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THE CRUMBLING EDIFICE

FROM the High Command down to the local organisations, the Congress is disintegrating. What has so long been the central political organisation of India's ruling classes is splitting under the stress of its mounting inner contradictions.

The berserk violence against the Naxalites was somewhat understandable; for, after all, they were going to stage a revolution. But we have left that long behind. India's Bangladesh venture accompanied by some minor gimmicks partly succeeded in covering up the bloodstains. Revolutionary violence, gone astray, was successfully smothered by rousing a wild counter-revolutionary violence in a fast-degenerating youth force which, after the massive failure of the Left forces, had lost all sense of direction. The Indira group was apparently sitting on top of it all. Why then, under such conditions of "peace" and near-absolute power, has it been increasingly resorting to fascist violence—of which the latest expression was the breaking up of Mr Narayan's Calcutta meeting? This comes on top of the atrocities on the Gujarat and Bihar people, the occasional cold-blooded shooting down of the supposed extremists (who are at the same time declared to be no longer a menace) and the omni-present police-goonda oppression.

What it meant is that there is a great hollow at the centre of the Indian reactionary world, an economic and political, a moral and cultural hollow that is widening everyday. Ruthless suppression of the people at home and abject surrender to foreign exploiting forces (whose battleground the Indian political field is fast becoming) cannot go on increasing for ever without creating such a hollow. A regime cannot last for ever by depending on lies and fraud, by counting on the "eternal gullibility" of the people sought to be reinforced every day by calculated corrupting influences. That the "rulers of independent India" should have to keep down the revolutionary consciousness of the country's teeming youth by dipping them in the dirtiest cesspool of corruption, by serving them with an incessant supply of mental poison, is a bitter commentary on their own position. It shows the desperation they are in; that they are at the end of their tether. Apart from all else, their inability to endure the slightest opposition even from the Dharias within their own class, their counter-revolutionary hypersensitiveness, shows a pathological rigidity which

is a sure indication of a fatal inner brittleness.

It is true that superior positive forces are required to topple even the most degenerate of regimes and that under the specific conditions bequeathed by the long traditions of Indian history, such forces are taking a long time to appear in any significant concentration. But nature abhors a vacuum and the very real and visibly deepening hollow at the core of the reactionary forces points dialectically to the deepening

and widening of the people's revolutionary potential, even though it may not for some time yet assume a decisive kinetic character. And, after all this manifold experience of deceptions and deviations, the potential revolutionary forces can be only those who can radically transform the social structure and raise it to an altogether higher level, and not those who, however catchy their slogans, seek liberal reforms within the existing order.

Smith's Tactics

As a result of persuasion by some African heads of state several organisations fighting for the liberation of Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) agreed to come under the umbrella of the African National Council headed by the moderate Bishop Muzorewa in December. The Rhodesian Premier, Mr Smith, had talks with some of the released leaders in Lusaka and hopes were raised of an understanding over black majority rule. The hopes, inevitably, were belied. The conditions which Mr Smith outlines from time to time make it clear that the whites will not agree to majority rule under any circumstances as a result of polite negotiations. Mr Smith has tried the tactic of divide and rule. There are differences between the various nationalist organisations which he tried to exploit by arresting the Reverend Ndahaningi Sithole, the president of Zanu, the main guerilla organisation in Rhodesia, on a charge of conspiring to assassinate rival black leaders. The charge, the mode of arrest and the trial procedure were so inept that even the South African Prime Minister Mr Vorster was said to have been annoyed. Although Sithole had agreed to merge Zanu with other less militant groups in preparation for talks with the Smith regime, he has been insisting on immediate majority rule and has never abandoned his support for 'chimurenga' or armed struggle. He has been a radicalising force within the ANC, even persuading Bishop Muzorewa to support guerilla warfare as a necessary means to achieve majority rule.

This is not the first time that Sithole faces a charge of assassination. In 1968 Sithole—then in prison—was convicted of plotting to kill Smith and other Cabinet Ministers and sentenced to an additional six years in jail.

The arrest of Sithole has blocked negotiations with the white regime, though Zanu at first seemed ready to go ahead with the talks. The next incident of importance was the mysterious death of Herbert Chitepo, Zanu chairman, in a mine explosion as he was taking his car out of his garage in Lusaka. The Rhodesians deny any complicity and accuse black groups. The Zambian police have arrested some 50 Africans as they gathered in Chitepo's house to mourn his death. Chitepo was reported to have had contacts with China and was responsible for giving the guerilla sophisticated training.

It is no wonder that Zanu is the main target of white Rhodesians. As the Secretary of Labour, Social Services and Welfare for Zanu said after the first Lusaka meeting: "We have joined in the talks, but we have not put down our guns. He believed that the South African-British-U.S. strategy in Southern Africa is to "disorganise and defuse" the guerilla movements in order to establish a regional detente between black and white-ruled nations which is meant to achieve political stability in the area and create an integrated economic system dominated by South Africa and Western investment. The key to this arrangement is a settlement in Rhode-

sia. After Vorster lost his buffer zones in Mozambique and Angola, he began to think that he could accept an independent Rhodesia and a moderate Government. Anything was better for him than Zanu in power in Rhodesia. But it is rather unfortunate for him that he cannot say who will be in power in Zimbabwe.

Zanu is a cause for anxiety. When it agreed to come under the ANC, it made it clear that a united front should be such that each organisation could maintain its independence, its own identity and can carry out its own programme beyond the common platform—and its programme is armed struggle. There could be no cease-fire unless the principle of immediate majority rule was accepted.

The Saxbe Gabble

A correspondent writes:

Bill Saxbe, the American envoy to India, is a little too loud in sound and too broad in scale for a diplomat. But he is honest enough and for his blustering gaffe he invites endearment rather than irritation. He confided in the *Washington Post* that only "grudging respect" between India and the USA is possible. Translated in the layman's lingo it means that the USA would grudge giving any respect to Indian sentiments or viewpoints, but it would expect India to show respect to the USA if not from conviction then at least from expediency. Fair enough.

Further, in the same expansive vein, he said: "I don't see improving relations between our two governments as my basic role". Again, rendered into the parlance of the man-in-the-street, it stands for: "I care a fig for the so-called strains between the two countries." Not much different from the above. And as simple and straightforward as the above. Among the reasons for difficulties between the two countries, he named "India's romance with the Palestine Liberation Organisation". We should be thankful; for once we have a Saxbe in the diplomatic corps. It is shocking to him indeed that we chose romance not with the Greek generals, Lon

Nol. Thieu, Mafia, Latin America's tin-pot dictators, South Korea, Thailand and others of the same ilk but stumbled against the PLO, a raffish assortment of refugee Arabs who should have been forgotten for want of a homeland. What a blasphemy to woo such people (rabble, to be correct, according to Uncle Sam's lights). His country's interests in India were limited to humanitarian and cultural activities, according to this interview of the year. Now this is more sinister than poor Saxbe would care to admit. How "The Humanitarians"—UN, the Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere (CARE), the Catholic Relief Services, the International Rescue Committee—have worked as agents of the CIA and eroded freedom and dignity of many countries in the Third World too blatantly, always acting in concert with the State Department and the Pentagon, has been well documented by Judy Carnoy and Louise Levison in *The Trojan Horse*, a Ramparts Press publication exposing to sunlight the horrors perpetrated under the various foreign aid schemes of the USA.

