

# frontier

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Editor: Samar Sen

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

## VOTING WITH THEIR FEET?

THE bells will be tolling soon for Saigon, but the National Liberation Armed Forces (NLF) are unlikely to mount a frontal attack. The PRG wants Thieu to go and a coalition Government set up within the framework of the Paris agreements, a framework of independence, democracy and national concord. This will come about much sooner than expected despite whatever President Ford does, after he has listened to his Army Chief of Staff. U.S. supplies are still being flown from bases in Thailand, but the course in South Vietnam is irreversible. With two-thirds of the country in their possession, with masses of people co-operating to establish a new order in liberated cities, towns and villages, the PRG can wait for the bloated, corrupt and inefficient regime of Thieu to collapse.

The present advance of the NLF has been the swiftest in the whole course of the long, epic Vietnam war. But it has not been an advance in military terms alone, not a blitzkrieg. The fact is that, but for certain key towns and strategic roads, the NLF had been in effective control of surrounding areas; village and regional guerillas as well as large sections of the people had been preparing for the day when the countryside would encircle the cities; regular forces nearby were ready to go into co-ordinated action at the appropriate moment. The pattern became clear at Ban Me Thuot, the unofficial capital of the Central Highlands. On March 10, the Montagnards, a mountain tribe which the Americans had always tried to bribe and coerce into collaboration, led the NLF into the key areas of the town—and the Saigon troops were in disarray. Thieu denuded Pleiku and Kontum of his troops who were rushed to Ban Me Thuot. The NLF then moved into Pleiku and Kontum. Everywhere there were local forces supporting them and there were local uprisings. It is these uprisings which to a large extent explain the surprisingly swift debacle of the Saigon forces, already demoralised by lack of sustenance thanks to the infinite corruption of the generals and other officers. The NLF did not have to fight their way into most of the towns. Foreign correspondents based in Saigon could not report the uprisings: the French journalist, Paul Leandri, was shot dead because he had reported the Montagnard support to the NLF.

What diverse news agencies and American politicians are doing is to speak of the "millions of refugees" who, by fleeing from liberated areas, are "voting with their feet" against the communists. It is true that the collaborators, whose number is not small, dread the NLF. It is also true, as Prince Sihanouk

pointed out to a correspondent, that a good part of people living in capital cities like Phnom Penh, Bangkok, Saigon or Manila have an allergy to a too virtuous regime and prefer, even though they are poor, to sprawl in the putrefaction of an Asian Sodom or Gomorrah. But the masses, who have nothing to lose but their chains, do not on their own leave their homes for an unknown and savage destination. Reports are available that before the Saigon troops were asked to withdraw, Thieu ordered a "scorched earth" policy to force the local population to abandon everything and join an "exodus" that will provide the retreating ARVN with a human shield and supply international opinion with the image of people "fleeing from the communists". Also as an excuse to appeal for public charity and any American intervention. The main fear of the refugees, according to some Western news agencies, is the bombing of PRG territory. Such terror bombing is taking place. The New York Times of March 26 also reported that newspaper correspondents had interviewed hundreds of refugees from various parts of Vietnam. Asked why they left their homes, "Not one said", The Times reports, "it was because he or she feared or hated communism". "There was bombing and fighting all the time, many killed", said one young woman with a child. "It's better to go to the Saigon side, because the communists have no airplanes". "I think the communists may be all right", said a fleeing tax-driver. "But it's no good to be caught in the war zone."

It will be difficult for people not to be caught in the war zone, as the Saigon areas shrink. With little or nothing to eat, no living space, they will perhaps force Thieu to quit, this time stamping him out with their feet.

In Cambodia, the fall of Phnom Penh is imminent. With the capture of the key ferry town of Neak Luong, the entire Mekong river supply line is now controlled by the liberation forces, and 6,000 crack troops, so long besieging Neak Luong, are free to further tighten the noose around the capital.

These are great days for Southeast

Asia and bleak ones for the White House mafia which has inflicted untold suffering, misery and indignity on countless people of the Third World. The situation should also be a warning to Moscow not to flirt with U.S. lackeys like Lol Nol, as it did after he staged his coup at a moment when Prince Sihanouk was in Moscow and hoped for Russian support. A Lol Nol in Phnom Penh is better than a Sihanouk in Peking, so decided the Russians.

## A Warning

The opposition leaders can shout themselves hoarse over the way the J. P. meeting in Calcutta was broken up last week, but the government, both at the Centre and here, will remain unperturbed. The rowdies of the Chhatra Parishad, the Youth Congress and the CPI wanted their attack to be taken as a severe warning to the conveners: beware of organising any J. P. meeting in future. They know that strong-arm tactics, when backed by a passive police force, will terrorise the opposition. They care a damn for adverse press and public opinion. The demonstrators were addressed and incited by a Minister of State and a Congress MP who led them to the University Institute building; and after all the monkeyish violence, the Congress MP congratulated his task force on their 'peaceful' performance, without batting an eyelid. Congress and CPI members in the West Bengal Assembly praised the performance.

Something is rotten to the core in West Bengal. Seven or eight years ago the Congress did not dare hold a public meeting in Calcutta, not out of fear of violence but because of mass unpopularity. But now it can get away with anything, not because it is endearingly popular but because it knows that the alliance of the rowdies, the police and the administration is too strong for the once-militant leftists who have now lost heart. It is also sickening to see bruised and battered opposition MPs frantically crying to the Chief Minister, the Prime Minister and

the Union Home Minister, to redress the situation, as if Congress politicians higher up are all angels and will take their minions to task.

There is a good deal of philosophising going on about the climate of violence, with each side blaming the other. Most people know that it is the forces trained and released by Mrs Gandhi and her government ever since 1969 in the name of rallying the youth that is responsible for the widespread hooliganism all over the country. In West Bengal this hooliganism is naked because of the sordid period of inner and intra-party strife that marked the 'leftist' interlude after 1967 and because the art of rigging the elections has been perfected here to give a phoney mandate to the Congress. These people know that they cannot be removed from power through the ballot box and can go on doing whatever they like with impunity.

The leftist forces here are in a hopeless mess, thanks to their addiction to Calcutta and electoral prospects. They have lost whatever guts they ever had and cannot think of a protracted struggle by other means. In a city like Calcutta it is difficult to cope with the alliance of rowdies and the forces of law and order. Had they the correct political line, the leftists would have shifted their forces to the countryside and built up a base there. After all it is in the countryside that the people are starving and dying in vast numbers and looking for a lead.

An angry Mr Narayan has asked the students to organise another rally next month which he will attend; at any cost. He also criticised the elite-based politics of the left parties. The first challenge — will it be taken up by terrorised leaders? The Maidan might be tried, it is a much safer venue. As for the second observation, is not Mr Narayan himself relying too much on the students—and cities? Of course he has some achievement to his credit; and with Mr Morarji Desai going on an indefinite fast demanding elections by May in Gujarat, the Centre will have some unquiet days, but not on terms beyond its control.

## Bodo Movement

However one may assess the aims, objectives and implications of the Bodo agitation for the Roman script for their language, nobody should remain unconcerned over the police excesses in Bodo areas for the suppression of their language movement. At least 25 people have been killed in police firings in Bodo areas during the last three months. The Government's attitude appears to have hardened and it is determined to crush the agitation once for all. This was reflected in a series of police actions recently at Sidli, Kourajhar, Bijni, Gosargaon and Udalgiri, as well as police firings in other places. The police and CRP are not the answer to the movement; they muck up the situation and, in fact, by pursuing a hard line, the Government is only strengthening the so-called separatists.

