra Pradesh as a 'big step forward' in building up a single, monolithic Marxist-Leninist party in the country. The Andhra Pradesh Government too, seems to have taken a serious note of it. The Government had almost doubled the armed forces in the 'disturbed areas' of Khammam, Warangal and Karimnagar Districts in the Telengana region of the State. It has earmarked Rs 25 lakhs for this year to contain and suppress the armed struggle going on in the agency areas of the three districts and instructed the armed and para-military forces deployed to intensify the combing operations, it is learnt. The Chief Minister, Vengal Rao, was reported to have said that he would wipe out the 'extremists' 'within a few months', as he did in the case of Srikakulam as Home Minister of the State. The Government has also instructed the district authorities to take some ameliorative measures in the tribal areas of the districts to wean away the tribals from extremist influence.

Though those who still owe their allegiance to the theory of "class enemy annihilation" are sore over the merger of the two parties, they have not said anything against it so far. Serious rethinking is apparent among the cadres of the Charu Mazumdar group in the State. Even the leading cadres of the group are refraining from raising the slogan of 'class enemy annihilation' and propagating armed struggle as the "main form" of struggle. The statement made by Mr Satya Murthy, an important leader of the group in the State, and an accused in the Parvathipuram Conspiracy Case, before the court, considering armed struggle as the main form of struggle was attributed to the rethinking among the members of his group.

A correspondent
Andhra Pradesh

CORRECTION

Last week it was the issue of March 15, and not February 15 as wrongly printed under the masthead.

For *Frontier* contact :

BANKURA NEWSPAPER

AGENCY,

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P.O.: & Dist. Bankura.

MARCH 22, 1975

Missing The Bus

That the CPI(M) should be in the throes of an inner conflict, judging by persistent newspaper reports, is not in the least surprising as some of its latest stances do give rise to some suspicion and justifiable resentment. In fact, the leftist movement in general is in disarray and deeply fragmented. A weakness of all the communist parties is that they would rather appeal to the liberal conscience of the nation than make adequate preparations to overthrow the existing order, their rhetoric remains revolutionary but their strategies are still liberal—what they need is a revolutionary plan and a reformist language.

As far as the CPI(M) is concerned it can by no stretch of imagination be called a revolutionary Marxist party any longer. Talking about revolution is simply not good enough—the Russian Mensheviks and German Social Democrats did just that and got nowhere. For a Marxist party to acquire the genuine credentials of a revolutionary party it must be prepared to create the sort of revolutionary organisation that could on the one hand undertake semi-government responsibilities on behalf of the workers and peasants and on the other carry on a relentless struggle against the ruling classes. While the revolution is in progress, this organisation will help to maintain the tempo of development and on its completion become the new government itself. The Soviets that came into existence in 1905 in Russia to cover the urban and rural areas are a case in point. In the 1917 revolution the Soviets that burgeoned in the country under Bolshevik party guidance were the final culmination of the prototype Soviets that grew in 1905. Every effort should have been made by a party like the CPI(M) to develop a militant structure and organisation of its own outside the purview of the legal and constitutional framework of the Establishment so that when necessity arose and the normal legally recognised processes of expressing opposition were denied to it, there was some hope of salvaging its revolutionary organisational cells and letting them take over the fight against the ruling classes. Ever since the Telengana uprising, no Marxist party thou-

ght of building up such an alternative and lately they have been so obsessed with all the glitter of parliamentary democracy and its superficial trappings that it seems as if elections alone had been considered the only way of coming to power. When both the United Front governments collapsed as a result of cleverly devised conspiratorial moves made by the Congress, how could the CPI(M) expect to return to power in 1972 again on the basis of free and fair elections? Should they not have seen through the hollowness of Congress protestations and given up the pretence that the parliamentary path alone can bring about radical changes knowing that they were up against the combined might of the police, CRP and the young Congress stormtroopers? The CPI(M)'s shameless attempt to get on to the Congress (O) bandwagon in the hope that once again elections will bring them back to power shows that the party leadership has no

imagination, integrity or courage to face the harsh realities of political life in West Bengal. That many genuine workers and party activists should feel cheated and frustrated in a seemingly hopeless situation like this is quite natural.

Samir Mukherjee
Calcutta

In Kashmir Too

We record with shame the inhuman treatment of detainees in Swarankot, Poonch, Jammu and Kashmir. Preliminary reports say that those arrested after a local riot underwent inhuman torture.

We have directed Mr Amin Anzum to conduct on-the-spot enquiries, collect medical evidence and certificate and report by March 31, so that we can decide on our further course of action.

Civil Liberties Council,
Srinagar

APPEAL FOR FUNDS

18 *The prices of both imported and indigenous newsprint have been raised substantially. And these prices, together with the service charges demanded by dealers these days, are crippling. Printing costs, postal rates, office rent etc. have all gone up.*

On the other hand, there is very little advertising,

Once again one of the means of survival seems to be donations.

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

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

GROWING INDUSTRIES

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

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

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

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

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

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

DISTRIBUTION

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

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

20 years of significant service

MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT

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

CONSULTANCY SERVICES

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

FINANCIAL POSITION

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

	Rs (in crores)
Total income	4284
Less: Excise duty and Freight outward	289
Net income	844
Total expenses	3451
Leaving Cash surplus	2896
Stock of finished and semi-finished products	558
Total surplus	151
Out of this, Government dues on interest	706
We are left with	289
But had to account for depreciation	437
	663
	(-) 246

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

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

WHERE WE STAND TODAY

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

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



**HINDUSTAN
STEEL**

ON THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR
GREAT CONSTITUTION

let us be vigilant

The Constitution of India represents and defines a way of life; the parliamentary democracy that we have chosen in order to fulfil our goals....in order to secure for ourselves justice—social, economic and political.

This way of life is under attack by those, among our own people, who do not like it. They would not let it prevail, much less succeed. Theirs is another way of life—disruption, destruction, denigration, 'de-stabilization'.

Let us be vigilant. That is the price of freedom and democracy.

PROTECT THE CONSTITUTION