As for cultural activities. We thought India was surplus in this commodity and was doing a helluva good job of exporting it to the enjoyment and edification of the Americans. Perhaps Saxbe regards

one-way traffic unfair, and wants to restore the balance by a reciprocity of sorts. But cynics assert that without the American Embassy exerting itself so solicitously in the matter we have enough of it (American 'culture') already and can well afford to spare some of it. If, under the garb of cultural activity "abotage on a massive scale flourishes, as it has done all over the world under the cover of humanitarian activity, who can object to and prevent it? Is it a carte blanche, then, that Saxbe seeks for his designs?

Spurious

There was precious little public anger over the recent revelation that as much as 45 per cent of a food product is adulterated. That it would happen is a measure both of the behaviour of Indians under the system and of their sheer disbelief that the Government would have the nerve to implement the very laws it had passed. Not to be daunted, Mr S. S. Ray, with his socialist distaste for right reaction of the wealthier few, might say that by this way he is only enlarging the scope of the little man to buy things, otherwise out of his reach. There is another conclusion to draw from this statistic. The communists (right and left) have chosen this yardstick by which things must be appraised. The percentage of adulteration was 30 per cent only in 1960-61 when Mr P. C. Sen, present reader of Nava Nirman Samiti, was Chief Minister, which proves he was 15 per cent more progressive than Mr S. S. Ray, and can therefore be talked into a united front. The CPI might dismiss the whole adulteration business as pubescent waywardness, the ailment of non-capitalist growth. One can laugh over this debate but it is the capacity to distinguish the bad from the very bad that determines the tactics of Indian leftists and this is at least as important as the strategy. When a clergyman challenges an officer of the Dragoons to a duel about a woman whom other men know to be a whore, the comic spirit will certainly be in attendance. It is not the comic spirit, however, but mutual cowardice that keeps us in peace. Being all cowards we go on very well,

Shadows Over Saudi Arabia

R. P. MULLICK

KING Faisal has been killed and buried. The assassin, at first thought to be insane, has now been found to be normal and will be tried. What the trial will reveal few people know.

For the last eleven years the Emir had fulfilled the role of building up an elite-based affluent economy in his crucial land, bolstering the image of Islamic Arab nationalism and containing the radical left forces of revolutionary Palestinians, and serving as a provident element of alliance between Arabia's feudalism and the classical imperialism of the West. It is not to be wondered, therefore, that Saudi Arabia should have attracted the USA's "benevolent" attention most.

It is reported that there are about 15,000 CIA men in key positions in Arabia's king pin-State; and about 3,000 military advisers. Out of \$8,262 million worth of arms sales by the USA the world over in 1973-74, Saudi Arabia got \$600 million. (Iran is the first customer, getting \$3,794 million worth, and Israel the second, with \$2,117 million). But figures do not reveal the entire picture. It is the training and the trim of an army which count, especially in sudden upsurges of phoney war that often take place in the fluid political belt of this region. As late as February 10, the U.S. Government clearly indicated its firm intention of giving military training to selectively picked elements of the Saudi Arab army, especially its National Guard. The Pentagon has arranged with a certain "Vinnell Corporation" of California to train completely four Saudi Arab battalions in the use of sophisticated arms and equipment, maintenance and repair work, and, besides, undertaken to teach English as well as the political mores of capitalism to the personnel. This scheme is to last three years and cost

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a tidy sum of \$77 million. The Saudi regime is not ungrateful; it has already made a sumptuous investment of the country's oil money in the USA; together with other oil producing countries, e.g. Iran and Kuwait, a leviathanic sum of \$10,500 million has been invested in the USA; alone, it has granted a loan of \$750 million, repayable over one hundred years to the World Bank, for the ostensible purpose of increasing the latter's credit-giving capability but in reality to further the USA's political leverage and help its economic recovery.

The late Emir was reputed to have had an anti-Israel stance to the point of taking an anti-USA tone in policy. But that is less than a half-truth. He repeatedly opposed using the oil price-hike plus production-control—the techniques of resurgent Arab nationalism (of the poor), and pleaded, successfully, for maintaining a status quo (as far as practicable in the context of the general trend of inflation in the world capitalist economy) in favour of the developed and industrial countries of the West. Recycling of oil-money has been allowed by the OPEC, Saudi Arabia taking a lead in the matter along with Iran. Although it is true that the bounty of OPEC's wealth has been slanted mostly towards those countries which are bound to the oil-rich countries by ties of religion and collateral direction in international policy, viz. Egypt, Syria and Pakistan (the three, together, claimed an approximate 70% share of OPEC disbursements, about \$5,000 million in 1974); it is also true that the investment policy of OPEC has been largely responsive to the requirements of the crisis-ridden West. Recently, Europe's Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, had had a stock-taking of the situation, apropos the imbalance in the distribution of earnings from resources, of oil and raw materials on one hand, and

from goods and services provided by the highly industrialised, on the other, and came to the conclusion that although the OPEC nations had had a disconcertingly high oil income in 1974 and the first few months of 1975, and although this earning held the dire prospect of rising up to some dizzy figure between \$240 billion and \$250 billion by the year 1980, it was possible still to tap out a large portion of this staggeringly alluring wealth, partly by meeting the developing countries' demands for goods and services and also, private equity needs. The time-tested methodology of expansion of monopoly capitalism, by exporting capital to foreign-based branches of multi-national corporations, is likely to be tried again.

The exit of one monarch may not mean much in normal circumstances. But the times are out of joint in the Middle East. The intensity of contention between the USA and the USSR has reached its zenith. The PLO is being groomed by Brezhnev as a future wedge for intruding into Palestine, although keeping open all options for detente with the USA, a settlement of Kissinger-brand step-by-step pattern included. While British banks are to advance an incredible largesse of £1,000 million over the next five years to help Russians buy from Britain (and help augment the employment potential of British industries), the USA, remains opposed to foreclosing the possibilities of reviving the Nixonian approach for direct and massive US-USSR trade and commercial compacts. Confrontation in the context of power politics between the USA and the USSR, although it accommodates commercial deals and economic tete-a-tete, is however reaching a point from where it might get impossible to return to the good old arrangements of cease-fire and de-escalation of late October, 1973. Since the positions of Syria and Egypt on the one hand, and of Israel on the other have hardened, the chances are bright for the Russian side at present. Implicit in the change of helmsman in the Saudi Arab ruling class complex is the Kremlin's hope of smoothing the way to the emergence of an Iraq-type protegee State in this land of dominant feudal reaction.

Working with Young Urban Intellectuals—II

MINT ZIR

Some Causes of failure

(a) **Lack of Direction in the Study Course:** Independent groups do not usually have politically mature cadres to direct the study programme. They have a tendency to avoid seeking help from known communists. Sometimes the fear is genuine—a result of severe repression in the area. But often it is a result of the distorted image the bourgeois press has built of the communist party and ideology. They have been brainwashed into thinking of party and communism to be synonymous with lack of freedom and regimentation. At times the local party units and their functionaries do fit this image. While the intellectuals have this fear, the party units on their part are disinterested in them. This perhaps is related to the feeling that clear class identification of intellectuals is difficult. This gap is seen everywhere. Owing to lack of guidance the intellectuals select diverse topics for study and discussion with only incidental interconnection.

(b) **Topics of Study not Need Based:** The bourgeois world-view is steadily being propagated in colleges and universities and the intellectuals are deeply imbued with it. Radicalisation means replacement of the bourgeois world-view by the socialist world-view. Socialist world-view not only exposes the irrationality of the economic order of the society, it seeks to destroy the entire philosophical, cultural and social outlook of the bourgeoisie which forms the basis of the exploitative system. Since those who have access to colleges and universities generally belong to different sections of the bourgeoisie, the argument of economic irrationality may not arouse a great deal of interest in them, at times, it might even develop fear in them—a fear of losing what they have and what they can hope to gain. Philosophical and cultural aspects may be of greater appeal to them in the beginning. It may be more effective to devote the initial phase of the study to exposing the im-

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morality of the prevailing system. The study should then proceed to examine the relationship between the superstructure and the basic structure. It should be followed by a discussion of socialist reorganisation of society and study of some countries where socialist construction is well underway.