The Government holds the view that the Roman script issue is more political than academic in nature. The Government has not yet categorically accused the foreign Christian missionaries of influencing the agitation, but hints are often dropped about "undesirable outside influence". It finds in the script movement a deep-rooted plan to alienate more and more people from the mainstream of Assamese culture, aimed at the ultimate, complete psychological isolation of the Bodo people from the Assamese. Conceding that the Bodo people, by and large, support the Roman script for their language, the Government says that since the separate State (Udayachal) demand could not involve the majority owing to the stiff resistance offered by the Congress, the separatists have shifted their emphasis to the cultural front, and it is on the insistence and provocation of these people that the Government is now faced with a direct confrontation with the militant agitators at a time when talks were being held to settle the script issue.

Prof Charan Nariari, MLA and General Secretary, Plains Tribal Council, however, blamed the Government for its delaying methods and mishandling of an extremely delicate situation.

In a statement, he charged the Government with "administrative chauvinism and their deeprooted animosity" towards the Bodo linguistic minority in Assam, just because of their choice of a script for their own language. Refuting the allegations of missionary and other outside influence in the movement, he said that such propaganda is designed "only to justify the use of brute force to suppress the democratic aspirations of the Bodos who want to survive and grow according to their own genius and choice." Accusing the Assam Government of "pride, chauvinism and a mad desire to thrive by subjugating and assimilating others", he said that the "small and helpless linguistic minorities have been systematically neglected and suppressed here and their voices have been sought to be silenced by gunfire and bloodshed."

Pointing out a sharp contrast in the manner of Government handling of the situation between the 1972 language disturbances and the present one arising out of the peaceful Bodo movement, Prof Nariari said that, from the modus operandi of the administration, it seemed the State Government was out to commit genocide on the simple Bodo tribals.

## Murders In Kenya

A correspondent writes:

Successive murders of eminent politicians in Kenya, quite a few of them opposed to the Jomo Kenyatta Government, have become a feature of the one-party rule there. Among them have been Pio Pinto, murdered in February 1965; his friend, Tom Mboya, the young trade unionist commanding large resources and organisational skill, in July 1969; Kungu Karumba in June 1974. The latest to join them is Kariuki, a prominent critic of the Government. He was last seen in company of security men outside a hotel; quite a few days later one of his wives identified his body in the morgue.

Not only are individuals being liquidated, political parties like the Kenya African Union and Kenya African

## NOTICE

**April 13, 14 and 15  
being holidays in  
Modern India Press,  
there will be no issue  
of Frontier on April  
19.**

**Business Manager**

Democratic Union have gone defunct as Kenyatta has pushed ahead with one-party rule. What is his party, Kenya African National Union, like? A very sympathetic biographer of Kenyatta, testifies that overseas investors with interests in Kenya have found it prudent to channel funds into KANU.

Kenyatta is 76 and his tribe, the Kikuyu, constitutes 20 per cent of the population, fills most of the important posts in government and administration. Kenyatta ordained in November 1963 that disrespect to the person of the Prime Minister (as he was then) would be an offence, and many were expelled for this crime.

Not only has Kenyatta outdone the British as far as pomp and regalia are concerned, just like them he has got away by dubbing his critics communists—the onus being on the critics to disprove the charge. While the opponents get busy with issuing disclaimers, the substantive criticisms against the regime are lost sight of.

The Zanzibar revolution which occurred on January 12, 1964 had different effects on Tanganyika and Kenya. The former moved towards bolder, more independent pan-African policies; Kenya took a sharp turn towards reaction. As a critic says: "Ministers and top civil servants compete with one another to buy more farms, acquire more directorships and own bigger cars and grander

houses. In six months an MP receives more money than the average peasant earns in half a lifetime. A self-entrenched class of politician-businessmen is growing up in the cities, and in the countryside a large land-owning class."

The autobiography of Oginga Odinga, sometime Vice-President and Cabinet Minister who was jailed for having criticised the swelling personal and family fortunes of Kenyatta, titled 'Not Yet Uhuru' (Freedom) lays bare the ramifications of Western capital's penetration of the Kenyan economy, as also the frustrations of men of conscience. In his opinion, Kenya is still today largely part of the Western sphere of interest and investment. "The danger in Kenya has never been communism but imperialism and its remnants".

## Nixon Doctrine and the Asian Mercenaries

JIM STENZEL

**F**ORMER President Nixon's "generation of peace" may be a long way off in Asia, but there are increasing signs of late that when peace comes it will be on Asian and not U.S. terms. Recent developments in Cambodia and Vietnam indicate that, short of massive reintroduction of U.S. troops or nuclear warfare, the U.S. is playing its last card in defence of some of the more corrupt military dictatorships in Asia. That last card, espoused in the Nixon Doctrine six years ago, is to train, equip and fund mercenaries to protect American interests in the region. The goal, in short, was to bring the U.S. troops home and to hire Asians to kill Asians.

President Ford's pleading in recent weeks that "if we don't protect our interests, nobody else will" is as clear an admission as any to the slow but steady sinking of Nixon's mercenary doctrine. The reluctance of the U.S. Congress to provide emergency military aid to Southeast Asia has little to do with the sinking itself. Most military/political observers in Asia are convinced that the handwriting is on the wall, and that

even massive U.S. assistance would only delay the inevitable.

This is not to suggest that, after Cambodia, the "dominoes" will fall one after the other; nor that the U.S. military is about to walk away from Asia with its tail between its legs; nor that popular, democratic regimes are about to sprout into the April sunshine throughout Asia. It is merely to suggest that the key plank of U.S. designs for "post-war stability" in Asia is facing imminent failure in certain Southeast Asian countries and that eventual total failure of the mercenary strategy throughout the region, from South Korea to the Philippines, can no longer be ruled out.

Such a total failure may not be witnessed for another five to ten years, however. Even with somewhat limited funding, the U.S. military establishment is still doing quite well in the training and equipping of military and paramilitary forces, most notably in South Korea, the Philippines and Thailand.

Still, it is becoming increasingly clear that the credibility of the U.S., and the credibility of the regimes it backs, is on a downward slide in post-Vietnam Asia. The failure of the mercenary strategy is intimately linked to this slide. The situation is forcing something of a "reverse course"—realisation that direct U.S. intervention, or the threat of it, may be required to protect U.S. interests.

The current mobilisation of U.S. naval airforce and marine units for large-scale manoeuvres in Southeast Asia is one example of this reverse course. According to informed sources, the mobilisation, scheduled to peak in April, is the largest show of force by the U.S. military since the last years of U.S. fighting in Vietnam.

Under the circumstances, it is instructive to consider the Nixon Doctrine, and specifically the mercenary strategy, in terms of both how it emerged in the 1960s and how it is being submerged in the 1970s. Two recent publications shed important light on these matters.

One of the politically most remarkable—and militarily most brutal—secrets of the Vietnam war was the employment of more than 300,000 South Korean mercenaries in Vietnam over a

seven-year period. The full story of how these allied troops were purchased, and the numerous atrocities committed by the ROK forces in Vietnam, has finally come to light in a documented report published February 19 by the American Friends Service Committee (19102). America's Rented Troops: South Koreans in Vietnam is written by Frank Baldwin, and Diane and Michael Jones.

During the Vietnam war buildup years (1965-68) when President Johnson and the Pentagon were desperately seeking allied troops, ROK President Park Chung Hee drove a hard bargain but eventually provided ROK forces which more than met the highest expectations of the U.S. commanders in Vietnam. The ROK troops were cheaper (\$5000 per year per man, compared to \$13,000 per year for a U.S. soldier), were considerably fiercer in battle, and helped lessen the flow of body bags back to the U.S. The example of the Korean troops, coupled with growing U.S. domestic opposition to the war, are considered two key elements behind Nixon's open endorsement of the mercenary strategy in 1969.