Thus while the class to which the group members belong has deep influence on their thinking it is not very difficult to help the process of 'declassing' through careful and rigorous study. The study material should reflect the need of the members and be broad-based to include philosophic and cultural aspects of revolutionary theory. Reading only the economic part may make one rational to some extent, but cultural and philosophical confusion will eclipse and eventually erode this rational understanding of the economic order and the person will lapse into old patterns sooner or later.

(c) **Method of Conducting Discussion—Non-participative:** The mechanics of discussion are led by one person on a subject of his choice. Others generally listen and occasionally question. In this form the discussion is gradually reduced to a monologue. Participation is lost. Participants follow less and less every day and eventually lose interest.

The topics chosen should reflect the choice of the group and not of an individual. Moreover, the topics should be related to the immediate needs of the group members as far as possible. The abstraction of subjects of study must be gradual and evolve with the group's understanding. Each topic must be discussed thoroughly to enable every member to grasp it before the next topic is taken up. In short, the study must be with the objective of grasping a subject and special attention should be paid to the weaker individuals.

(d) **Struggle—An Essential Component Ignored:** The study groups tend to ignore the struggle component. A correct approach to learning is study-practice-study. As far as possible the area of struggle must be one's own environment at least in the beginning. When the intellectuals go out into some community to work, it leaves their own institutions free from struggle. This is not desirable. As far as possible the struggle should be waged in the main

areas of one's own work. Only after sufficient experience is gained, should cadres move to other areas. The struggle in other areas could be undertaken if a person with experience is available.

(e) **Identification of Problem of Community Not done on Prior Analysis of Contradiction:** Young intellectuals coming to work in communities are outsiders. It takes some time to develop rapport with the people. The problems identified by the intellectuals generally do not have the same priorities in the minds of the community people. Intellectuals tend to want to change the slums so that they ask more like their own neighbourhood—clean and inhabited by educated people with large and permanent source of income. In other words the community people are a tough and helped to ascend the social ladder. This is the approach which has its theoretical base in the ruling class ideology i.e. a deep faith in the existing system ability to remove exploitation. This ignores the contradiction in the theoretical base. The slum may be full of hunger and disease. The dwellers may want medicine. Provision of things to them without making them politically conscious in practice means 'depoliticising' them. Ignoring this results into more expectations on the part of the recipient, a political gap between him and the activists and mounting frustration on both sides. This leads to the process which is the exact opposite of what was desired. This is not to suggest however that a man on the death bed should be given a lesson in politics before medicine is made available to him.

The choice of problems in the slum areas for work should be done as far as possible by prior analysis of contradictions: otherwise the process of solution inevitably become charity or reform oriented in the long run.

(f) **Small Groups—Lack of Resources—Handicap to Struggle:** An independent small group generally has limitation of resources. This sometimes becomes a handicap in undertaking even a moderate struggle. They have no access to voluntary legal help of good calibre and other such help. They should therefore endeavour to strengthen their organisation base as rapidly as possible. The group should develop

capability of identifying its allies in the city or region. This requires analysis of the existing organisations of the left and building contacts with appropriate people and organisations.

(g) **Working style—Excessively Liberal:** A new activity be it study or mass work undertaken by a new organisation requires sincerity and discipline. Attitude and method of work particularly of leading members have influence on others and it can be crucial in the beginning. This requires that the members in general and leading members in particular consciously promote discipline and sincerity of purpose. Manifestations of liberalism must be eradicated at every stage. Once a meeting is planned, all necessary preparation must be completed before it is held. Attention should be paid to all the details like expenditure time and manpower needed, location etc.

(h) **Isolation of the Group—Project Not A Movement:** The isolation of the group was discussed earlier. It must be realised that social change can be brought about through a planned effort only i.e. through a movement. Therefore the groups which are independent must continuously endeavour to establish contacts with other likeminded individuals and organisations with similar objectives. Reluctance to build a movement in practice means acceptance of the system as it exists today or at the best its reform. The problems and possible solutions must be looked at in relation to the society and not in isolation.

(i) **Extra-Group Interferences:** A progressive group which grows in strength becomes a potential threat to the existing authorities—academic and political. The others are quick to notice particularly if the regime has a wide network of intelligence. Forces are then set in motion to break the group. Such interference may take various forms—winning away members, temptation and intimidation. This must be recognised and precaution taken as far as possible.

6. General Guidelines

(a) Revolutionary work in any part of the country with any social group must have as its basis a consistently scientific framework, a clear perspective and an understanding of the social

situation in the immediate surroundings. The above is a general pointer. The group of young intellectuals may not readily see it that way. They must set their own objectives as they see them. Since the most common base of progressive intellectuals is the desire to remove exploitation, each member of the group must list the forms of exploitation known to him through his own experience. The members must try to identify oppressive and exploitative systems in their own environment—village, city, college, family etc. The individual lists should be pooled to prepare a common one for the group.

Then the group should pool their understanding and discuss each major form of oppression or exploitation—its causes, the identity of the oppressed and the oppressor, the possible methods of remedy. While discussing the methods of solution, the group should supplement its understanding by arranging discussion with the people who were identified as the oppressed/exploited.

After doing this, a better understanding is likely to emerge as to what should be studied and what activities undertaken by the group. This process may take one to two months (3 to 4 meetings). In more advanced groups this however may be done more rapidly.

(b) The group must recognise that the essential thing is to develop the desire to remove exploitation and oppression into a scientific understanding of society (past and present) and laws of its transformation into a new one. In short the revolutionary outlook.

It is therefore necessary that the group develops an understanding of the revolutionary perspective and identify the major needs of the movement. While it is desirable it is not always possible to do this before starting an activity. It must be done as early as possible in the course of group work. An appreciation of the perspective and major problems area will help the group in finding appropriate people, groups and organisations to draw support from.

(c) Depending on the common understanding the group should clearly specify its short and long range objectives; and lay down the specific activities to

be undertaken in order to accomplish the goal.

The Study Programme

(d) The study programme must be designed taking into account the need of the participants and their existing outlook. It should not reduce itself to mechanical/forced reading of material too remote from their daily work and concern.

The study programme, if it relates to their surroundings, must also combine struggle with it. They are mutually reinforcing. Absence or too heavy reliance on one at the cost of the other will not develop a thorough understanding.

The main aim of study by the group is to develop among young intellectuals a class feeling for the oppressed. Study alone has limitation as an instrument for bringing this about. The workers, the peasants and the poor in general have a great deal to contribute. Work among them should be with a view to learning from them their problems, way of thinking, etc.

A catalogue of study material should be prepared in advance by common agreement. *Ad hoc* selection should be discouraged unless the topic is of significant importance.

The Community work

(e) If a progressive group with some political maturity wishes to work with off-campus communities it must first of all identify the broad classes and their revolutionary significance. This of course assumes an appreciation on their part of the present stage of revolution in the country as a whole and the necessary tasks in urban areas. This will go a long way in ensuring that the efforts contribute towards the long-range revolutionary goal and have the possibility of eventual integration with the movement.

(f) As far as possible, the work with the people must be initiated with the aim of building a durable organisational base. People should not be used as guinea pigs for experimentation in mass work. Masswork which is half done or half heartedly done breeds scepticism among the people and reduces the credibility of progressive ideol-

ogy. This makes it harder to arouse their interest subsequently.