The development of the mercenary strategy since 1969 is spelled out in great detail in a recent issue of *Le Monde Diplomatique*. In an article entitled "Asian Mercenaries and United States Policy", two Americans, Michael Klare and Mark Selden, document how the manpower contributions of Asian client States have "assumed enlarged significance for the realisation of the Kissinger grand design for a framework of international development, the International Police Academy and other U.S. government-related bodies in training Asian mercenaries, who are then equipped and supported through an array of U.S. military aid channels."

In a detailed analysis, Klare and Selden predict that military dictatorships, which are "endemic to satellite governments whose strongest links are to foreign powers and foreign capital", are likely to further "exacerbate tensions in the region, and in the long-run these nations will seek autonomy from U.S. goals."

"While sustaining the capability to confront the ultimate challenge, no-

clear or conventional confrontation with the Soviet Union", say Klare and Selden, "American military strategy in Asia increasingly reflects the clear perception that Asian people are the problem and the most dangerous regional threat" to U.S.-backed dictatorships.

This perception has led U.S. military planners to use their Asian mercenaries more for internal control than for third country operations of late. Thus the

ROK troops are now back home supporting their own dictator. But the Pentagon can no longer assume the unquestioned loyalty of any of these indigenous forces. One recent example is the report that CIA-trained Montagnards in the Central Highlands of South Vietnam are now fighting for the NLF.

The Asian people may indeed be the problem, and the mercenaries are, after all, Asian people.

## Petty Bourgeoisie and the Middle Class

ASHOK RUDRA

IN "Analysis of Classes in the Chinese Society" Mao Tse-tung defines the petty bourgeoisie as follows: "Included in this category are the owner peasants, the master handicraftsmen, the lower levels of the intellectuals, students, primary and secondary school teachers, lower government functionaries, office clerks, small lawyers—and the small traders." Mao further goes on to recognise three sections within the petty bourgeoisie. Thus, "The first section consists of those who have some surplus—money or grain, that is who by manual or mental labour, earn more each year than they consume for their own support". "The second section consists of those who in the main are economically self supporting." "The third section consists of those whose standard of living is falling." Mao does not however satisfy himself only with objective characterisations in terms of standard of living. As in all his writings involving class analysis, he uses criteria based both on objective relations of production as well as on objective characteristics in terms of attitudes, values etc. Thus, about the first section of the petty bourgeoisie, Mao writes "such people very much want to get rich . . . while they have no illusions about amassing great fortunes, they inevitably desire to climb up into the middle bourgeoisie. . . People of this sort are timid, afraid of

government officials, and also a little afraid of the revolution." About the second section Mao writes, "as for the movement against the imperialists and the warlords, they merely doubt whether one can succeed . . . hesitate to join and prefer to be neutral, but they never oppose the revolution." About the third section he says, "They are in great mental distress because there is such a contrast between their past and their present."

In "Chinese Revolution and Chinese Communist Party" the petty bourgeoisie has been demarcated as follows: "The petty bourgeoisie, other than the peasantry, consists of the vast number of intellectuals, small tradesmen, handicraftsmen and professional people". About their subjective characteristics, it is said "they are being driven ever nearer to bankruptcy or destitution. Hence these sections of the petty bourgeoisie constitute one of the motive forces of the revolution and are a reliable ally of the proletariat."

Mao thus understands the petty bourgeoisie in such a way as to cut across agricultural and industrial occupation groups. But he also finds it convenient to consider as distinct social classes or categories the different sections of the peasantry such as rich peasants, middle peasants, poor peasants and landless labourers. In any case these latter peasant classes

are so important as to require discussion by themselves. We shall, in our discussion of the petty bourgeoisie, restrict ourselves to that part of it which is outside the peasantry.

We shall now turn to our own society and set ourselves the task of identifying the sections of the population which may be thought to constitute the petty bourgeoisie in India with a view to studying the contradictions between these different sections as well as between the class as a whole and other classes or subclasses belonging to the toiling masses. With this purpose in view we shall take up for separate discussion such categories as white-collar workers, intellectuals, small-scale industrialists, petty traders etc. However, before we take up for detailed study such social categories, it would be worth while to take a look at that social category which is the Indian "middle class". This middle class, which is not a class in terms of the Marxian theory of classes (defined on the basis of production relations) but includes parts of various Marxian classes, largely overlaps with the petty bourgeoisie which could be defined in Marxian terms. The reason we think it important to start with a discussion of this loose social stratum called the middle class is because of the preponderantly important part it plays in Indian politics.

As we have just now said, the "middle class" is not a "class" defined in terms of production relations. All the same it has got a good deal of social cohesion based on similarities of behaviour patterns, world outlook, social attitudes and values etc. That is to say the "middle class" has a high degree of heterogeneity in the matter of its objective economic roles and relations whereas it has a high degree of homogeneity in the matter of life-style and social dealings. This gives rise to various contradictions:

Let us first look at the heterogeneity aspect. An upper caste landowning family in the village belongs to the middle class—irrespective of the small size of land he possesses or the low level of per capita income he enjoys. In contrast, a low caste, cultivating family, whose family members them-

elves work with their own hands, do not belong to the middle class even if land in their possession be large and the per capita income of the family quite high. Some traders—even small and poor ones—definitely belong to the middle class: for example, owners of bookshops, medicine shops, stationery shops. Some others definitely do not; for example these who sell vegetables or fish or meat in the market, those who run groceries. Among traders who do not belong to the middle class are many of the biggest ones who control the market of, say, foodgrains. There are trades in which some traders are middle class people and some others are not, like shops selling clothes, eating places etc. Among the professions, doctors and lawyers belong to the middle class but barbers and cobblers do not. In the teaching profession everybody belongs to the middle class, from the primary school teacher up to the university professor. But in the engineering profession, as one goes down the ladder, fitters and mechanics cease to belong to the middle class. In the administrative services everybody from the junior clerk and typist up to the top secretary belongs to the middle class, only peons, drivers guards etc. being outside it. In industries the top executives belong to the middle class just as much as the white-collar workers, the bank manager just as much as the bank clerk.

There is thus, within the middle class, various sections of conflicting class interests. Thus, the economic interests of the top executives of business firms would coincide with the class interests of their capitalist owners whereas the class interests of the white-collar workers would be more aligned with those of the so-called blue-collar workers or manual labourers. Similarly the top level bureaucrat, engineer, lawyer, doctor, teacher etc. all benefit from the social organisation as it is now—they stand to lose from any radical reorganisation that would benefit the masses. As such, their objective economic interests are aligned with those of the ruling classes. The opposite is true of the lower level clerk, the briefless lawyer,

the doctor without any practice or the school teacher. The highly paid salesman of some sophisticated products of modern industry has his economic interests tied to those of the capitalist producers or importers of those products and via that connection, his interests are aligned with those of the big grain dealer who may not be of the middle class; but in his social dealings he is close to the petty middle class teacher or the petty counter salesman of some middle class shops.

Along with heterogeneity in class interests also goes a tremendous heterogeneity in the matter of income and wealth. This partly arises from the very fact of the range of occupations within the middle class being so wide. But even within the same occupation groups, middle class families can vary enormously in the matter of their economic well being because of certain objective factors characterising our economic system and certain subjective factors belonging to the middle class mentality. The relevant objective factors are: the rampant unemployment amongst middle class youth, the absence of any incomes policy or employment policy either in the government or in the trade union movement. Among the objective factors are certain social and family obligations middle class people find unavoidable. Thus consider two families living next to each other, both having their principal source of income in the services; either in the government or in the private sector. In the first, there may be a single adult male earning member; he might have to support a few college and school going or unemployed younger brothers and a few sisters of marriageable age; he may have to support his old parents and may be even one parent-in-law. The next door family may consist of a young man and his wife and a child, both husband and wife having jobs, their being only one dependent parent. Even though the salary range of the young persons of these two neighbour families may be about the same, it would happen that the second family would be able to send the child to a costly school, go in for various modern gadgets, indulge in small luxuries like going out to eat

in Chinese restaurants, taking occasional rides in taxis, having yearly holiday tours of different part of the country etc. The first family would have to do without all of the above; the boys may have to terminate their education at an early stage, not to speak of the girls; making ends meet would be a matter of monthly crisis; getting into debt would be almost unavoidable. This phenomenon of two families placed exactly similarly in society in terms of production relations, yet one of them getting sucked into the vortex of the values of the consumption society of the capitalist West and the other sinking into humiliation and despair and lack of self-respect through indebtedness, is due, on the one hand, to the lack of any policy on the part of the State of distributing jobs amongst families according to their needs (and the failure on the part of trade unions to fight for such a policy) and the tendency on the part of Indian middle class individuals for taking up economic responsibilities for the members of the extended family which are not taken by individuals in other more individualistic countries. This latter commendable trait of the Indian middle class often results in the already employed person managing to obtain jobs for his brothers, sisters and children in the same employing organisation, giving rise to the phenomenon of clustering: some middle class families having many employed members and other families of the same size precariously depending upon a single earning member.

Let us now come to the aspects of homogeneity of this class. The middle class in India, in any region, eats in the same way, dresses in the same way, arranges its houses in the same way, entertains in the same way, amuses itself in the same way. Of course the vast differences in economic positions of different middle class families do make a difference in the qualities or market values of the goods and services they can command; but the tasks are the same, the preferences are the same. There is, in the consumption habits and life-style of the middle class, some generally accepted norms; those who cannot afford to reach up to these

norms treat them as minimum targets to reach. The uniformity of the norms is best seen in the way middle class families observe ceremonial occasions. Food served in a middle class wedding feast, in any one region, would be standard whether the bride's father be a school teacher or an engineer, a clerk in a government office or a Secretary to the Government—only the number of invitees would differ. Even without any such ceremonial occasion like marriage, the way a visitor would be received, what one would offer along with tea and coffee, is also standardised. (A big change is being made in this uniform pattern, by the recent widespread prevalence of alcoholic drinks in middle class entertainment habits, but the lower middle class is striving its best to catch up with the upper in this respect too.)

An important aspect of this middle class homogeneity is the way its different disparate elements—disparate in class interests, disparate in income levels—are connected with each other. It is not at all uncommon for a prosperous doctor to have a brother who is a petty trader, a high government official to have a nephew who is a shop assistant, a senior business executive to have an impoverished uncle whose family he has to maintain. This indicates a very high degree of vertical mobility. This happens in two ways. One is through marriage: in the marriage market girls who are good looking and who have other qualities desired by middle class grooms command a price that can outweigh the fathers' poor capacity to pay dowries. The second is through sheer careerism to which the middle class devotes a good deal of studied attention as well as resources. The vertical mobility among the peasantry is very

little: whatever there is of it is only in the downward direction. A poor peasant can become a landless labourer; but he can hardly ever become a rich farmer or take to any other profession. Similarly the landless labourer cannot but remain landless labourer all his life; the slum dwelling industrial labourer can sometimes rise a few scales in the ladder, but not many. But it is not at all uncommon for a school teacher to try to make his son an IAS officer or a bank clerk to succeed in sending his son to an engineering college.

As a matter of fact it is this mobility and connectedness that gives the homogeneity in the life-style of the middle class; it is therefore not surprising that the values and attitudes are also very uniform in different sections of the middle class. Thus, in the matter of the peculiar combination of half-baked modernism and rationality and of obscurantism, in the familiar gap between practice and preaching, in the matter of the co-existence of highly spiritual ideals and highly down-to-earth commercialism, in the adulation of the West, in the great importance attached to "keeping face" which makes them follow ruinous habits in their entertainments—these characteristics are common in the entire middle class in all its layers and in all its segments.

It is well known that the Indian middle class supplies the leadership as well as the cadres of most of the political parties of the country, especially the parties which are leftist or populist in character. The Indian left parties thus have been highly influenced in their functioning by the heterogeneous class interests represented within the middle class as well as the homogeneous attitudes, values and lifestyles. The first, that is the heterogeneous conflicting class interests have prevented the left parties from consistently and firmly aligning themselves with the class interests of the toiling masses. Thus, most of the left parties have till now objectively served the interests of the rich and middle peasants, at the cost of the interests of poor peasants and landless labourers. The second, that is the homogeneous attitudes, values, life-

styles etc. of the middle class have made the leaders and the cadres of the left parties remain isolated from the toiling masses; for the middle class life-style norm is totally alien to the values, attitudes and life styles of the toiling masses. It is not that the middle class political elements—leaders and cadres—are not aware of this alienation. But it is a characteristic feature of the middle class mentality that instead of combating this alienation, the politically conscious middle class Indians indulge in self-denigration and mutual denigration for the fault of their being born in the middle class. The most favourite stick for one middle class political element to beat another middle class political element with is to call him a petty bourgeois, which ought not really be a word of abuse, for it is simply a statement of fact. Wallowing in self-abasement and mutual recrimination for the fault of being born in the middle class is thus used by middle class elements as a substitute for the more difficult and arduous task of over-coming their alienation from the toiling masses.

*Just Out:*

**THE CONSTITUTION of the  
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC of CHINA  
(1975)**

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# CPM's Revolutionary Teaching

DIG VIJAY

IN the historical background of opportunism and the struggle of two lines the attack\* by Mr Basavapunniah (CPM) on the revolutionaries needs examination. Although criticising the CPI as well, his main attack is on the revolutionary left. It is neither the first nor the last time that the revolutionaries and their line have been attacked by the CPM leadership. We have no particular inclination to add to the already voluminous polemics but we do consider it necessary to expose the 'Marxist' arguments of Mr Basavapunniah in order to identify the opportunism where it really lies. Mr Basavapunniah stated in his article that:

- (a) the USSR and China represent respectively the right and left deviation in the international communist movement and their Indian counterparts are the CPI on the right and the 'Naxalites of all hues' on the left, with the CPM being the genuine Marxist party free of deviations.
- (b) although the bourgeoisie will never surrender power peacefully the strategy of people's war is not feasible in India as the counter-revolution has made enormous technological advance and has consolidated itself; and
- (c) the Soviet Union is not imperialist even though the leadership has turned revisionist and there are serious mistakes, distortions and deviations in its policies.

## 1. Nature of the Indian State

The right CPI's position identifies the State as basically progressive (anti-monopolist, anti-landlord and anti-imperialist) led by the national bourgeoisie; it seeks to achieve socialism through joint hegemony of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat peacefully. In other words it sees no need

for a revolutionary overthrow of the State. The CPI is clearly revisionist and has all but faded from the revolutionary front.

The real threat to the CPM position now therefore is not from the CPI but from the CPI(ML) and other revolutionaries. It is with this in view that Mr Basavapunniah develops his 'critique' of the left. He referred to 'the Naxalite position' on the character of the State which, according to him, is that the State is a puppet State and government of U.S. imperialism; the bourgeoisie which is in power is comprador and a lackey of U.S. imperialism. He compares this to the position of the CPM which holds that the State is bourgeois, landlord led by the monopoly bourgeoisie in alliance with landlords. According to the CPM, the bourgeoisie is also collaborating with foreign monopoly with a view to developing capitalism in India.