The Organisation and General

(g) It is invariably a small group of activists (sometimes only an individual) who initiate progressive work. It is obvious however that there must be an organisation to advance the work. Sooner or later this necessity is felt. The group should therefore organise itself in some formal way.

But while doing this it must be kept in view that in the long run, it must lend itself to easy integration with the larger, nationwide body. This implies that the objectives, (long and short range) the work style and even the name of the local organs be carefully worked out.

A new organisation requires resources and has its own demands on the activists and over a period of time develops its own ego. All this if not carefully thought out may become serious handicaps in relating the work to the larger goals. It also may become a barrier between the people and activists of neighbouring areas.

(h) The style of work in the group or organisation is a very important component in developing a revolutionary outlook. The advanced activists must reflect a revolutionary culture and revolutionary outlook on all aspects of life—social and personal. The activists must also continuously develop their own culture and help their co-workers in their development. Practice is the most important feature of a revolutionary person (and his organisation) which distinguishes him (and his organisation) from all others.

(Concluded)

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Book Review

THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF THE SINO-INDIAN FRONTIER

By Kalunakar Gupta,
Minerva Associates (Publications)
Pvt. Ltd. Calcutta. Rs. 30

THE title is somewhat misleading. The author presents really two books—one the hidden history of the Sino-Indian frontier, the other on the Korean war. The first part remains very much the mirror of its author's interests and naturally so; we shall confine ourselves to reviewing the first part alone.

The Sino-Indian border dispute is unquestionably one of the decisive events of our time. And from the vast output of material coming together through the media of modern mass communication, the Indian people have received but one picture, the official picture of how the dispute and the war started. One of the important reasons for people being initially taken in was the massive victory of the Chinese army in 1962. "The facts are clear enough. You cannot have this taking place suddenly without planning and arrangement previously", this was the logic Nehru put forward when a journalist questioned him, "what is your source of information that there was a well-planned aggression against South Korea?" Years later the same Nehru told a correspondent that "a thorough study of documents has rather convinced him that the real motives of this conflict have been in the policy of Dr Syngman Rhee" (Quoted by the author in the book under review). Similarly a thorough study of documents relating to the Sino-Indian dispute will convince the honest enquirer that the real motives of this conflict have been in the policy of the Government of India egged on, on the one hand by the USA and Britain, and by the USSR in particular on the other internationally and by the right reaction locally. While Neville Maxwell's *India's China War* (the latest edition including the postscript) is the most comprehensive

study of the subject, Prof Gupta's selective and carefully chosen documents bring the whole question up to date. In his book Prof Gupta reexamines the historical and constitutional basis of the claims by India in NEFA areas and Aksai Chin and exposes again the shallow and disingenuous proofs now on record. While examining, he discovers that *Aitchison's Treaties*—the authoritative publication of the Foreign and Political Department of the British Government of India, on which the Government of India relied concerning the Simla Conference of 1913-1914 and the McMahon Line, is a spurious version organised by Sir Olaf Caroe, suppressing the original edition. Incidentally, the author makes a study of Caroe's career. Sir Olaf had served as the Foreign Secretary of India under the British Raj during 1939-1945 and was a vehement critic of Nehru's policy of non-alignment reportedly, the author says, it was on his advice that New Delhi absorbed a large number of Tibetan exiles in manning the posts along the whole stretch of the Himalayan frontiers after giving them necessary military training.

This study takes severely to task the self-serving bureaucracy in the Historical Division of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, under Dr S. Gopal, son of the former President, Dr Radhakrishnan. It was on Dr Gopal's advice that the once-hesitant Nehru came to think wrongly that India's claim to the Aksai Chin area was clearly stronger than China's. Like Maxwell, one of the author's prime examples of how misconstrued understanding on Aksai Chin has led to disastrous results, is the escalation after Dr Gopal's so-called research of India's involvement in the dispute with China.

The Indian case presented in the Report of the Officials has been much admired in the West. Sir Olaf Caroe once described it as worthy of an Oxford college and thought that Socrates would not have found fault with it; yet there can be no doubt that it has led astray many people including the noted journalist N. J. Nanporia (*The Sino-Indian Dispute*) most of all Nehru, on a number of crucial points. Distor-

tions of facts including the serious misquotation of the only formal definition of the boundary in the Aksai Chin region which the British ever made to China were first discovered to their embarrassment by the three American authors, Margaret W. Fisher, Leo E. Rosy and Robert A. Huttenback (*Himalayan Battleground*) who have carried out some original research in the archives of India Office. They have, for example discovered that the Chinese boundary marker of 1892 hitherto concealed as "64 miles south of Sukat" is not in the Kuen Lun range at all as stated in the Indian report but on the Karakoram Pass. They have also taken the trouble to look at the original text of the Note (referred to by the Indian side in defence of their claim), which Sir Claude Macdonald handed to the Chinese Foreign Office (the Tsungli Yamen) on 14 March 1899 and found that the Indian official report has grossly misquoted the Note. Had this 1899 alignment been accepted, the authors of *Himalayan Battleground* note, most of the territory currently in dispute between New Delhi and Peking would have been conceded to China. Prof. Gupta breaks no fresh ground here but he admirably sums up all these important points quoting chapter and verse of the relative documents for the benefit of Indian readers who have no easy access to different books published abroad. He has kept his book to a broad political outlook unmistakably critical of the Government but without any party commitment and discreetly general enough in its specific comments to escape suppression.

The author is at his weakest in examining the operation of complex factors and coincidence of events that, according to him, prevented resurgent

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Madras - 17.

Asianism from uniting and making their own contribution. He quotes an interesting letter from Nehru to Sir B. N. Rau about the role of the USA, Britain and the USSR vis-a-vis India and China. The letter had been quoted much earlier in a Frontier article, but goes no further. The roles of the different States in the Sino-Indian disputes have not been thoroughly investigated.

The sympathy felt for India as the weaker power was both natural and honourable. But weakness, as has been well said, does not confer the divine right of doing wrong. And in this conflict between India and China India has been in the wrong from beginning to end. The Kongka pass incident of 21 October, 1959 which generated so much heat, with Khrushchev making a public statement against China thus adding fuel to the fire is now known from the I.B. chief B. N. Mulik's own testimony (My Years With Nehru pp. 243-244) to have been engineered by the Intelligence Branch of the Government of India.

While the Government of India publicly accused China of "unprovoked aggression" at the Kongka pass within the inner conclave of the Government blame for provocation and aggression was squarely laid on the Intelligence Bureau.

In any case, Indians are ready to believe things about their Government they had dismissed as communist propaganda a decade ago.

Probodh Dutta

For Frontier contact

People's Book House

Cowasji Patel Street,

Meher House,

Fort, Bombay

For Frontier contact :

BANKURA NEWSPAPER

AGENCY,

Lokepur,

P.O. & Dist. Bankura.

Young Women For Socialism

FROM A CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD and Secunderabad, the twin cities, recently had to their credit amusing and colourful demonstrations by young women clad in simple and colourful saris, against obscenity.

The women belonging to the Progressive Organisation of Women (popularly known as POW) mostly college girls—some in their sweet sixteens and many in the prime of their life—launched the anti-obscenity campaign between January 20 and 25. Several batches went round and tarred obscene cinema posters and staged demonstrations in front of shops selling pornographic literature and cinema houses showing vulgar films.