Before examining the two positions further, it must be noted that Mr Basavapunniah's version of the CPI(ML)'s position is grossly incomplete. It amounts to a deliberate and calculated attempt to misrepresent the the CPI(ML)'s actual position which holds that the Indian State is semi-feudal, led by comprador-bureaucratic bourgeoisie in the interest of U.S. imperialism and Soviet social-imperialism. The CPI(ML) identifies semi-feudalism as the main contradiction and claims that the bourgeoisie is incapable of independent development. The CPM holds that the bourgeoisie is capable of independent capitalist development in India.

Let us briefly examine the nature of the industry leaders—the monopoly bourgeoisie which is interested in 'building capitalism' in India.

Whether or not the monopoly houses represent independent capitalists depends on (a) the control of product and technology; (b) the extent of foreign participation in Indian industry; and (c) the export and import relations and terms. The extent of foreign participa-

tion in Indian industry measured in terms of reproductive capital is rather small (less than 1%). The important thing, however, is not the quantum of capital but the amount of control it exercises on the products, processes (technology) and the direction of growth. The Indian monopolists have now become the national counterparts of foreign monopoly which uses advanced technology for spreading its influence. These linkages and an elaborate system of control by the imperialist monopolies of the direction and nature of growth of several developing countries have been evolved over a period of time. The system consists in advancing 'loans, grants' and 'aid' to the government of the recipient country for encouragement of a particular pattern of industrial and agricultural growth there. The pattern that is encouraged is the one that subserves the needs of imperialism. This reduces the local monopoly bourgeoisie to mere users, promoters and clearing houses of foreign technology which is rapidly becoming obsolete in the country of their origin. This technology is still 'advanced' from the viewpoint of developing countries like India. This has been amply documented.\*\* One may, therefore, state that the monopolist bourgeoisie of the country has got its interests firmly linked with those of the imperialists. It would be wrong to consider the monopoly bourgeoisie as capable of independently building capitalism in India.

Thus Mr Basavapunniah not only seems to ignore the real character of the State, he seems to want to mislead the cadre by referring to an incomplete statement of what he called the 'Naxalites' position'. While the positions of the CPI and the CPI(ML) are widely different, they are sharply defined. The position of the CPM on the other hand is not so sharply defined and is vacillating.

## 2. Soviet Social-Imperialism and Ideological 'Independence' of the CPM

Mr Basavapunniah's ideological confusion is not confined to the question of the State alone. He claims that his party is neither pro-Moscow nor pro-

\* See "Revolutionary Techniques with Special Reference to India", *Social Scientist*, June 1974.

\*\*See for instance Sau R.K. *Indian Economic Growth: Problems and Prospects*.



Peking and will pursue its own programmes. Once again let us see how the CPM leaders have demonstrated their 'independence' in practice. In 1967 the Chinese leaders criticised (through the radio) the brutal repression of the Naxalbari uprising by the CPM Ministry. This criticism was taken by the 'Marxist' leaders of the CPM as an 'interference in the internal affairs' of the CPM. They vehemently opposed the Chinese stand. A year later in 1968 when the Soviet Union sent troops into Czechoslovakia to put down the movement there, the CPM leaders gave their unqualified support to the Soviet move which was opposed even by a section of the right CPI. Evidently, according to CPM leaders, sending troops across the border is no interference, but ideological criticism through the radio is. Such is the ideological 'independence' of Mr Basavapunniah and the CPM leaders.

The CPM leaders in order to assert their neutral stand ignore the facts and criticise the characterisation of the Soviet Union as social-imperialists. Mr Basavapunniah argues that, since the means of production in the Soviet Union have still not regressed back to private control, it can never be imperialist. But there are some known facts about the foreign and domestic policies of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union has not only denied the Chinese access to nuclear technology and other help, it has collaborated with the U.S. in the 'containment of China'. It has sought to impose the nuclear 'non-proliferation treaty' on other nations, specially China.

On the domestic side it is now known that the social reconstruction programmes suffer from revisionism. The benefits of socialist reconstruction in the Soviet Union are not shared by different social groups equitably. The gap between the wages of workers and other functionaries is not only there, monetary incentives have been reinstalled as desirable. All these fit into a pattern and one can state that revisionism has captured the leadership of the State.

Revisionism, as Lenin points out, is "promoted by the bourgeois in working class movement which omits, obliterates and distorts the revolutionary side of

Marxism and its revolutionary soul; they push to the foreground and extol what is acceptable to the bourgeoisie". Is this not the case in the Soviet Union today? The bourgeoisie which has survived the ruthless suppression by hiding within the party for decades has now captured power. It has adopted the policy of collaboration with U.S. imperialism in dividing the world into spheres of influence where each can effectively exploit the economic resources and the market. It is for these reasons that the Soviet Union which is revisionist is characterised as social-imperialists.

### 3. Questions of Tactic and Tasks

Mr Basavapunniah has "exposed" a series of other issues which he calls the 'fallacies' of 'Naxalites of all hues'. These relate to the tactic and current tasks of Indian revolution. On one hand he states that 'he does not have any parliamentary illusion' and believes that 'the State power cannot be attained through peaceful means'. On the other hand he states that 'counter-revolution has unified itself, advanced technologically, militarily and has acquired enormous communication and transport facilities'. Therefore, people's war is no longer a possibility. If one believes Mr Basavapunniah's claim of no parliamentary illusion one may infer that the real determinants of people's victory are the military hardware, transport facilities and communication equipment. This amounts to gross disrespect to the people's war waged successfully by the Vietnamese who have defeated the most sophisticated counter-revolutionary war machine in the world. People's war has liberated Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau from fascist imperialist rules. Similar struggles are on, in other places in Asia (Malaysia, Burma, Cambodia, Thailand) and several Latin American countries. Ignoring such struggles would mean that Mr Basavapunniah has come to believe more in technological hardware than in the people, despite his occasional lip service to the latter.

Again despite his reservation about the success of people's war he states that revolutionary conditions are not yet ripe for it in India. One wonders why he bothers about revolutionary conditions if he does not believe in the pos-

sibility of people's war, to start with. On the other hand if he seriously thinks that conditions are not yet ready for people's war, he may have indicated his method of gauging the situation. He lists three places where armed uprising took place and was suppressed and uses these to substantiate his argument. It is interesting to note that the failure of two Ministries of the CIM has not convinced its leadership of the futility of elections whereas two examples have convinced Mr Basavapunniah about the unfeasibility of peasant's war.

Mr Basavapunniah however rationalises his continued participation (which in fact is the CPM's sole occupation) in elections on the plea that "they don't wish to give the bourgeoisie an alibi that CPM believes in the 'cult of violence' and is not striving to achieve political power peacefully". It was the CPM leadership which had the control of the West Bengal Home Ministry (that is control of the police force etc), when the Naxalbari uprising took place. And later again during the uprising at Debra-Gopiballavpur (Midnapore). Mr Jyoti Basu deployed the BSF after the police failed to suppress the uprising and greatly appreciated the work of the BSF. Brutal repression of the uprising and slaughter of cadres has certainly established the CPM leadership's credentials with the bourgeoisie. But the revolutionary cadres will never forget that CPM leaders value ministerial power more than revolution; they know that the CPI will suppress the cadres if they ever become a threat to the leadership.

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For Frontier contact

VISALANDHRA

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A. P.