Miss Rukimini Menon, the general secretary of the organization, told this correspondent that in their picketing of a cinema house at Secunderabad, the demonstrators did not hesitate to fight with the police until some obscene posters at the theatre were pulled down. According to Miss K. Lalitha, the president of the organisation, the people were very much helpful and co-operative and a few cine-goers walked out of the theatre even after buying tickets. It demonstrated the solidarity the public had extended to their campaign against obscenity.

The Progressive Organisation of Women which was formed a few months ago had to face several difficulties from reactionary sections and the police too. Immediately after forming the organisation they gave a call for a demonstration against the dowry system. About 600 women marched through the main centres of Hyderabad raising slogans against the dowry system. The growth of the Organisation did not phase the Akhila Bharatiya Vidhyarthi Parishad, the student wing of the Jana Sangh, some of whose members went to the extent of manhandling an office-bearer of the organisation. This sparked off a huge protest demonstration of not only POW

but also men students of Osmania University. They went in procession to the university. They went in procession to the against the students responsible for the misdeed. The PDSU (Progressive Democratic Students' Union) stood four square in support of the demand. Later some PDSU members were reportedly beaten by members of a reactionary students organisation. The police ultimately filed a case against some students who were alleged to have manhandled the girl student.

The PDSU concluded its first provincial conference a couple of months back and it proclaimed the attainment of New Democratic Revolution as its goal. It also extended support to the armed struggles led by the tribal and other exploited classes in the State and in other parts of the country.

It is believed that POW is the women's wing of the PDSU, and has the same political goals.

At the end of the anti-obscenity campaign the POW held a public meeting at Narayana Guda. The speakers claimed that their six-day campaign had served to expose the 'shameful extent to which obscenity has pervaded our culture.' They criticised the attitude of the Government which allows advertisements through various mass media portraying women as "sex objects" and commercialising the female body. The organisation stands for the dignity of women and has pledged to fight for equality with men in a socialist society.

The POW has about 500 members at present, in the twin cities alone, and many more will be enrolled in the near future, according to an organiser. It has branches at Tirupathi, Karimnagar, Warangal and a few other towns.

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Albinos In The Ascendant

I. K. SHUKLA

ARYANS are a discredited lot; they may have been fake after all. But albinos in command are a fact of life. You can't escape them, they are all over. You can't oppose them; they are organised and too powerful. India has been under the Hindus, Muslims, and the British. Now it is under the albinos whose imperialism is lording it over in many countries of the Third World.

When Albion left it anointed the albinos to rule the natives. Britain, as was proper for a colonial power, had sedulously groomed the albinos for the day. Being an albino was no more a stigma; it became the badge of distinction, the patent of a pampered guild, the passport to parasitism and the charter to the closed preserve of privileges. Thus it was that they came to the commanding heights. They mouthed the loquacities and inanities learnt from the Britons so efficiently that the Britons felt more than convinced, and later vindicated, about their wisdom in handing over the sub-continent to a set of people who however bizarre to look at, were nevertheless found a fit role which not only rehabilitated them but also the Briton who had, only seemingly, departed, but who had taken good care to reinforce his presence from among his khandas handpicked from among the natives so favoured just for being albinos.

Before we proceed in our exegesis, let COD explain what an albino is: "Human being marked by congenital absence of colouring pigment in skin and hair, which are white, and eyes, which are pink and unable to bear ordinary light; any animal so distinguished"; Britons were farsighted in choosing them as successors, for albinos mostly tended to procreate albinos. Thus the heirloom of British gift remained within the clan. These native dummies of the whites could be only inwardly albinos; externally they remained black and brown, their mighty efforts to undo their colour notwithstanding.

Deceptively enough the albinos so

chosen look exactly like the rest of natives. But to smell them out of the lot requires the kind of genius necessary for smelling and sampling the various varieties of tea. The British were good at that, and as the history of colonialism shows, the French and Portuguese were no less.

Because the advantages of being "unable to bear ordinary light" were too manifest, both to the Briton and the legatee albino, a handicap was rendered into a bonanza for both. The albino would not see in the day. And at night it will be the duty of the night to watch him for the glow-worm that he was; he in the process having been absolved from the function of seeing. Suited fine everybody. Thus the mantle of authority having devolved on the albinos they had to prove worthy of the trust reposed in them and acquit themselves in the best interests of their godfathers. Class conscious as the Briton notoriously is, he imparted these values, along with his flair for making a fast buck, to the subcontinental albinos. A few went to the white countries in order to avoid being dubbed albinos. Some of them created here itself cabals and covens of albino men and women. Still others became hangers-on of the two classes and got admittance to the sun-shunning club as errand boys or scavengers, for a mass of pottage. The difficulty was, even those who once "had been" to the mother country (which was well advertised), did not come back a horse if they had gone a donkey. The miracle lay in their wide acceptance as a horse after their return, even when the fellow albinos, besides others, were unanimous about their having remained unbroke donkeys. Horses or donkeys, when in the "mother country" they did not learn the things whereby the White or Briton is held in esteem the world over, but the things he is hated for, or, in all fairness to him, he plainly lacks. Not only did they—the "have beens", the locals and the toadies—speak their native languages with an English accent, they took the special trouble of being judicious in the matter by speaking English in such esoteric accents as to be intelligible only among the fellow albinos and none else. This helped in two ways. The naive mistook them to

be knowledgeable; those who know better, being fewer in number, did not bruit about their proficiency in ignorance.

As for the country's past, present or future they cared a fig. What they did care about was their own perks, pitchforking their sons and daughters and in-laws into posh positions, having junkets and jaunts abroad, lining their pockets from public funds and charities, buying government property dirt cheap, viewing blue films secretly, swapping wives and girl friends as the "in" thing, upholstering themselves after the circus clowns, sporting manes and whiskers of Jesus-Romeo combination, and thus "going along" with their button-eyed sons and bottom-busting daughters.

You rummage their houses through but you won't find a good book or magazine, there being no place for these superfluities in face of the formidable furniture, dim discotheques, juvenile juke boxes and hip-swinging hubbery tangos. Blank in anything noble or great other about the mother country or India, they glibly prattle about "shlokas" in the Vedas, and similar profundities, and are applauded for it. The toddlers in their homes inflict on you, at the instance of the parents, mumblings and monstrosities which you are persuaded are nursery rhymes, sung for the kudos you dutifully pay. Paying for your pains? Never mind. You may thus get into the fold. Forbear, flatter, follow. The paradise, or a particle of it, may come to be yours, in due course of time—reward for suffering nonsense and practising it in your turn.

The kind of books and magazines the scions of the albinos keep flying in the house for demonstration effect—as their elders do the fridge in the drawing room instead of in the kitchen—would shame a charwoman of England. The albino male and female instead of feeling guilty for possessing contraband articles from abroad brag about it loud and long enough to ensure that none among neighbours, relatives, and acquaintances misses their being the jet set. The vulgarities and vacuities that they talk, the conspicuously ostentatious living they flaunt, and the demonstrative wastefulness they indulge on ceremonial occasions, show them innocent of a bird

called ethics and a bug called social concern. They did not get it from the Whites who are plain stupefied at the spectacle. They did not owe it to the poor in the neighbourhood, who feel further dazed, if not aggrieved, for supposedly it is only at the instigation of some ideologically committed blokes that the slumdweller feel alienated or aggrieved.

While in the rest of the world—the white world of course, for that alone exists for the albinos, congenitally myopic and sun-scared—it is the intelligentsia which protests the iniquities and articulates the popular grievances against the oligopolist, in India not a streak of either—ethics or intellectual integrity or social accountability touches the albino literates busy making dough while the going is good. Become an albino, and hey presto, ministership, army generalship, vice-chancellorship, membership of Public Service Commission, or a delegation abroad, chairmanship of this or that Commission, appearance on the TV as permanent interviewer, projects worth lakhs to prove that women Harijans tribals “have yet a long way to go to benefit fully from the constitutional provisions in favour of them” etc. will clutter your way.

Among them are many sham radicals, rightists, renegades and plain chameleons who change the tune according to the weather. Lacking woefully in aesthetic and intellectual equipment they conjure their own abracadabra to sound impressive: “parameters of democracy”, “alternatives to stagnation and disorder”, “syncretic modalities of transition”, “participatory pacification of the masses”, and such like gibberish. This qualifies them as experts for abroad or as advisers to the government. That is, to cheat the people by ever newer phrase-mongering. The paid stooges are wordsmiths, and know their job well.

They have not heard of Ethiopia where the albinos denied a famine having killed millions. Ethiopians decapitated them when their turn came. Ignorant of Mary Stuart they know only of Marie Antoinette, and are proffering us only her classic advice to eat cake if we have no bread. The natives, we, very much like to act on this, but the national cake is with the albinos and the bread with

their toadies. People have a hard choice between being herbivore and carnivores. Thus while people become animals in any event, the albinos continue to be “dis-

tinguished animals”. The albino is part of the domino theory, quite naturally. For confirmation, see some of the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

A Trip To Kerala

ANIRUDHA GUPTA

THE journey from Calicut to Trivandrum was a memorable one. The winding valleys, with their niches of neatly cultivated land and unending rows of coconut and banana trees and also—as the bus took twisted turns—sudden glimpses of the sea—all this and much more gladdened the heart. In Kerala, no land is left fallow by the indolence of man; on the contrary, human labour seems to have blended itself with nature in order to enrich and not to spoil its bounties.

It is the picturesque cleanliness of Kerala towns and villages which strikes most a casual visitor. Imagine, for instance, villages without malaria-infested and stale pools of water where women and children go to bathe and fall sick; imagine no pile of dirt scattered on the wayside or in a marketplace, and—also—imagine no spitting on the roads. Can such a place be found anywhere on the lap of mother India?

It is unbelievable but true. During the journey, we faced the problem of disposing of the remains of lunch we had taken in the bus. If we had thrown them on the road it would have been marked incivility on our part to a people who love cleanliness. In vain we searched for a familiar mountain of dirt to throw our burden. Finally, we pushed the remains in our bags until we reached a hotel in Trivandrum. “Where do you throw your rubbish?” It was the first thing I asked of the hotel manager!

How come the Malayalee have not imbibed the durable qualities of modern Indian culture e.g., dirt, uncleanness, and rowdy behaviour in the marketplace? Nowhere in any Kerala town did we come across a violent scene which is the afternoon *tamasha* everyone enjoys free of cost in India's capital city.

One observed, in fact, a calculated regularity in the behaviour of the Malayalee. For instance, in no place did we find a queue being broken or rushed by tough-looking hooligans. (Again, a familiar sight in Delhi). A queue to me—who is physically weak—has come to signify the symbol of civilisation. For it indicates one's acceptance of the rights of one's fellow-being: a habit not known to the inhabitants of the Ganges valley.

Is it possible that Kerala ethics has been influenced by some external factors? I was told that both Christianity and Islam played an important role in moulding the culture of Kerala. The number of Catholic churches we saw on the way were not only architecturally perfect but they merged with ease with their neighbouring surroundings. It is also possible that some exotic element (could be Arabic or Portuguese) has given Kerala its unique pattern of human settlement. The villages and the towns, literally speaking, blend with the one another. Villages wind up into small towns at the end of which unroll the coconut arms far off into the interior. A Kerala village is not a cluster of homesteads as we find in the North. Instead, the land sprawls between one homestead and another, lengthening all the time from one end to the other of the State. One may ask if this pattern makes an impact on Kerala's socio-economic institutions. Perhaps it makes an average Malayalee individualistic which allows him to stress his personal achievement. If this explanation is as good as any other, then it also explains why so many Malayalee leave their homes to go far off for a living. This is not something peculiar with the Malayalee—after all the Punjabis or Gurjaratis (and earlier the Bengalis) leave their homes in

search of jobs in all parts of the world. Yet, whereas an emigrant from the North is forced to leave because of acute poverty, the average Malayalee has an innate love for adventure.

Whatever be the reasons for emigration, one thing is certain i.e., no Malayalee ever leaves his home for good! After earning his livelihood and saving capital, he invariably returns;—which perhaps explains (i) the insatiable land hunger in the State; and (ii) the boom in the construction industry. Far too many Malayalee return home to build houses wherever they can, and, as I was told, in such cities as Trivandrum and Cochin, land is sold at the price of gold. The construction industry, on the other hand, helps to give employment to daily workers and creates, on the other, congestion in the cities. But population pressure in Kerala is not exactly the result of natural increase (one would like to know whether the Bengalis breed more than the Malayalee); it is in fact a reflection of the quest for a home by the returning Malayalee in the land of his birth.

Beggars are scarce in any part of Kerala. Those we met were immigrant beggars from Tamil Nadu! The comparative prosperity of the poorer section of Kerala cannot be gauged from statistics of per capita income; nevertheless, it is true.

What about politics? Again, one can merely relate some impressions. It struck me that an average Malayalee, especially when educated, is inordinately fond of talking. He can talk hours without end on any topic. Perhaps his loquacity also seeks an outlet through group activities; hence the proliferation of political groups and factions.

Has politics risen above caste? One journalist averred that all Ezavas are CPM and most Nairs are CPI. Muslims

are generally in the Muslim League, while the Christians support the Kerala Congress. From all evidence it appeared that the CPI has lost its mass base, though it still has a galaxy of important personalities. This is not surprising, considering that the CPI is the only party in India which has generals without an army!

What about the CPM? It has definitely mass support; but its dilemma is a peculiar one. For quite some time the party has been in the opposition and this is bothering the leadership. The latter has begun wondering about its own future. What will happen in case the party does not come to power? Will not the leaders lose their patronage? A young teacher at Calcutta told me "Like other parties, CPM leaders also do not want younger elements to climb up to positions of responsibility. In their eyes, we must always remain workers to hold rallies, to put up posters, and to sing their praise". How long will this continue? one wonders. That reminds me how often I have listened to lectures by CPM leaders who may have kept the fire in their heart burning but who seem to have never grown beyond the 1950s. But that is another story.

The one disturbing aspect in Kerala life is the hold of vested groups on the educational system. The minority schools and colleges are run by Christian missionary societies and Muslim trust. Because there is a great rush for education, I was told that it has become normal on the part of school managements to demand 5,000 to 10,000 rupees for each admission. Similarly, teaching appointments are only made when the appointee pays a **pagree** of anything between 30,000 and 100,000 rupees! Of course, as one university teacher said, this keeps alive the dowry system in Kerala. In order to pay the amount of money, a new teacher raises the amount from his bride's family — and if the bride becomes an earning member then it promises quick returns on the original capital. It is a sad commentary on the political life of Kerala that no Minister (Congress, Communist or United Front) has so far been able to break the hold of the vested interests on the educational system. Nevertheless, best wishes to the younger generation of Kerala.

The Weather Story

PATRAKAR

THE editor was angry over the story that had appeared in "today's paper. Sethji would not have liked to see it, at least in his paper. Naturally, the boss was in a mood to deliver sermons—always starting with a "when I was working on...."

"Publish whatever the grandma likes to read", he snapped. "For instance the weather stories, heavy rain sun-strokes, snowfall etc. Natural calamity report especially if deaths are involved, are more widely read. Just like crime stories".