## Biography of A Not So Unknown Non-Indian

BENOY GHOSE

The writer of *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* has, at last, in his late seventies written a biography of Friedrich Max Muller,\* a non-Indian Sanskritist and Indologist. He thanks his friend Laurens van der Post for having suggested the project to him. One can't help wondering why and for whom the project was intended. That a writer who is perchance an Indian, who writes 'Why I Hate Indians' and "often curiously conservative in his intellectual dissertations and pontifications, and who has a sort of quixotic admiration for European culture, without setting foot in Europe until he was approaching sixty, was commissioned to write the biography of a 'Scholar Extraordinary', who was a German by birth and upbringing, but English by adoption, and who loved and admired India, her 'Rig-Veda' and 'Sacred Books' from Oxford, and had never felt like seeing and setting foot in India during the long fifty years (1850-1900) of his Sanskritised cerebration, is strange indeed. But is it really strange? Muller was a German who 'always wrote in English with complete mastery of the language'. Mr Nirad C. Chaudhuri is a Mymensingh Bengali and Indian, who writes mainly in English. Mr Chaudhuri's English prose style, and his romantic attraction for Aryanism because of its European roots certainly establish his claim for writing Muller's biography. He worked at Oxford for four long years, not for his researches only, but 'to imbibe the spirit of the place' where Muller spent

his life. The first and last biography of Muller was published in 1902, and he was almost totally forgotten. But a new biography, such as the present one by Mr Chaudhuri, is needed for restoring and refurbishing his image, because he played so important and significant a role in history that he remains an element to be reckoned with in understanding the continuing evolution of a particular people or humanity in general. Then there is always the most important question, which Mr Chaudhuri has always put to himself, of 'the basic significance of all lives', and pondering over it he says: I have considered it in connection with the life of European scholar-thinkers, and above all Karl Marx. Did his ideas contribute anything to the understanding of human life or to enhancing its value? Or was he only the priest and propagator of a cult more bloody than that of our Kali or of the Aztec war god Huitzilopochtli, to be himself dragged to the altar of his own cult as a sacrificial beast fattened in the British Museum?' (P. 9, emphasis added). One really can't help wondering why the commissioned writer of a popular biography of a non-Indian Indologist Max Muller, should at all think over Karl Marx in connection with the life of European scholar-thinkers, particularly of the 'Extraordinary' Muller-type scholars! Not for nothing Mr Chaudhuri invokes our Kali and Aztec Huitzilopochtli to focalise the bloody cult of Karl Marx, 'a sacrificial beast fattened in the British Museum', and to fluoresce the contribution of the Rig-Veda translator Sanskritist Max Muller, an imperialist stooge, battered in Oxford University. It cannot be discarded simply as a typical Nirad C. Chaudhuri hodge-podge, in spite of the threat of the Aztec war god Huit-

zilopochtli, or as an illustration of intellectual cretinism from which a heavily obsessed pedant English-medium writer can suffer. There is more to it.

A unilateral biography of Max Muller like the present one, written in traditional style with unimpeachable devotion, and of course with commendable ability, does not call for a comparative discussion or evaluation of Muller (1823-1908) and Marx (1818-1883) who were both German scholars and contemporaries, born and brought up in the same historical-cultural milieu of nineteenth century Europe, but responded and reacted to it in completely different ways. Still we do a bit of it for the Huitzilopochtlian bite of Mr Chaudhuri. The German Muller was naturalised in England and always wrote in English. The German Marx remained a German and always wrote in German to Oxford in 1848 and was romping about in Oxford clubs as a pianist, when 'People who knew nothing about the Rig-Veda knew him as a pianist' (P. 99), Karl Marx wrote and published *The Communist Manifesto*. Historically it was the year of revolutions and the Californian Gold Rush. The story of Muller's evolution from a pianist to Orientalist has been faithfully narrated by Mr Chaudhuri. In 1859, the year of his wedding, Muller published his *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, and 'Like his marriage, the book was a great success' (P. 144). In the same year Marx's 'Preface' and *Critique of Political Economy* were published and also Darwin's *Origin of Species* and Mill's *On Liberty*. When Muller's translation of the Rig-Veda was published in 1869-70, as a result of enormous expenditure on the part of the Directory of East India Company, Marx had completed all his major works, including three volumes of *Capital*. Those were the days of the Gladstone Ministry, the Franco-Prussian War, the Paris Commune (1871) and the German Empire. Marx died in 1883, Muller in 1900. There were hundreds of thinkers and scholars like Muller in Europe and in India in the nineteenth century, but none like Marx in the whole history of human thought. Marx,

\*Scholar Extraordinary: The Life of Professor the Rt.Hon. Friedrich Max Muller, P. C. :

By Nirad C. Chaudhuri

Oxford University Press: Rs 85.

the 'great divide' in the human thought-stream, is therefore remembered all over the human world, and Marxism is the greatest dynamic force shaping the destiny of man today. But Muller as a thinker was already dead in his lifetime, and after seventy-five years of his death, he can only be resurrected as a ghost, stalking a fast changing world with a copy of beautifully bound English translation of the Rig-Veda in hand. As Mr Chaudhuri says: 'In Britain, which was his adopted country and where he spent all his working life of over fifty years, his name means nothing outside the circle of professional Indologists, linguists and mythologists, and even within it the recollection is dim. Even in India, where he was a legend and an institution combined, he is now only vaguely remembered. It is only very recently that the cultural projection of western Germany of today has revived his name by calling its centres in the big cities of India Max Muller Bhavans or Houses'. And an intelligent man like Mr Chaudhuri certainly knows why Muller's name has been revived and Max Muller Bhavans have been established in India today.

But for the readable style of writing of Mr Chaudhuri it would be difficult to wade through this 382-page biography of Max Muller, because Muller, although a great Orientalist, had not played any important or significant role in history. But Mr Chaudhuri's contention is that he had played it and, in support of it he has assembled, with admirable endurance, a lot of historical material, which may be profitably used by others interested in the history of nineteenth century India, and also of Bengal. Most of Mr Chaudhuri's interpretations of historical materials, as well as situations, stem from his peculiarly conservative roots of thought, akin to Muller's repulsive Aryanism. Style alone, without any sense of dynamics of history, can hardly sustain or create a reader's interest in any biographical work. Even in regard to style, it must be said that Mr Chaudhuri, at his best, is fluent, vigorous and forthright; but at his worst, bombastic, pedantic and often patronising. As regards the material he has picked out, many are undoubtedly interesting, but it is worth con-

sidering how valuable they are in their own right, or whether their only importance lies in proving Muller's importance in history.

#### Courtship and Marriage

Mr Chaudhuri is at his most original in presenting Muller's protracted courtship and marriage, (Chapter 2, Part Two) and he devotes thirty pages to it, six pages more than (Chapter 1) that on The Rig-Veda. Courtship and marriage follow The Rig-Veda. This is significant, perhaps more significant than Muller's role in history, which is the central theme of the book. Here the typical Bengali character of Mr Chaudhuri is revealed, through the glittering veil of his love for European culture, because this love episode of Muller would not appear remarkable to any English biographer. Mr Chaudhuri, it seems, has a strange predilection for dilating on matters sexual. And one can trace it from the very beginning of his intellectual voyage in the fifties in *Autobiography* to the seventies in *The Continent of Circe* and *To Live or Not to Live*. Muller, a thirty-year-old don, had to wait five years to obtain the hand of a wealthy nineteen-year-old girl Georgina, and this waiting produced the highest form of human experience, which was love, and in which Romantic idealism, passion and religious fervour were blended to generate a kind of spiritual intensity, which the wretched Hindus can never experience or appreciate because they are cut off from their Aryan, that is, European roots. This is really fascinating. 'From the Rigveda down to the epics', says Mr Chaudhuri, 'especially in the Mahabharata, one faces a consistent attitude towards sex life. It is based on frank acceptance of the flesh, gusto in sensual pleasures. (*The Continent of Circe* Chapter 10). Then he quote from the Rigveda a verse, in which Queen Goddess Indrani defies the sexual virility of Lord Indra, in these words: He achieves not—he whose penis hangs limp between thighs Achieves he alone whose hairy things swells up when he lies' (Rigveda: Mandala X, Sukta 86, Verse 16). According to Mr Chaudhuri, the highly spiritualised love-oriented monogamous ideal of marriage