At this point he remembered something. "Patrakar, what happened to that rape story in which the police commissioner's son's friend was involved?"

"Sir, the Minister's P.A. rang up to say...."

He interrupted—"that is all right, we shall discuss it later".

Next morning our paper carried, "chilly weather in city". The day after it was more chilly, hence, "city braves cold". Etc., etc.

In the morning's mail we received a letter from a reader (a retired government servant turned a chronic letter-writer) along with a clipping supposed to be from our last year's paper. It was a story on "chilly weather in city". It was the same story as printed in the latest issue: mercury fell to season's lowest..dense fog.. people shivering.. slum-dwellers and shelterless had a tough time . . etc. etc. Not a word differed. Just like one of those Diwali and New Year greetings that appear in the papers every year.

Next morning we had, to borrow the editor's term, a story of "human interest"; old woman found dead, I had a suspicion. Went through the old files. The same story again. Even the date was the same; Jan 26. And she was found on the same spot; under the open sky near Raj Bhavan.

The photographers were having a

The review of **Small Town Stories** (March 15) was done by Amartya Mukhopadhyay.

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APRIL 5, 1975

brisk time. (As they say, a pic can never tell lies.) Oh! such lovely shots. The one who had brought the dead kid's pic will certainly get some international prize.

The desk had also a busy time. The tea-sipping lazy boys were excited "Ten killed, says BTL," one would shout. After half-an-hour another would announce, "LNI says 12".

The figure would go mounting; in fact the agencies had no difficulty in supplying the latest score—for their offices were just across the street and they had each a man planted in the other's office.

But it was a tough competition. For instance, if one day LNI would

kill two people less than their rivals, pat would come a 'service' on teleprinter from the HQ: Why We Missed Two?

The moffusil correspondents had also a pretty good time. Only once one poor fellow was caught. "Forty killed", he wired. We rang back for the break-up. He gave it, we calculated, the total came to 53!

The editor entered the hall: what is the score? . . . 102. Good job. Keep up the spirit boys. John, you go and give a story on the old woman who was found dead before my house. And take the photographer along. Get a good snap. And by Jove! it is too cold here. Chaprasi, bring a heater.

Theatre Centre Comedy

BY A DRAMA CRITIC

DHANANJOY Bairagi's comedy **Kecho Kburte Saap** was staged at the Academy of Fine Arts on March 19, as part of the Centre's Festival.

A weak mystery with touches of drolery which lapses into ordinariness after a while would just about sum up the play. The setting is a small wayside station in Bihar. A group of old men and a woman live together thriving on their inquisitiveness and hypochondria when a young girl, one of the cronies' grand-daughter, arrives suddenly and livens up the scene. Her youthful radiance bowls over two young men of opposite temperaments and there follows a little horseplay and a good amount of uninhibited laughter. In the meantime, a neurotic old woman, mother of one of the suitors, discovers the existence of a hidden treasure and there is a spate of furtive whispers and incantatory recitals to lend credibility to the treasure hunt. In the end, a gang of professional crooks working hand in glove with one of the seemingly innocent residents of the sleepy Bihar town speeds up the movement of the play and the feverish treasure hunt leads to the unearthing of a sinister plot to adulterate medicines.

Tarun Roy, as the eccentric scientist Pyrimohan, gives his own special brand

of tired slapstick with a few repetitive grimmicks thrown in for good measure. Dipanwita Roy as Hemlata was good in an unobtrusive sort of way while Debraj Roy in the role of the arrogant young man was uniformly wooden and unconvincing. In a play of this kind the sight of a pretty young girl who is perennially in the throes of laughter does gladden one's heart but is that all Nini had to offer? The other cronies and the doctor from Ranchi went in for some real old-fashioned, staid acting reminiscent of some of the very mediocre North Calcutta plays which go on endlessly without creating a ripple. Dhara Roy was downright boring as the mad old woman obsessed with hidden treasures and neurotic aberrations. The play fell short of being uproariously funny and as one left the hall, one felt no deep stirrings within.

The stage-sets, however, were realistically got up incorporating three separate houses rather compactly. The splintered light lent mystery to the night scenes with the pilferers going about their shady business as stealthily as possible.

SOROSHI

Sarat Chandra's immortal novel **Soroshi**, as dramatized by Theatre Centre, gave us a whiff of the typical village ethos at the turn of the century; Jibananda Chowdhury, the ruthless tax-collecting zemindar who goes through a change of heart before he finally dies of alcoholic dissipation; Soroshi, the Bhairavi, nursing within herself the abrasive memories of an abortive marriage and capable of steadfast love and flights of nobility; the village elders anxious as usual to preserve the sanctity of their temple and their fossilized way of life and scheming endlessly to that purpose; the robust villagers with their clearly defined sense of loyalty and chivalry—all these were the highlights of this drama bringing to life all the absurd complexities and latent pathos of a Bengali village society resting heavily on its feudal trappings. Tarun Roy's depiction of the metamorphosis in Jibananda's character from a dyed-in-the-wool villain to a man repenting for his past sins and wanting desperately to imbue his life with a sense of purpose was quite powerfully achieved. Dipanwita Roy seemed to have outgrown the role of Soroshi and a younger person in the role could have drawn more sympathy. We got more than just a flavour of rustic wiliness in the performance of Shiromoni, Janardan and some others while Nirmal as the barrister, was a trifle too self-conscious, and Sarvi Hoon as the magistrate, atrocious.

The three-in-one set was well utilised and the light effects of a sunset in the death scene were impressive. It was a welcome change to see Tarun Roy tackling a serious character role with finesse and competence.

For Frontier contact

VISALANDHRA

BOOK DEPOT,

Srikakulam,

A. P.

Nandikar's Bhalomanush

BY AN AVERAGE THEATREGOER

AFTER the usual decade gap, the Bengali theatre seems to have lately discovered Brecht and promptly claimed him as its own. Brechtian is the word one comes across most frequently, whatever it may mean. Apparently it is a portmanteau adjective which accommodates a respectable number of meanings. Since each of the discoverers is certain that the other chaps—the audience included—are not sure of what tricks the enigmatic playwright was really up to, he has a wonderful time informing others by way of either producing one of his plays or, more commonly, commenting on what Brecht really meant.

We, the poor audience, not knowing what he wrote or what he meant, have to wait for the comments of self-appointed authorities on Brecht to learn whether he was being given by the Bengali theatre a fair deal or a raw one, whether he is being treated in an adult manner or not, whether the devices of a particular production were the genuine stuff or just counterfeit. But before one has been enlightened by the name-dropping reviewers and "critics" one has already seen the play, and has either enjoyed it, liked it, admired the acting, and been stimulated into thinking about it, or has done or felt none of these things. Which, in the final analysis, is all there is to seeing a play.

Nandikar's *Bhalomanush*, an adaptation of Brecht's *The Good Person of Szechwan*, is enjoyable and well produced. After seeing it who needed to be told that the import of the play was that in a money-nexus capitalist society a person trying to be good has all the chips stacked against him? And that a person could not be good and prosperous at the same time? One got the message; more importantly, one was entertained. Add to that, the fact that the acting, by and large, was excellent and the production pleasing. What more should one want?

The tale of the Good Person can be

told in a few words. The Gods descend to earth to try to find one good person. They choose a poor prostitute. She finds that she cannot remain both good and prosperous as too many people impose on her. So she assumes the personality of a supposed male cousin and survives by ruthlessness. The problem of a moral person in an immoral society is, however, left unresolved.