belongs to Western culture, which rose to its peak in the mid-Victorian age, drawing its strength from the German Romantic movement and the Lutheran sacramentalisation of sex. But monogamy, love, fidelity, and such things owe their origin to other historical and sociological causes. Love is dissociated from sexuality, and invested with an aura of chastity and ethereality, in a social context in which the criteria are performance, competition, and maximisation of profit. The classic capitalist gives it practical shape in his life, in the separation he makes between wife and mistress, ball and brothel, love and lust. Love remains in its highly idealised position, as utopian an ideal as the promise of economic and social freedom for the common people. The role of sexuality in history, its relation with genitality, love and fidelity, has been lately explored in all its dimensions, and in depth, by eminent scholars like Wilhelm Reich, Herbert Marcuse, Reimut Reiche and others. In the light of their discussion, Mr Chaudhuri's ideas about sexuality, genitality, love and fidelity appear queer and backdated. His interpretation of Hindu sexuality, and also of European sexuality, may be politely rejected as trash.

Summing up Muller's role as a man and thinker, Mr Chaudhuri says: 'Religion, morality, and thought were (were) his three preoccupations' (P 374). We have nothing to say about his religion and thought. Scholars, Orientalists and Indologists have put them in cold storage. His morality? 'His respect for morality also made him almost a worshipper of Buddha, more a moral than a religious prophet' (P 374). What about his political and social morality? This moral prophet, who was 'almost a worshipper of Buddha', was also a great admirer and worshipper of British imperialist rulers. Muller looked upon British rule in India 'as a political tour de force'. He wrote in his reminiscences (P 341):

'The government of India by a mere handful of Englishmen is, indeed, an achievement unparalleled in the whole history of the world. The suppression of the Indian Mutiny shows what stuff English soldiers and statesmen are made of. If people say that ours is not an

age for Epic poetry, let them read Lord Robert's *Forty-one Years in India*. When I see in a circus a man standing with outstretched legs on two or three horses, and two men standing on his shoulders, and other men standing on theirs, and a little child at the top of all, while the horses are running full gallop round the arena, I feel what I feel when watching the government of India.

Without comment, we close this review. No more about the 'moral prophet', the 'Scholar Extraordinary', or about the writer of his biography.

## Of Games and Gamesters

GYAN KAPUR

ONCE upon a time America was the first land of opportunity. No more. We can now pride ourselves on having usurped that place. Boot-legging, gun-running, the numbers game, traffic in drugs, trade in women, the protection racket, tycoons of the so-called underworld living very much on the surface and hobnobbing covertly with politicians and controlling them overtly,—you name it, we have it all, bigger and better, if that is the right word to use for such things. For large sections of the people this has become a way of life and they look upon the strictly legal ways of making a living as fit only for the aged, the infirm or the weaklings.

Perhaps it is the large quantities of American wheat we have eaten over the years which has developed these truly American virtues in us. But in one thing at least we have beaten the Americans hollow. They may wallow in adultery openly; but there as rarely any cash in it. We as a nation have developed adulteration as the easiest way of making a fast buck.

Apart from making appropriate noises from time to time when a few unfortunates die, little is done to check adulteration whether it is in medicines or in food. But a piquant situation has now developed in the Capital where a Magistrate has convicted the Central Government's Indian Tourism

Development Corporation, the Manager of its Hotel Janpath and the kitchen supervisor for adulteration, as reported.

In any other civilized country such a thing would be unthinkable and the Managerial staff would never have lived down the shameful incident if by any chance it did happen. But here anything may happen. There may be a law to exempt government undertakings from being prosecuted for such crimes in the interests of the nation's prestige. At least this much is sure. All and sundry will be able to cite this one incident alone as an example of the difficulty in avoiding adulteration.

Commercial institutions have their own ends in view when advertising. But it is strange to see that in the nationalised banks and government undertakings and even direct departments, the admen seem still to merrily live in a world of their own, wasting money as well as scarce newsprint.

People with money to invest do not require frequent reminders of the rates of interest paid by the nationalised banks. They know it well enough. And yet there are big insertions, sometimes by two or more banks on the same day giving the same information.

Another glaring instance of such extravagance is the full-page advertisements by Modern Bakeries, "issued in the public interest, on behalf of the Government of India". With poverty and hunger staring large masses in the face, it is a mockery to try to teach them about proper nutrition. With the rocketing of the price of bread during the last two or three years, it is something of a luxury now. Even then bread is frequently on and off the market. The interests of the public would have been served much better if the price of bread had been reduced by cutting out the expenditure on such fanciful schemes of teaching nutrition, when the mass of the newspaper reading people are at their wits' end to keep pace with the run-away inflation. And in their hurry to catch up, the first casualty is always food.

## JUST ARRIVED

*The Scalpel, the Sword*; Allan and Gordon (33.57); *Hundred Day War—Cultural Revolution at Tsinghua University*; William Hinton (29.33); *Turning Point in China* Hinton (14.88); *The Great Road* (the life and times of Chu Teh); Agnes Smedley (33.57); *Armed Struggle in Africa—with the Guerillas in 'Portuguese' Guinea*; Chaliand (16.58); *On the transition to Socialism* Paul Sweezy & Battelheim (16.58); *Revolution & Counter-Revolution in Chile*; Sweezy & Magdoff (23.37); *A Short History of the European Working Class*; W. Abendroth (25.08); *Studies & Further Studies in a Dying Culture*; Christopher Caudwell (33.57); *Essays on the Political Economy of Africa*; Arrighi & Saul (38.25).

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## Right and Wrong

BY A DRAMA CRITIC

**NYAYA Anyaya** staged at the Mukta Angan last month by Cartoon Theatre, was Bimal Bandopadhyaya's adaptation from Albert Camus' play **The Just**. The play resolved round the imminent grenade attack on the Grand Duke Sergei in Russia by a band of militant young conspirators who found the prevailing atmosphere in the country too stifling and oppressive. One of the conspirators, a sensitive poet, lost his nerve and did not throw the grenade when he discovered that the Grand Duke was in the carriage carrying him to the theatre along with two children who were looking out on the world ever so innocently. This last-minute debacle creates a sense of failure and resentment amongst his co-conspirators who decide to stage another attack with greater determination. Eventually the poet overcomes his hesitation and plunges into the attack and is caught redhanded when he hurls the grenade which blows the Grand Duke skyhigh. He is taken to prison where insidious attempts are made by the authorities to subvert his loyalty and he is shot when he refuses to acknowledge his guilt and insists that he fought for justice. The play ends with his circle of friends taking a solemn oath to keep the fire of revolution burning.

On the whole this was a very well-acted play with almost everyone pitching in to keep up the atmosphere of suspense, tension and excitement. The furtive conspiratorial air was well brought out in the facial expressions of the performers and through the subdued lighting that accentuated shadows and often merged with the background. Swati Chanda as Dora was appropriately tense and relaxed and gave a convincing performance although at times she did not seem to know what to do with her hands and perhaps used them a little too frequently. That she had real feeling, however, was amply borne out more than once. The fact that she looked too much like a school-girl may have been a minor disquali-

fication. Ujjal Sen Gupta as Yanick, the poet-revolutionary, was the piece-de-resistance of the evening and gave a finely balanced piece of acting. He exuded all the sensitivity of a poet and his natural good looks merely added to his laurels. He was given good support by most of the other young men of the inner circle. The police chief and inquisitor Shorotov was a trifle irritating with his booming voice, and Shukla Roy Chowdhury as the Grand Duchess failed to attract our sympathy with her monotonous harangue. There was a slight incongruity in draping her in what seemed to be a glorified peasant's costume of the early twentieth century, while Dora romped around in a short skirt and top. The prison scene was ingeniously realistic with the bars casting their shadows over the back-drop of the stage.