The Bengali adaptation by Ajitesh Bannerji is more than what the reviewers are fond of describing as competent. It has a Bengali twang and a local flavour which is not to say that the original, judging from John Willet's English translation, has been in any way lost. The three Chinese gods have been appropriately transformed into the Hindu trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswar. They have the distinctive traits of popular belief and communicate easily.

The burden of the play lies heavily on the shoulders of Shanta, the poor prostitute Keya Chakraborty carries the burden without faltering, which is saying something. Indeed, the role, the double role in fact, demands the employment of resources and reserves which only a very good actress has and can call upon. Her brisk movements, vocal control and quick change of personality from Shanta to Shantaprasad, an act of put upon, behavioural schizophrenia were utterly delightful to watch even if in the miming scene with her unborn child she overdid things a bit.

Which is what Ajitesh Bannerji as Makhan Babu, the owner of the hair-dressing saloon, never does. In fact he slightly underplays the role. But then Mr Bannerji with his stage personality and trained voice can afford to do so. The unemployed waster Govinda has, of course, no qualms about imposing on Shanta. Normally one would not expect him, in theatrical convention to be a sympathetic character. But Brecht would never spoil the fun by not making a rascal a loveable one.

In any case, in Rudraprasad Sengupta's rendering of the role he was what I believe Brecht wanted Sun to be. He matched the mixture of rascality, pathos and helplessness by an appropriate mixture of incongruous gestures without unduly stressing the physical part of it.

Of the production as a whole, one felt that the songs, dances and the choreography could, perhaps, be improved upon. They detracted somewhat from the merit of this enjoyable and instructive production of Nandikar. It is heartening that it has proved popular with the average theatregoer.

Letters

"Locals and Outsiders"

With reference to Mr D. Prempati's letter (March 15), I must plead guilty that I have not read the book *The History Makers*. Nor do I feel inspired to go in for such an exercise even after Mr Prempati's challenging advocacy in its favour. There is a large body of literature on Gandhi. Perhaps I had my preferences and Mr I. K. Shukla had his. Supposing our choices were mutually exclusive and cancelled each other, the net result would not project as fearful a picture of Gandhi as Mr Shukla's conclusions did. But I leave it at that so that my reputation for having "religious sensibilities" remains untarnished!

Mr Prempati has further argued, like a clever lawyer, in favour of Mr Shukla's advocacy of the Central rule in Manipur when Mr Alimuddin added 'one more contradiction—a purely fake anti-thesis between locals and outsiders,—to the several other contradictions of the class he was serving. Mr Shukla, we are made to believe, "did no more than call attention to this additional nightmarish contradiction". "Nightmarish" to whom? To "locals" or to "outsiders"? According to Mr Prempati, Mr Shukla wanted to fight "the specific contradiction" in Manipur with the help of Mrs Gandhi's hordes from New Delhi because "the local tingods" were "found whipping up such mass frenzy as actually drives out innumerable Shuklas not only from Manipur, but also from

livelihood". Thus "the only rational option" was to invite a bigger "outsider(s)", tyrants from New Delhi, to keep the "livelihood" of "innumerable Shuklas" intact in Manipur and elsewhere!

The terms bandied about in Mr Prempati's wonderful thesis are Maoist. This gives us a clear clue why over 50 years of existence of a communist party (or parties) in India has led the downtrodden of this country nowhere. Our gentlemen radicals have been more concerned with keeping their "livelihood" intact than bother themselves about making revolution. Those who thought that all manifestations of contradictions in society were the direct result of class divisions which have to be fought one by one in the order of their strength and importance, under the organised power of a broad united front, were obviously wrong. There is no such thing as principal contradiction required to be tackled first. "Alimuddin and Bal Thakares," being "as much a prop to" Mrs Gandhi's "leadership as her own Chandrashekhar and Shashibhushans" must be suppressed, in the first instance, and that too not by direct appeal to or by building any revolutionary alternatives, but by Mrs Gandhi herself, at the instance of Prempatis and Shuklas! The dialectical logic of these gentlemen radicals, as projected by this peculiar thesis, is unbeatable indeed.

Obviously, this logic when applied to the movement led by J.P., also leads us to the conclusion that this movement too is "as much a prop to her leadership as her own Chandrashekhar and Sashibhushans". We are thus expected to believe that the bourgeoisie is bourgeoisie and there are no contradictions within its ranks! And if there are any, the principal contradiction, the reactionaries in power, controlling the army and other instruments of coercion, should be invited and helped to suppress the secondary contradictions, the reactionaries not in power. Was it Mao who described this exercise as mere shadow-boxing? Well, why should we bother about the Chinese Mao when we have so many Indian ones? According to them, if we help Mr Gandhi to defeat Alimuddin, and the like of

him, the exercise will help Mrs Gandhi to defeat Mrs Gandhi! This is the latest revolution in revolution.

A sizable section of the CPI(ML), which reportedly is helping and supporting the movement led by J.P., must revise its stand and fall in line with this latest revolutionary doctrine so that Mrs Gandhi has a free hand in putting it down successfully! Evidently the interests of Mrs Gandhi and these new gentlemen radicals seem to converge at the point where Gandhians and other non-conformists need to be suppressed.

Ramadhar,
New Delhi.

A Grain of Truth

With reference to the letter "Gandhi and a grain of truth" (March 15, 1975) what about the ten-page letter written with his own hand that Lord Irwin sent to Gandhiji in Karachi? The late Sri Satyen Majumdar who was present, reported in his paper that on reading the letter Gandhiji broke into a loud laugh, "the sort of laugh one laughs when one suddenly loses everything that one has":

Lord Irwin explained that he could not keep Gandhiji's request for commutation of the death sentences on Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukdev, because the services in a body had threatened to resign if he did Gandhiji could not of course make commutation a precondition of the Agreement; For, the Viceroy wanted an undertaking that revolutionary activity would be abandoned altogether, and the revolutionaries would not have given Gandhiji authority to give any such undertaking. How could he have spoken for those who were outside his control? It is well known that Gandhiji secured reprieve for those who had been sentenced to death in the Hathi-Chimur case and some others, including, perhaps Haridas Mitra of Bengal.

Barun Bhattacharjee
Calcutta

Attacks on the Press

Delegates from different newspapers and journals in West Bengal, at a meeting on March 17, adopted a resolution noting with deep concern the raids on sections of the press which are critical of the Government or the ruling party. Among the victims of these attacks have been **Bangladesh, Darpan, Frontier, Janatar Mukh, Alipore Barta** etc. There are other forms of intimidation. The police are inactive. All this is a further curb on even the limited freedom of the press that prevails here and the resolution called for a united effort to resist the attacks.

Another resolution condemned the dastardly murder of a French journalist in Saigon by the reactionary South Vietnam Government.

Convenors of the meeting
Calcutta.

Cricket

My hearty congratulations for your comment 'cricket and politics' (March 1). Nowadays many progressive people are gradually becoming conscious about the poisonous effects of sex, crime, popsongs etc. But we are not yet conscious about the bad effect of cricket, which is a new form of weapon of the reactionary cultural superstructure. It is pathetic to see youths of the middle class stratum looking upon "cricket stars" as heroes. They are victims of the conspiracy of the capitalists who are using films, songs etc. to demoralise them.

I appeal to the readers of **Frontier** and other progressive people to boycott cricket completely.

S. Das,
24-Parganas.

Poems Etc

Reading I. K. Shukla's article "Voices in Bronze" I am prompted to suggest that you could further enrich your periodical by printing short stories and poems. Our new courageous writers have hardly any scope to get their works published in standard, infantile and puerile periodicals.

Nandita Ghosh
Calcutta

APRIL 5, 1975

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