Bimal Bandopadhyaya's language was occasionally imbued with a strong poetic flavour and the blood and thunder of the play did not overwhelm us with its sheer raucousness. The last scene where the dead poet appears in the dark background with the light falling on his face and giving him a strangely luminous Christ-like glow was impressive.

### "The Freedom Struggle"

Theatre Commune staged **Swadeshi Naksha** at the Mukta Angan on March 31. It might be an oversimplification to say that the play was a political farce but in the attempt to expose the arrant hypocrisy that is always at work in a complex situation demanding total honesty, the elements of farce were given a good airing. A zamindar during the Raj becomes the proud father of twin sons and hopes to perpetuate his hold on his impoverished and simmering subjects by refusing to accept the fact that they have any problems. The sons grow up just when the partition of Bengal is beginning to create a wave of unrest amongst the people and decide to join politics without a sense of commitment. When the boycott of British goods catches on, they storm into their wine-sipping father's chamber and compel him to remove the foreign whiskies

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For revised foreign mail rates see third cover.

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while presenting him with a bottle of Scotch suitably camouflaged under the label 'Ganga water'. What the two boys wish to drive home is that appearances alone count and nobody need bother about the inner contents of a whisky bottle or a human heart. From this cynicism and rank opportunism springs political adventure which leads them through various labyrinths of progress but they are both believers in demagogic patriotism and would in reality like to protect their own interests which are inextricably linked with those of the British Government. Under a facade of radical gestures and statements, they plump for moderation and a continuation of the status quo in national affairs—isn't that how our present rulers conduct themselves in public? The only disturbing element is a maverick character called Hari who is not completely taken in by the brothers' hypocritical postures and loudly demands a radical solution seeking a direct confrontation with the British Government. Since politics is such a roaring and lucrative business, the aging father also decides to join his sons specially when the zamindari no longer offered a steady source of income and self-enrichment. The play ends with the two young men opting for the rich plums of ministerial office and bracing themselves for this noble effort.

There were songs galore to acquaint the spectator with the mood and spirit of the fragmentary situations cropping up in the course of the play and some of them were well sung and cleverly put across. The Brechtian placards were quite in place and gave a kind of momentum to the proceedings but somehow from an overall point of view the play suffered from boredom and did not seem to take off. Subrata Bhattacharya as the zamindar got on our nerves with his endless repetitive clowning and the two sons were meticulously monotonous in what seemed an attempt to explain to the world just what they were about. Nilkanta Sen

Gupta, the director of the play, had rather a small part as Palanath, the zamindar's nouveau riche neighbour, who was getting rich and high-powered a little too fast but his leers and sneers were effective and amusing. Hari was an emblem of earnestness while the zamindar's two stooges Narain and Panchu kept up a facade of fawning adulation and abject servility without flinching.

This play made it its business to satirise mercilessly the follies, peccadilloes and vices of the hangers-on in a particular historical context—in this case, the anti-British freedom struggle. The idea itself is not new or exciting but much would have depended upon how imaginatively the satire was presented. In spite of all the gimmicks, what made the evening dull was an overdose of facetiousness and unrelieved mediocrity of acting. No bright sparks were sent up to kindle the imagination and what went on in the name of farce degenerated into a farce itself. If the humour was less stodgy and the performers less vociferous, the play might have succeeded somewhat.

The set constituting the zamindar's house and the courtroom scene had more than a touch of authenticity.

## Canvas Artists' Circle

SANDIP SARKAR

THE Canvas Artists' Circle, whose exhibition was held at the Birla Academy in the first week of April, are fast becoming a permanent feature in the art scene of Calcutta, and they are almost, but not quite on par with the Society of Contemporary Artists and Calcutta Painters. In fact they have a large number of artists below thirty who are showing every sign of catching up very fast. There was more freshness in this exhibition than the Indian section of the Triennale.

It is evident that Alok Bhattacharjee works very hard on the canvas, at times even overworks in a pseudo-academic fashion. He is realistic in an old masterly style, but is careful to create an impression that he has an individual style unlike theirs. He paints a com-

plete human figure inside square areas. In each of these square areas he sticks a member of the body, and he may magnify one or more parts as he chooses and finally tries to work out a relationship of all the square areas. This generally by and large, gives the effect of all the square areas not growing into a single whole. Moreover, the relationship of individual areas is disturbed by minute details that forcibly attract attention. Particularly 'The Barque of Dante' suffers from this. In 'Picasso' he gets away with the collage-like approach. I like his 'Drawing' of a dog, a man and a table where his attitude to life seems more robust.

Subir Chowdhury's weak point is his drawing. This time the total canvas space had tonal variation which is fresh and glorious. There is a quality of effulgence in his hues worked out in subtle contrasting schemes. Particularly in his 'Puppeteer' there is an intense revolving effect in the composition and circular trajectory motion of lines which creates an atmosphere. In 'Civilization' there is a decorative face which looks like chinaware and a cityscape which has cannibal teeth. The other two paintings were bombs that do not explode. Now that his composition orchestrates with his colours, he should concentrate on drawing.

Swapnesh Choudhury is still in his curved decorative world which thrives on variation of two or three hues. He lets himself go in his drawing but his paintings seem to lack the spark of life.

Bishnu Das shows marked improvement in his mixed media works. To be precise he painstakingly minimises and thereby runs dry of emotion.

Balai Kaymakar plays with colours but achieves very little as he wallows in outworn imagery—extended hands, grow large etc. etc. ! His 'Closed Window' has window upon window and his colours create an illusion of a vast cityscape.

Nikhil Baran Sengupta's 'Eternal Lust' series has lush tropical colours and vigorous lines but the copulating figures do not evoke any pleasure because they lack visual order.

Tridip Chandra in his 'Life 75' has, deep down, a quite powerful drawing

which is done with a flourish of swirling lines and an interplay of bright colours. His men and horse (why must he paint a horse in Bijon Chaudhury fashion?) unify to build a dramatic tension complete with a feeling for texture.

Parimal Dutta Ray seems a little exhausted. He should stop, meditate for a time before he begins again.

Rathin Ray's work reminds one of good illustration done in children's books. The caveman with his nuclear family is too much of a back projection but his mushrooms have a primeval quality no doubt.

Sakti Chakraborty's drawings of birds is well done but a bit too calculated.

### The Little Master

Manick Talukdar chooses strict frontality and a marriage of convenience between sculpture and painting. His terms of reference are ancient Indian sculpture where the artist thrust the viewer to a vantage point by concentrating on relief. He has a calligraphic element which has a folkish overtone and reminds of sculpture found in pre-historic sites in the sub-continent. The texture and rhythmic geometrical points and counter-points build up an emotive atmosphere and there is an intense yet tender quality in these wordless transmissions. He has shown a rare mastery of technique and it is time he took to relevant and poignant things.

### Letter

#### Token Fast in Jails

Political prisoners in different West Bengal jails observed a token fast on April 6, Anti-Repression Day, in support of the just and genuine struggle of the people against the continuance of emergency, DIR, MISA and other draconian measures, as also against the ruthless suppression of all the democratic battles being waged by the oppressed millions.

Amar Prasad Chakraborty,  
President,  
Legal Aid Committee,  
Calcutta.

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